

Friday: *Opposition*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind¹⁶ by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God’s wrath has come upon them at last!

<p>Reflect: The end of verse 15 is interesting. The word for “oppose” is used for forces of nature (e.g., Mt14:24; Acts27:4), the physical posture of a person (Mk15:39), and opposition in a spiritual sense (e.g., Acts26:9; Tit2:8). It has a general sense of “moving in an opposite direction.” In light of this, it seems Paul is alluding to something within all people that desires to hear (and respond to) the gospel.</p> <p>The sad contrast between (many) Jewish people – who displease God, and Christians – who please Him (1Thess2:4; 4:1) is undeniable. God does not care who your earthly parents are...He cares about who your “Daddy” is (cf. Rom8:15; Gal4:6).</p> <p>There are some historical events to which we can point concerning God’s wrath in verse 16. There was a major famine in Acts 11:28 (AD 46), banishment from Rome in Acts 18:2 (AD 49), as well as major atrocities under Tiberius Alexander. Those may be in view, but we also need to keep in mind the “already-not yet” aspect of our salvation (cf. Jn3:16-18,36). For anyone not “in Christ,” only a heartbeat(s) separates them from partial (already) and full (not yet) damnation.</p>	<p>Respond: Read Acts 7:54-8:1; 12:1-5; 13:44-50 for some possible examples of verse 15.</p> <p>When was the last time your actions hindered someone else from receiving the gospel?</p> <p>Who do you know that is longing for God? Remember v15.</p>
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Pray: Pray for Prairie View Christian Camp; another mission New Life supports. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes – elders of New Life. Confess to God your desire to be used by Him to further His Kingdom. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Saturday: *Preparation*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

<p>Reflect: Fear. We have all suffered in its grasp. We have all felt the paralyzing effects of the unknown, the potentially bad outcome of a certain situation, etc. In another of Paul’s letters he wrote, “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power love and self-control” (2Tim1:7). Yet here in 1 Thessalonians 3:5 Paul blatantly admits he had fear.</p> <p>So what gives? Is Paul’s “walk” not matching up with his “talk?” “By no means!” or “Certainly not!” (a phrase Paul uses to refute a false idea, e.g., Rom6:2). What Paul is fearful about is very clear, “I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless” (1Thess3:5).</p> <p>What was of concern to Paul is what should be of concern to all of us; a concern for people who are not in a saving relationship with Jesus. We all have people we personally know who fit that description. This is what led Paul to fear, it would appear nothing else did (2Cor11:23-28).</p>	<p>Respond: Pray for the Holy Spirit to probe deep inside you to reveal your fears.</p> <p>Are you concerned about those who don’t know Jesus?</p> <p>Who are the people closest to you that need a saving relationship with Jesus? Pray for them.</p>
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Pray: Pray for the National Missionary Convention; a mission New Life supports. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag – deacons at New Life. Pray those the Holy Spirit is prompting to come to New Life tomorrow will be obedient and come. Pray our worship service tomorrow will be pleasing to God.

Who Is At Work Around Here?
September 27 – October 3

The evidence for the reliability of Scripture continues to mount. Every major archaeological discovery confirms what the Bible says. Outside substantiation repeatedly supports the historical Biblical record.

For example, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 provided manuscripts which moved our evidence for Scripture (i.e., for the “Old Testament”) back 1,000 years. We discovered the Bibles we read are accurate reflections of those the ancients read. Ancient methods of transmission have not significantly altered the text.

Paul’s confidence in God’s word, which became the confidence of the Thessalonian Christians, can become our confidence. We can trust God’s word.

Unfortunately, the evidence for the obedience of believers is not so convincing. We continue to prove that while Scripture is reliable, we may not be. There are far too many believers who know what the Bible says, but ignore it.

How many of us have read (memorized?) Jesus statement about “forgiving as we are forgiven,” yet we carry bitterness in our hearts? How many have read, “let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth,” yet speak hastily, harshly, hatefully? How many have heard the call of God to “love your neighbor,” yet have driven by the needy? How many have read “when you fast,” but eat day after day after day?

Our text this week speaks of God’s word “at work in you believers.” A clear implication is “believing” means “obeying.” By contrast, “lack of obedience” is paramount to “lack of faith.” When we refuse to obey the clear teaching of Scripture we demonstrate a lack of faith in the trustworthiness and wisdom of God (some disobedience is because of a lack of understanding, which is a different issue altogether).

The call of God is for obedience. He calls us to listen and do what He says. He implores us to trust Him to know what is best. He longs for our faithful submission to His will, His way, His wisdom.

If we are not/do not – by default we are opposing God. If we are opposing God, we are displeasing to Him (cf. 1Thess2:15-16). If you find yourself on “that team” it is time to “switch sides” – i.e., repent. (Since God desires all to be saved, what may this imply about one in opposition to Him?)

Praise God for His mercy, may we be shaped by His Word to become more merciful as well.

Monday: *Constantly*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:13¹³ 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.

