



1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Lesson 5

“It is a witch hunt! Nothing true about it!”

Fake News and Slanderous Accusations:

People have always been pointing fingers at someone else...

Accusations based on presumptions and self-serving thinking!

False allegations against Paul (According to William Barclay)

Barclay saw the following false charges against Paul...evident from the way Paul explained himself in chapter 2.

- **“Paul has a police record and is therefore untrustworthy” (1 Thessalonians 2:2, *suffered before* referring to his imprisonment in Thessalonica).**
- **“Paul is delusional” (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *error*).**
- **“Paul’s ministry is based on impure motives” (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *uncleanness*).**
- **“Paul deliberately deceives others” (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *in deceit*).**
- **“Paul preaches to please others, not God” (1 Thessalonians 2:4, *not as pleasing men*).**
- **“Paul is in the ministry as a mercenary, to get what he can out of it materially” (1 Thessalonians 2:5, 2:9, *nor a cloak for covetousness*).**
- **“Paul only wants personal glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:6, *nor did we seek glory from men*).**
- **“Paul is something of a dictator” (1 Thessalonians 2:7 *we were gentle among you*).**

Evidently the opposition wanted to impeach Paul for his stand against legalism and ungodly actions by others.

“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel (good news) of God in much conflict. We don’t need man’s blessings; we are only seeking God’s approval.”

We came into your camp seeking healing...but more than that, we were seeking to see your souls saved.

We spoke gently, but truthfully. We worked for our bread and we did not seek your money or treasure. We never deceived you in any way!”

Additional thanksgiving for the work God did in the Thessalonians lives.

1. (13) Paul is thankful that they welcomed the Gospel as the truth...God’s message, not man’s.

“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

- ✓ **When you received the word of God:**
 - *Paul earnestly believed and taught others that God had spoken to man and that we have recorded this word of God.*
 - *Paul believed in a voice that speaks to mankind with the authority of eternity, and speaks above mere human opinion.*
 - *Therefore, since we do have this word of God, we have a true voice of authority. A word you can count on and believe as the truth.*
- ✓ **There are those people (Christian’s included) who openly and very emphatically say to us, “That is just your interpretation. I don’t see God in what you are saying.”**

Paul said that you welcomed the Word of God not as the word of man, but as it is in truth...the Word of God.

- ✓ **Not everyone receives Paul’s message as the word of God.**

Various reasons for that:

 - *Lack of trust and lack of ability to understand the truth (tendency to be negative in everything presented.)*
 - *When they do not receive the Word of God as the truth, it reflects upon them...not the message or the messenger.*

“You have not perceived spiritual things are true; but it is no proof that there are none to perceive.” Anonymous

Like that of the man who in his trial tried to counter evidence by non-evidence. Four witnesses saw him commit a murder. He pleaded that he was not guilty, and wished to establish his innocence by producing forty persons who did not see him do it. Duh! Sometimes people want to look smart, but are about as dumb as dirt.

Relativism: If forty people declare that there is no power of the Holy Ghost going out with the word, this only proves that the forty people do not know what others do know.” (Spurgeon)

I’ll go further: “If 50,000,000 people say that the Holy Spirit no longer baptizes people in His Spirit, this only proves that the 50,000,000 people do not know what others do know!” (Gerald Cumby, December 1, 2019)

2 Corinthians 4:4, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

✓ **The Word of God effectively works in all who believe:**

- Paul’s confidence in the word of God wasn’t a matter of wishful thinking or blind faith.
- Paul could see that it effectively works in those who believe.

✓ **God’s Word works:**

- ***It doesn’t only bring information to produce feelings, but...***
- ***The power to change lives.***

“Where the word is believed and received as the word of God, there is this energy that promotes love, repentance, self-denial, comfort, and peace.” (Poole)

The Thessalonians welcomed suffering when they welcomed the Word, yet they stood steadfast.

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, “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.”

- ✓ **The Thessalonians also suffered the same things:** When the Thessalonians responded to the Gospel, they became the targets of persecution.
- ✓ **The Thessalonian Christians became imitators of those who had suffered before them.**

- ✓ **Who (the Judeans) killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us:** *Paul comforted these suffering Christians with the assurance that they were not the first to suffer this way. The Lord Jesus faced persecution, and the Christians in Judea faced it first. Additionally, Paul and his associates were also persecuted.*

Paul knew well that the Jews of Judea were not the *only* ones responsible for the murder of Jesus. The Romans had their full share of guilt, so *both* Jew and Gentile were guilty.

- ✓ **“They displease God and are hostile to everyone”** Paul also comforted the Thessalonian Christians with the awareness that *they* were the ones pleasing God, not those doing the persecuting. Just because you are in the minority doesn’t mean you have to bow or yield to the majority.
“Know when to hold them, and know when to fold them; know when to walk away and know when to run.”
Kenny Rogers wasn’t the first one to sing this song. That song has been played for centuries.
- ✓ **“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.”** Here Paul revealed what offended the religious persecutors of the Thessalonians so much. The persecutors (Some Jewish converts) were outraged that Gentiles could be saved without first becoming Jews (circumcised and purified). This exclusive attitude piled up their sins to the limit...full measure (thinking that the man’s way is better than God’s way). Their “fullness” of sins was the fact that they knew the truth, but yielded to a false and pretentious belief.
- ✓ **“But wrath has come upon them at last.”** Paul comforted the Thessalonians by assuring them that God would indeed take care of their persecutors. When Christians forget this, they become disheartened and their enthusiasm diminishes.
“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:36

Paul explains his absence from the Thessalonians.

1 Thess.2:17-20, “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.*”

Here we have a heartfelt response from Paul to the Church at Thessalonica.

Some thoughts about this passage:

1. ***Paul knew that the Thessalonians appreciated the comfort he gave, but they wondered why he didn't come and bring this comfort in person.*** Paul was assuring them that the reason was not a lack of love or desire for the church members.
2. ***Satan hindered us:*** It wasn't that Paul did not *want* to visit the Thessalonians. It was that **Satan hindered** Paul and his associates. The Thessalonians were mostly Gentile converts, yet when Paul mentioned **Satan** here, he gave no further explanation. This shows that in the few weeks he was there, Paul taught the Thessalonians much about Satan and spiritual warfare.
3. ***Paul, in all his apostolic ministry and authority, could still be blocked by Satan.***
Even so, Paul did not just receive this satanic hindrance in a fatalistic way. He did something about the hindrance.
 - ✓ First, Paul had the discernment to know this was not just circumstance, but a satanic attack.
 - ✓ Second, Paul had faith. *"For a short time" means that Paul knew it would only be a short time until the roadblock was overcome.*
 - ✓ Third, Paul was committed to fight against the roadblock any way he could. If he couldn't be there in person, his letter will go for him and teach and encourage them in his absence.
 - ✓ Finally, God brought the victory. In Acts, we find that Paul later ministered to various churches in Greece including Thessalonica.
4. ***For you are our hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing?*** Paul assured the Thessalonians that he could never forget them because they were his glory and his **joy**. His inability to visit should never be taken as a lack of love towards the Thessalonians.

Paul was saying that he didn't need a crown in heaven because these precious ones were his crown of victory.

Those whom we bring to Jesus and disciple are a crown of victory for us.

