

INTRODUCTION

EXPOSITION

- v.13 Paul explains another reason why it is that they constantly thank God in their prayers (1:2)

I. HE THANKS GOD FOR HOW THEY RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD – v.13

- These men were the human instruments of God speaking to people
- The presence of the Holy Spirit was evident in the Thessalonians seen in that they received it as the Word of God
- This is one evidence of conversion and the working of God in the hearts of men; there is a change of mind in relation to what God has spoken through His Word;
- Many say that such words (and the Bible, and sermons) are merely the words of men
- But it is in truth the Word of God; God speaks and reveals Himself through the Gospel
- He is there and He is not silent
- They received it as authoritative, taking it seriously and obeying it as such
- The Word of God worked in them effectively, it changed them, because they believed it and lived differently because of it
- They believed it, even when they had to do so by faith and not by sight
- the word does not profit if not mixed with faith in obedience - Heb 4:2
- This is the condition for this blessing of effective working; it isn't enough to know

II. THIS EFFECTIVE WORKING WAS SEEN IN THEIR WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER FOR CHRIST – vv.14-16

- v.14 They became imitators of other churches, especially those in the East (Judea) who had suffered persecution
Such unity in tribulation showed the unity of their faith. – Geoffrey Wilson
- Those churches had suffered from their own countrymen (the Jews), v.15 those who killed the prophets and Jesus, they further persecuted the Apostles v.15a
- v.15b God was not indifferent to this, for it did not please Him; it is also contrary to all men – opposite, hostile
- v.16 They did this be seeking to stop the preaching of the Gospel
- Many say that the Gospel preached is hateful; God says it is hateful NOT to or to oppose it, because it is His message to save sinful men; it is through the Gospel of Jesus Christ that men may be saved from their sins and for God
- To oppose the Gospel is to oppose the ultimate good of humanity
- As these men opposed the Gospel, it was filling up the measure of their sins – Rom2:5
- The result of this is that wrath has come upon them to the uttermost – a difficult phrase, but may refer to the reality of their rejection as God's special people (Mt21:43) and their coming destruction in 70 A.D.
...it is the work of God's word to produce a new character, not only distinct from that of the unconverted but antagonistic to it, so that to the extent that we experience the power of God's word, we come into collision with the world that rejects it. - Denney

III. THIS WORKING OF THE WORD IN THEIR LIVES CAUSED GREAT AFFECTION IN PAUL – vv.17-20

- Going back to the accusations against them, Paul reminds them that their leaving Thessalonica was not because they were fickle or unconcerned, but because of the persecution
- v.17 Because of this persecution the apostles were forced to leave them; while this is so, their heart is still with them
- This absence caused them to long even more to see them face to face with great desire
- In other words, even this brief absence caused them to greatly long to see them (demonstrating the depth of his love)
- v.18 While Paul sees God as in sovereign control over their circumstances, he sees Satan behind the persecution
- He wanted to be with them (even Paul), but Satan hindered them
- v.19 The reason for this longing for them is that they are his hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing
- This is especially so as he thinks about the day when the Lord Jesus returns; he still sees a connection with them in that day – "They say you mean nothing to me, but I say you mean everything to me."
- v.20 While Christ is ultimately his glory and joy, they also as the body of Christ are so
- The reference to coming (Gk. *parousia*) may be to the secular use of the visit of a sovereign to whom was presented gifts; if so, then the imagery is Paul giving to Christ these believers as a tribute of His work; they are the crowns he will lay at Jesus' feet

APPLICATION

I thank God for your reception of the Word of God.

- This is evidenced by your earnestness in hearing preaching, in talking about and applying the Word in your conversations, in your reading of the Scriptures in private and family devotions
- It is obvious by the fruit in your life that you are receiving it in faith and seeking to obey it
- Let us abound more and more, that we might know the presence of God and His blessing

I thank God for your willingness to joyfully endure for the Gospel.

- While the nature of our suffering is not the same, there are those of you who face things with faith and count it joy to serve Christ in the midst of it

I thank God for what you are to me, my joy and crown.

- I look forward to laying you at the feet of Jesus at His return