



1 THESSALONIANS 2: 14-20

Letter	Date of Writing	Place of Writing
1st Thessalonians	54 A.D.	Corinth

Verse 13 - [From Session 7]

What does God's word do in our lives? It **effectively works in you who believe**. The Greek word, **works** is **ἐνεργέω** *energeo*. The **word of God** effectively gives believers energy to live our Christian life. When you think you cannot overcome temptations or endure trials, or hold up under stress, and when you falter and fall, it may be because you lack *energeo*. And so the solution is to get into the Word of God, into Bible study.

Paul commends this church for their energy in the word of God.

Verse 14 -

In chapter 1:6, we saw that the Thessalonians were followers of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Now he notes how the Thessalonian church also followed the churches (Greek: ekklesia, assembly) in **Judaea**. The word **followers** is the Greek word *mimetes*, from which we get our English word *mimic*. They were imitators of the church in Jerusalem.

Notice the reference Paul makes to the **churches of God which are in Judea**. These were Christian Jews most likely living in vicinity of Jerusalem. That church had suffered greatly. In that sense, the Thessalonians were imitators in that they suffered from their own countrymen as did the Judaens. Their **own countrymen** must refer to the Jews of the diaspora (Acts 8:4). This verse is a pretty clear indication that Paul is addressing a Jewish audience in Thessalonica. That

fact makes a huge difference in the interpretation of chapter 1:4, "Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God." Election just means the "act of picking out or choosing.) It is the nation of Israel that is elected for salvation, not individuals (Deuteronomy 7:6; Psalm 33:12). Individually, people are not elected for salvation. Individuals come to God by faith. Today, we are saved by grace through faith.

The Jewish leaders, as in Jesus' day, did not like this new group of Christ followers. Persecution followed those who desired to live a godly life for Christ. And that same principle will apply to us even today (2 Timothy 3:12). Paul explains what that persecution was like in verse 15.

Verse 15 -

Who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets. Stephen, a man chosen by the apostles to be one of the administrators (or Deacon) in the first assembly of believers in Jerusalem, preached that the Jews of Jerusalem murdered Jesus. And not only Jesus, they persecuted the prophets and killed them before Jesus Christ came (Acts 7:52). Stephen's message did not go over well with the Jewish leaders and he was put to death (Acts 7:58; 60).

Following Jesus Christ was serious business. It could mean a believer's life. Paul said, **and have persecuted us**, meaning the apostles. In Acts 12:2 James the brother of John was killed by the sword at the hands of Herod. But the church in Jerusalem continued to follow Christ. The Thessalonians, being imitators of them, did the same, even though they too faced persecution from their own countrymen (Acts 17:1-9). We can get application for our lives in that we should imitate the boldness of these believers who came before us.

These persecutors did **not please God and are contrary to all men.** By all men he could mean all men who follow Jesus Christ.

Verse 16 -

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved. It is interesting that the enemies of the Jewish believers, who were Jews, did not even want the Gentiles to be saved. They would not have cared about the Gentiles. So we have to ask the question, what is meant by "Gentiles." The word *Gentiles* is the Greek word *ethnos*. It does not mean "non-Jew" in the

Scripture. It means nations. In those nations were non-Jews, but in the nations there were also Jews who were of the diaspora (that is scattered beyond Israel). As we read the context, we have to make a decision, is the word referring to non-Jews (what we today call Gentiles), or is it referring to Jews scattered among the nations? I think in this case it is the latter. These unbelieving Jewish leaders did not want Paul to speak to the *ethnos*, that is, the Jews living among the nations, which would include the Thessalonians in Macedonia.

Saved from what? As in, In 1:10, it could be salvation or deliverance from the wrath to come, i.e., The Great Tribulation.

So as always to fill up the measure of their sins; The verse literally reads *as to always fill up their sins*. Persecutors of the Christians are filled up with sin. What is the result of their filled life of sin? **But wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.** It's already been determined, they are going to face the wrath of the Tribulation, to the **uttermost**, this is the Greek word **τέλος** *telos*. It means extended to the very end.

Verse 17 -

Having been taken away from you for a short time. Paul looks back on the night he was sent away with Silas, because of the riots in Thessalonica (Acts 17:10). It had been about a year since they left, and subsequently went to Berea, then Athens, and Corinth.

In presence, not in heart. We can be absent from someone in person but be very close them in heart. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. We have the wonderful technology of seeing someone's face on a screen from the other side of the world, but there is nothing like being, face-to-face, in person. Paul had a great desire to see this church. He was concerned about their safety. We will see in our next session that he sent Timothy to them to find out what was happening in the Church (See 1 Corinthians 4:17).

But Satan hindered us. It is unclear how they were hindered from returning, but Satan had a part in it. We do not know how.

We shouldn't take this passage to mean we should blame Satan for every obstacle that is put before us in our lives. It is true, however, that Satan wants to impede the gospel. But, sometimes it is God who prevents us from doing something. Paul was hindered from coming to the church in Rome, but he does not say it was Satan who put up the obstacle (Romans 1:13; 15:22). Sometimes it could be that circumstances due to the fallen world we live in hinder us from doing something.

We want to be careful that we don't build a doctrine of Satan being under every bush and behind every tree. Instead, let's move boldly in our ministry, and when obstacles get in the way, pray without ceasing, and keep moving. We may have to move to the side, or even take a step or two backwards, but don't give up serving the Lord. The way will either be open, or it will be closed. Our job is to remain faithful wherever we are serving the Lord.

Verses 19-20 -

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

It has been said, there is only one thing we can take to heaven with us; other people. Paul reminds them that they are what is important to him. He is not even concerned about Satan hindering him. He only wants to be able to see the Thessalonian believers at the rapture of the church. And what a reunion that will be. Like the song says, "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be, when we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory."

For you are our glory and joy. Paul was not out for his own glory. We mentioned in 2:6 that there is a tendency to seek glory from others for ourselves. Paul does the opposite and puts the glory on others. That is his joy! There is more power and satisfaction in rejoicing in others, and not ourselves.