<p>Reflect: What are the types of things people “constantly” do? It seems some are <i>constantly</i> complaining. Others are <i>constantly</i> criticizing. Some are <i>constantly</i> listening to music. More than a few are <i>constantly</i> playing video games. Many feel as if they are <i>constantly</i> working...</p> <p>Yet what does the Bible say we are to “constantly” do? We are to constantly be in prayer (Rom1:9; 1Thess1:2; 2:13; 5:17; cf. 2Tim1:3). No other activity is linked with this word for “constantly.” Yet it seems many often justify not praying because they are “too busy.”</p> <p>If you are struggling with prayer, is it possible this is because you are not seeing God working in your life? Granted, there are other reasons why a person may struggle with prayer. Yet when we see how God is working around us (in the context of 1 Thessalonians this is related specifically to the salvation of people), it ought to lead us into prayers of thanksgiving. It seems the majority of those prayers would be praising God for the salvation of people and asking Him to continue working powerfully.</p>	<p>Respond: What does it seem you are <i>constantly</i> doing in your life?</p> <p>When is it easiest for you to pray? When is it hardest?</p> <p>Thank God for your salvation – as well as the salvation for others.</p>
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Pray: Pray for Ryan Nelson, the newest “church planter” hired by the CEA; his work will be in the Olathe area. Confess to God any struggles you may have with prayer. Pray for God to put someone in your path today and for you to share the love of God with them (make this a daily prayer). Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Tuesday: *God At Work*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:13¹³ 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.

<p>Reflect: The word for “received” indicates teaching which has been handed down (e.g., 1Cor11:23; 15:3; Gal1:9; 1Thess4:1). When what is “handed down” is God’s Word, we want it to be accepted for what it is. In fact, believing it is God’s Word can sometimes lead to frustration on the part of the one sharing it...like when “results” do not seem to be happening.</p> <p>In keeping with Bible Study principles we are currently learning in Community Groups...we cannot remove this passage from its context if we want to understand it properly. Recall how in 2:10 Paul referred to the type of life they lived among those at Thessalonica; they were blameless (cf. 1:5b; 2:3,7, etc.).</p> <p>In other words, if we want others to accept God’s Word for what it truly is – His Word – we need to make sure our lives are continually being shaped by it. His Word needs to be “at work” in our lives first... In fact, when you trace the word for “at work” though the Bible you see either God is at work in us, or Satan is – there is no in-between. Interesting...</p>	<p>Respond: When did you “receive” the Word of God?</p> <p>When you received God’s Word, could you tell He was at work in whoever shared the gospel with you?</p> <p>How has Satan been “at work” in you lately? How has God been “at work?” Who will you allow to be “on the job” today?</p>
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Pray: Pray for God to be “at work” at Lincoln Christian Seminary, Manhattan Christian College, and Ozark Christian College; missions supported by New Life. Pray for the Unity and Purity of New Life. Confess your desire for God to be “at work” in your life. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Wednesday: *You Became...*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:14a¹⁴ For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea.

<p>Reflect: Just as at the end of verse 13, where Paul says the Word of God is at work “among them,” here Paul again keeps the corporate nature of the church in view. Paul continually focuses on a group comprised of individuals, not individuals themselves (even the letters from 1 Timothy through Philemon still have a larger purpose than addressing one individual).</p> <p>Granted, there are times when Paul singles out an individual(s) (e.g., 1Cor5; Phil4), but those instances are because of the negative impact of one (or a few) on a larger group (the “church”). We all follow someone (even a person seen to be “the leader” is a follower); we should do all we can to make sure the One we follow is God.</p> <p>It is interesting how Paul mentions the churches “that are in Judea” are those the Thessalonian Christians are imitating. It seems this is another attempt by Paul to solidify the truth in these readers that they are God’s covenant people now. They belong to God because of their acceptance of what Jesus has done. All are welcome. Yet the path to God has been made clear by the cross.</p>	<p>Respond: Would another congregation in the area be wise to “imitate” New Life? Why or why not?</p> <p>Are you a good role model for another Christian to imitate (cf. 1Cor4:16; 11:1)?</p> <p>If you have children, who are they imitating?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Thank God for those whose walk you have been able to “imitate” in your journey as a Christian. Confess to God your desire to be worthy of “imitation.” Pray for the church of God in a persecuted part of the world. Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Thursday: *Anti-Semitic?*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15¹⁴ For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews,¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind

<p>Reflect: These verses sound rather harsh. In our culture they are borderline “anti-Semitic.” This has led some to discredit these verses and say Paul did not write them. However, this is unnecessary for a variety of reasons.</p> <p>First, Paul was a Jew (i.e., a person of Semitic background) – I do not think he hated his own people (cf. Rom9-11). Second, Jesus was a Jew – if a Christian is an “anti-Semite” they are ludicrous (and if they are racist at all they ought to be ashamed and repent). Third, history tells us some (certainly not all) of the Jewish people were intricately involved in the murder of Jesus. Restating what history says does not make one a bigot. Fourth, as the commas before verse 15 and after “prophets” show, Paul is referring to specific Jews – not an entire ethnic group.</p> <p>Suffering and persecution are hard to think about. In many ways “that” seems so distant from us because we (by and large) have none in America. Yet where there is suffering and persecution...the church thrives.</p>	<p>Respond: Is it unsettling to you that Paul repeatedly refers to suffering as an indicator of belonging to God in this letter?</p> <p>Do you have any prejudices against any ethnic group? If so, what should you do about them?</p> <p>Which events do you think Paul is referring to in v15?</p>
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Pray: Pray the bonds established between “house parents” and children at Cookson Hills (a Christian Children’s home and mission New Life supports) will be strong and godly. Ask God to reveal to you the wickedness of your heart – pray for strength to change what is necessary. Pray for Brent McCrory – the preaching minister at New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.