

I Thess. 2:13-20

(13) And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.

*(14) For you, brothers and sisters, **became imitators** of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews*

(15) who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone

(16) in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way, they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

(17) But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you.

(18) For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way.

(19) For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?

(20) Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

Intro: The moment is now. Decision time. Will you obey God?

That is the choice that we face on a daily basis.

WE ask:

- Will I obey Gods word today, or will I go about life on my own?
- We should be asking ourselves that question every single morning when we roll out of bed.

Obedience starts with the understanding that God's Word is just that...THE WORD OF GOD.

It's my prayer that you will first make a choice to accept Him into your heart as your Lord and Savior & accept His Holy Word.

This is the essence of the gospel...it's the Word of God, it's His powerful message. Those who hear it and accept it become transformed by its power...

It leads to an important question. [?]

I. HOW DOES THE WORD OF GOD WORK IN BELIEVERS LIVES?

A. Paul couldn't thank God enough the church in Thessalonica listened to His message & accepted it as truth.

- Not human truth but God's truth...and then he says: *"This word is indeed at work in you who believe."*

B. How can "we" know God's Word is at work in our lives?

- *That's a pretty important question for all believers!*

Paul says the first evidence is:

1. You follow Godly examples...The Thessalonians
"became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus." (v. 14)

- "If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" the Thessalonians chose the Judean churches to imitate... Judean churches chose Paul & Jesus
- Each of us SHOULD know this truth – ***We Become Like the Group We Align Ourselves With.***

It's why Paul told the Corinthians and the Church as a whole...
"Do not be misled "Bad company corrupts good character." (1 Cor. 15:33)

- Who you choose to imitate will always dictate the attitude of your heart and the spiritual growth you experience...or stifle.
- ***CHOOSE TO IMITATE THOSE WHO IMITATE CHRIST***

Another way to identify the people who have accepted the Word of God is NOTICING THE DIRECTION OF THEIR FOCUS:

2. It creates an "OTHER" focus instead of an "INNER FOCUS."

- Vss. 14-16 in our text is a short synopsis of what the churches in Judea suffered and what the Thessalonians were now suffering.
- Those who hear God's Word but don't receive its truth in their lives will do the following:
 - a. They Reject God's Word as applicable to their life
 - b. They try to STOP it from being received by others... They Don't want others to hear it & benefit from receiving it so they persecuted either the "Messenger- Paul & the church or they dilute the Message by saying: God's Saving Grace is NOT for you.
- Those who have accepted Christ want OTHERS to *"Come to Know About Jesus, too."*

II. PEOPLE NEED TO BE OUR JOY AND CROWN

Paul's loved the Church in Thessalonica.

- He intensely longed to be with them.
- He made every effort to see them.

Why? Because when he stands in the presence of Jesus at His return...It's people like the Thessalonians being there with him that are His joy

He says, "Our joy...our crown...the reason we hope...Is it not you?"

God's people are the key to unlocking eternity for a world that needs salvation. {It is Joy when people accept Jesus}

III. What Biblical Principles can we apply to us ?

The Thessalonian Church was effective because they were in Christ!

1. Each one of us must commit to be in Christ! (to be a Christian, one must be in Christ!)

What does this mean? To be in Christ means to belong to Christ!

How important is this? As we live our lives, we can be in all sorts of other things besides Christ, can't we?

- You see, ask, "Is Jesus Christ involved in all these things I'm in & am I allowing Him to be Lord in all these wonderful things?"

~~ And again, individuals in Christ will make a church that is in Christ... World needs Churches that are in Christ

2. Our church must be committed to be in Christ, belonging only to Christ!

- And so again, the same question we are to ask ourselves as individual Christians, we are to constantly ask for our church, "Is Jesus Christ involved in all these things our

church is in & are we allowing Him to be Lord in all these wonderful things?"

3. We are all to work on growing in Christ and persevere through opposition.

a. Be aware and stand firm from the opposition which can come from our own sins, the community, and from Satan himself.

b. By God's plan, opposition will come, including from the devil.
WE NEED TO BE READY !!!

c. The focus is to stand firm in Christ & God's Word ~~

d. Memorize and apply our Scripture for the Week: *"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong"; 1 Corinthians 16:13.*

Application Illustration: There's an old story of a missionary in Africa who gave a Bible to one of the African men. When it was given to him, the man hugged it close and expressed great appreciation for the precious gift of God's Word that the missionary had given him.

-But when the missionary saw him a few days later he noticed, much to his dismay, that the Bible looked like it was already falling apart, and that many of its pages were missing.

- The missionary asked him, *"What happened? What did you do to your Bible? When I gave it to you I thought you considered it to be a treasured possession."*

-The man replied. *"Indeed, it is a very precious possession. It is the finest gift I have ever received. It is so precious that when I returned to my village I very carefully chose a page and tore it out and gave it to my mother. Then I tore out another page and gave it to my father. And I tore out another page and gave it to my wife. Finally, I gave a page of God's Word to everybody who lives in my village."*

-- He loved God Enough to RECEIVE HIS WORD

-- He loved others Enough to Give them God's Word

God's Word... Receive It... Treasure It... Share It