

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
1 Thessalonians: Discipling Afflicted New Christians
Part III: Encouraging Afflicted New Believers By Explaining Their Spiritual Warfare
(1 Thessalonians 2:13-20)

I. Introduction

- A. New Christians are often unaware of their involvement in the angelic conflict until they experience unusually unsettling experiences, and wonder why so much trouble suddenly afflicts them.
- B. Thus, Paul revealed how to encourage such afflicted new believers in explaining that the wrestlings they face are spiritual warfare, and we view that explanation in 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20 for application today:

II. Encouraging Afflicted New Believers By Explaining Their Spiritual Warfare, 1 Thess. 2:13-20.

- A. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul expressed his ongoing prayerful thanksgiving to God that his Thessalonian readers had received God's Word from his ministry team not as the mere words of men, but as the Word of God due to God's own work in these new converts to convince them of the truth of His Word.
- B. Indeed, Paul explained they had followed in the pilgrimage of the Judaeans Christians, 1 Thess. 2:14a.
- C. However, in biting contrast to God's work in the hearts of Paul's Thessalonian readers and the believers in Judaea, both sets of Christians had suffered persecution from their countrymen, 1 Thessalonians 2:14b.
- D. Paul described this persecution at length, and revealed that it was Satanically fueled opposite the spiritual dynamics of true believers in fellowship with the Lord (as follows), 1 Thessalonians 2:15-20:
 - 1. Paul reported the Judaeans believers had suffered the same persecution by their countrymen as had the Thessalonians, suffering begun in the slaying of Christ and the prophets, 1 Thess. 2:15a; Lk. 11:47-51.
 - 2. Such persecutors typically do not please God, and are hostile to all in their efforts to stop the spread of the Gospel to the nations lest they be saved, 1 Thessalonians 2:15b-16a NIV.
 - 3. In fact, God allowed these evil foes to continue in their opposition to where their evil became evident to all so that when God judged them, His punishment would be vindicated to onlookers, 1 Thess. 2:16b NIV; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., fn. to 1 Thessalonians 2:16.
 - 4. Yet, opposite the persecution that had parted Paul from his readers (1 Thess. 2:17a; Acts 17:5-10), his team had tried hard and often to rejoin them (1 Thess. 2:17b-18a), but **Satan** had hindered them, 2:18b.
 - 5. To explain how at least some of this hindrance occurred, Acts 17:5-15 shows Satan used the human adversaries of Paul's team to produce a great opposition to his returning to his Thessalonian readers:
 - a. After Paul's team had been sent away by the Thessalonian converts to ease their persecution (Acts 17:5-10), Paul's team had gone south to Berea to evangelize there, Acts 17:11-12.
 - b. However, their opponents from Thessalonica had pursued them to Berea and stirred up foes there, so Paul sailed from there to Athens to ease the persecution of believers in Berea while Timothy and Silas, less "threatening" to these opponents, stayed behind in Berea, Acts 17:13-15a.
 - c. Paul's trip was made with the agreement for Timothy to visit Thessalonica to report back to him on the Thessalonian converts' welfare as they faced Satanic pressures, Acts 17:15b-16; 1 Thess. 3:1-5.
 - d. Thus, as Jesus noted in John 8:44, Paul revealed that lost foes of Christ and His truth in His servants are children of Satan whom Satan uses to persecute to try to counter the discipling process!
 - e. [Not only are unsaved people used of Satan this way, but carnal Christians can be influenced by Satanic activity to trouble godly believers even in a church meeting setting, cf. James 3:14-16 NIV.]

Lesson: Paul told new believers that fellowship among believers is from God but that their persecutors opposed to the truth are fueled by Satan, that these believers might start to adjust to the angelic conflict.

Application: (1) May we tell new Christians of the angelic conflict between God with His godly ones on the one hand versus Satan with the ungodly on the other hand. (2) May we explain to new converts that God may allow shocking, seemingly unchecked evil by the ungodly to occur for a period of time to expose their evil to all and justify God's judgment when it falls, 1 Thess. 2:16b; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 3:1-9! (3) May we also realize and tell new converts that Satan often more strongly opposes key Church leaders over other believers as seen in Paul's need to sail to Athens while Silas and Timothy could stay behind, cf. Acts 17:13-15a. We should adjust to this reality for unity and edification in the Church!