
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 2:14-16

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In our last article we talked about how the Thessalonians had received the word of God and it was effectually working in them (I Thessalonians 2:13). Evidence of such is seen in what we are going to study in this article. Notice: *“For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost”* (I Thessalonians 2:14-16).

When persecutions arise, those who are not rooted in the faith fall away (Mark 4:17). These saints did not fall away. Instead, they followed the pattern that congregations in Judaea had laid forth. There were times of great persecution against the saints in Judaea (Acts 8:1-3). We have already talked about how the saints in Thessalonica received the word of God with much affliction (I Thessalonians 1:6).

What Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wrote in this context is interesting. Since the brethren in Thessalonica were aware of what they were facing from their own countrymen, the focus turns more to what the Jews did against the cause of Christ. Before we get into what was mentioned, let’s take a moment and think about the relevance. I do not know why the Holy Spirit had Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus take this approach. What I do know is that it would have been beneficial for the saints in Thessalonica to know that they were not the only Christians suffering persecution. Peter was moved by the Holy Spirit to take this teaching approach in his writings too. Notice: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world”* (I Peter 5:8-9). The fact is, all faithful Christians have or will at some point in time face some sort of persecution for the faith (Matthew 5:10-12, Matthew 10:34-39, John 17:6-20, Acts 14:22, II Timothy 3:10-12, and I Peter 4:12-19). Now, let’s examine what was said of the things the Jews did against our Lord and the work of our Lord.

The Jews murdered Jesus (Matthew 26:1-27:66, Acts 2:22-23, and Acts 10:36-39). It is important to remember that some of them repented and were converted. Remember how this happened: *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same*

Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:36-42).

While some repented and were converted, many of the Jews continued to be opposed to the work of our Lord after He ascended into Heaven. The leaders of the Jews had the Apostles arrested, beaten, instructed not to teach the Gospel any more, etc. multiple times (Acts 3:1-5:42). Herod persecuted the church and killed James (Acts 12:1-4). The Jews vehemently pursued the Apostle Paul seeking many ways in which they could kill him (Acts 14:19-23:35). They continued to do what their forefathers sinfully did (Matthew 23:33-39).

The Jews were not at all pleased that the Gospel was sent to the Gentiles. You can see this early on in Acts 13:13-52. It was such a problem that division between Jews and Gentiles plagued congregations. We see that in Antioch (Acts 15:1-35). When you read the letter to the church in Rome, the Jews thought they were better than the Gentiles and vice versa (Romans 1:1-12:3). Peter erred and Barnabas was carried away from the faith through these things (Galatians 2:11-17). This was a huge problem and is in the background of many things written in the New Testament.

So, why were the Jews so vile? Why were they contrary to all men? Why were they forbidding the word of God from being taught? If you put the following Scriptures together, you should get a pretty clear answer to those questions I posed: *"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me... Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (John 16:1-3 and Romans 10:1-3).*

The Jews had become full of sin. They and those in Thessalonica that persecuted the saints will face the wrath of God (II Thessalonians 1:3-10). Our Lord takes persecution against His people personally (Acts 9:1-5). We should learn from this context that hatred against God's people is global. Set your mind, as they did, to be steadfast no matter what we face!