



I THESSALONIANS

a future for now

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 – A Story of Sadness Or Gladness

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We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. 1 John 3:12 (ESV)

Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain... Jude 11 (ESV)

1. Why are the Thessalonians a story of gladness?

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

A. They received the Word as God's Word, not man's Word.

...when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God...

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, Acts 8:14 (ESV)

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,... For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:1 and 3 (ESV)

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11–12 (ESV)

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 (ESV)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

...which is at work in you believers... 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

How does God's Word work in us?

- **It saves us** — since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 1 Peter 1:23 (ESV)

- **It blesses us** — *But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” Luke 11:28 (ESV)*
- **It guides us** — *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105 (ESV)*
- **It counsels us** — *Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors. Psalm 119:24 (ESV)*
- **It matures us** — *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 1 Peter 2:2 (ESV)*
- **It frees us** — *“If you abide in my word...the truth will set you free.” John 8:31–32 (ESV)*
- **It gives us joy** — *And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. 1 John 1:4 (ESV)*
- **It protects us from sin** — *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11 (ESV)*

B. They imitated seasoned Christians.

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea.... 1 Thessalonians 2:14a (ESV)

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord,... 1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ESV)

C. They persevered in times of suffering.

...For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews,... 1 Thessalonians 2:14b (ESV)

And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. **But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar,... Acts 17:4–5 (ESV)**

2. Why are the Jews a story of sadness?

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 2 Corinthians 11:24 (ESV)

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. Romans 9:4–5 (ESV)

Salvation is from the Jews. John 4:22 (ESV)

...that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. Romans 9:2–3 (ESV)**

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Luke 19:41–42 (ESV)

For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation. Luke 19:43–44 (ESV)

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.
Romans 10:2–3 (ESV)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
Matthew 23:37 (ESV)

...I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved,... Romans 11:25–26 (ESV)

A. They oppose the Word of God.

...who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind... 1 Thessalonians 2:15 (ESV)

...who killed the Lord Jesus...

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know... you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. Acts 2:22–23 (ESV)

...and the prophets...

You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, Acts 7:51–52 (ESV)

...and drove us out...

B. They oppose Christian leaders.

...oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved... 1 Thessalonians 2:15–16 (ESV)

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Acts 4:18 (ESV)

...and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Acts 5:40 (ESV)

C. They fill up their sins to the limit.

...so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last! (forever) 1 Thessalonians 2:16 (ESV)

Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. Matthew 23:32 (ESV)

And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. Genesis 15:16 (ESV)

...But wrath has come upon them at last (forever)! 1 Thessalonians 2:16 (ESV)

Application

- Am I a story of gladness? Am I like the Thessalonians who, after only a brief exposure to the gospel, accepted it as God's truth, began learning from other Christians, and persevered in times of difficulty?
- Am I a story of sadness? Am I like the Jews, who, after long exposure to the truth of the gospel and God's word, still see the gospel as the word of man, not the Word of God? Am I, like the Jews, opposing the gospel message, and as a result, I will justly face the eternal wrath of God?

Life Group Questions

1. How did the Thessalonians treat the Word of God and the gospel message according to 1 Thessalonians 2:13? How does considering the gospel and the Bible as man's words change how the Bible works in my heart compared to considering it for what it is, the Word of God?
2. When we consider the gospel message and the Bible as what it is, the very words of God, what work does the Bible do in us? **See 1 Peter 1:23, Luke 11:28, 2 Timothy 3:16, Psalm 119:105, Psalm 119:24, 1 Peter 2:2, Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 19:11, John 8:31-32, Psalm 119:97-98, Psalm 119:9, Psalm 119:28.**
3. When we experience persecution or times of suffering, why is it important to model our lives after older, seasoned Christians who suffered before us?
4. By today's standards, Paul would be accused of anti-semitism. Would this accusation be just? What is Paul's attitude toward the Jews in light of Romans 11?
5. Have you been insulted or abused for your faith? If so, how did you react? How do you hope you will react?
6. The Jews frequently abused Paul and attempted to murder him. Why are people violently opposed to Christians?
7. Do you know someone who has frequently been exposed to the gospel but they consistently reject it? Spend time in prayer that God would soften their heart, drawing them to Him.