

## **The Church and The Blessed Hope** **“Strength for The Battle”** **I Thessalonians 2:13-20**

Introduction - The church in Thessalonica was a model church and Paul was a model minister. But that doesn't mean it was easy for them to live for Christ or serve Him! They were facing some fierce opposition.

- See 1:6, “Much affliction.”
- See 2:14, “Suffered like things.”
- See 2:15, “Persecuted us.”
- See 2:18, “Satan hindered us.”

A.W. Tozer said, “The Christian life is not a playground, it's a battleground!” This is especially true when you seek to serve the Lord. II Tim. 3:12.

Paul was under attack. But he knew God provides the divine resources we need to strengthen us in the battles we face. I want to point out three resources God gives to strengthen us for the battle.

### **I. The Word of God Within Us, vs. 13**

The church in Thessalonica was born, founded and now transformed through the preaching and teaching of the word of God! See 1:5-6; 2:9; 2:13. Paul the preacher was thankful to God that the believers had the right attitudes and action towards the word of God (vs. 13). Because they did, God's word worked *effectually*, literally *was set in operation* or *it performs His purposes, it's active and powerful, transforming*.

How about you? Is God's word working effectually in you? If not, why not?

#### **1. Do you appreciate the word?**

Vs. 13, “not as the word of men, but as it is in *truth the word of God.*”

The Bible is the word of God, II Tim. 3:16.

Yes, it was written by men, but it's also the word of God. How? The Bible has two natures. It doesn't just contain the word of God. It's given by divine *inspiration*. It's also divine *revelation*. Two fundamental sources of knowledge: *reason* and *experience*. However they are limited and often subjective and leave many questions unanswered.

The Bible is God's objective truth! You can stand on it through all the storms of life. Matt. 7, house on the rock!

The Bible is sufficient! II Tim. 3:17.

God's word is! Ps. 17:7-10.

A. Perfect -

B. Sure - Making wise the simple.

C. Right - Rejoicing the heart.

D. Pure - Enlightening the eyes.

E. Clean - Enduring forever.

F. True - Righteous altogether.

G. Vs. 10, more to be desired...than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

## 2. Do you absorb the word?

“Ye received the word of God,” vs. 13.

Paul used two different words for *received*. The first means simply *to accept from another*. While the other means *to welcome*. One meaning *to hear with the ear*, the other meaning *to accept or embrace with the heart*.

So they absorbed the word into their hearts. Jesus gave a warning in Luke 8:18, “*take heed therefore how ye hear.*”

**Illustration** - The parable of the sower and the seed. Four soils, four hearts. Matt. 13.

1. Way Side - Hard heart.
2. Stony Ground - Shallow heart.
3. Among Thorns - Crowded heart.
4. Good Ground - Fruitful heart.

## 3. Do you apply the word?

“*Effectually worketh also in you that believe,*” vs. 13.

We must respond to God’s word in faith and obedience. James 1:22, “*But be ye doers of the word.*”

To stand strong in the battle, we must hide God’s word in our hearts!

Illustration - Jesus tempted by the devil. “It is written.....”

## II. The People of God Around Us, vv. 14-16

Paul is seeking to encourage the suffering saints by assuring them that they are not alone in their experiences.

A. Proof of their being changed by the word is that they are now suffering for their faith.

B. K.J.V., *followers*, literally *imitators*.

C. Same as the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus.

D. Suffered like things...own country men.

E. They have the Jews! vv. 15-16

There is great value in being a part of a local church fellowship. In times of difficulty we can encourage one another. A lonely saint is vulnerable to the attacks of Satan. We need each other in the battles of life.

## III. The Glory of God Before Us, vv. 17-20

Addressing the Thessalonian believers affectionately as brothers. Paul answers his critics arguments while at the same time expressing his genuine love for them.

1. He had left them with great reluctance, vs. 17a.

- Taken away from you, literally, orphaned: “*we were torn away from you.*” So it was an unnatural separation. It was forcible and painful.

- Our of sight but not out of mind, vs. 17b.

2. Paul made repeated efforts to return to them, vs. 18.

Note: : “Satan hindered us.”

- Jewish opposition.

- His thorn in the flesh.

- The legal ban on the house of Jason.

We don’t know how! But how did Paul know it was Satan? Discernment. Remember God use’s Satan to serve His own purposes. **Illustration** - Book of Job! “*Greater is He that is in You....*”

3. Paul asks two rhetorical questions, vv. 19-20.

Paul is saying that his joy in this world and his glory in the next are tied up with the Thessalonians who Christ through His ministry has saved and transformed.

In times of trouble and testing, we must fix our eyes on the eternal! One day we will be in Heaven. Only our service for Jesus will really matter. "*Therefore my beloved brother, be ye steadfast,*" I Cor. 15:58. God will reward you!

**Word of God within us!**

**People of God around us!**

**Glory of God before us!**