1 Thessalonians 2:13 – 13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. NASU

A. For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us – Paul now shifts his attention from his own ministry to the Thessalonians themselves and how they received it. “For this reason” he says, “we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us.” Notice here that Paul is “constantly” thanking “God” for how the Thessalonians received “the Word of God.” This shows the nature of divine calling even further, for Paul certainly does not pat them on the back for such wisdom as they possessed of their own to believe, or for being such clever folks as to listen to God. No indeed, He thanks God for powerfully working in them conviction concerning His own “word.” Further, see here, the saving message of the Gospel that Paul preached to them was “the word of God.” How important it is for us to understand the divine and supernatural origin of the Christian Gospel. It is not man’s cleverly invented story but rather the very “word of God” Himself, who alone can supernaturally save us by a supernatural work of regeneration. Christian salvation is not simply a mental assent to certain ideas or historical facts, but rather being born again by the power of God’s Spirit which is a supernatural miracle of God’s doing.

John 3:3-5 - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. NASB

1 Corinthians 2:14 - 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. NASB

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 - 17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, NASB

B. you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God – The point here could not be more clear. The message of Christianity is a supernatural message, “the word of God,” from outside of the earthly dimension that comes from God Himself and from eternity where God dwells. It is not just some human wisdom made up by some self-righteous soul, but it is God’s heavenly plan to deal with man’s sin. It is a saving enterprise which issues forth from God Himself and accomplishes exactly what God sent it forth for. This is how Isaiah describes it. Isaiah 55:11 - 11 So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. NASB

Paul is here commending the Thessalonians for accepting it as such, he states, “you accepted it not as the word of men.” This indicates a fundamental issue about the Christian Faith, that being, we understand the message of Christianity to be of divine and supernatural origin, and all true Christians accept it as such, “the word of God.” This why the Bible is ever and always under attack from the secular culture. If they can discredit the message as somehow being less than divine, they are also free from the curses that are written therein for those who reject it. See here one definite mark that distinguishes a true Christian from a mere professor, they hold the Bible in such high esteem that they see it “for what it really is, the word of God.” Further, those who see it as “it really is the word of God,” are also persuaded then that it is to be fully obeyed. If it truly is a message from God, it ought to be heeded, lest God be found in contempt toward us for our belittling of His holy Word.

C. which also performs its work in you who believe – It is because God had so moved in their hearts as to give them a witness of the divine origin of the message, that the powerful work of the Spirit had begun in their midst. God’s Word is of such wonder working power that it “performs its work in you who believe.” This is to say, the word “works” in those who “receive” and

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“accept” it, giving proof that they “believe” what it says. Consider that the Word “performs its work,” that is the work of the Word “in you who believe.” When the Word is combined with faith, it powerfully “works.” MacArthur comments, “God’s Word always performs His purposes in the lives of all who believe (Isa 55:11). Scripture works on behalf of believers in a multitude of ways; it saves them (James 1:18, 1 Pet 1:23); it sanctifies them (John 17:17); it matures them (1 Pet 1:12); it frees them (John 8:31-32); it perfects them (2 Tim 3:16-17); it counsels them (Ps 119:24); it builds them up (Acts 20:32); it ensures their spiritual success (Josh 1:8-9, Ps 1:2-3); and it gives them hope (Ps 119:147, Acts 20:32).” Consider how profound this thought really is. That God Himself is powerfully working in those who believe His supernatural Word which came from His mouth. Here see the reason for the tenacity of Christian believers holding to the profession of their faith even at great peril or fiery testing. Christians are so persuaded that God has spoken, and their hearts have been so powerfully changed, that they won’t let go of their faith, even if it means certain death. They realize that they ought to obey God rather than men, for He holds their eternal soul in His hand. And here in this context, Paul goes on to discuss how they “endured sufferings” from their countrymen. Yet, because God’s Word had so powerfully worked in them, they would not be discouraged or detracted from not only believing, but also “sounding forth” the message in “every place,” v-1:8.

1 Thessalonians 2:14 – 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, NASU

A. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea – Here see that they look like the genuine Christians who were first powerfully transformed by the Gospel when it was first preached in Jerusalem by the Apostles. In the face of severe persecution, they held tenaciously to their faith, even if it meant “enduring sufferings.” Consider the exhortation in the book of Hebrews to the Judean Christians and how remarkably similar their situation was to the Thessalonians.

Hebrews 10:32-39 - 32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, 33 partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. 34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. 38 But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. NASB

Nevertheless, these Thessalonians, “became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea.” They were willing no matter the cost to hold on to their faith, even if they were to face severe persecution for it. They, just like the Jerusalem church, instead of being stamped out by religious persecution, thrived in the midst of it. This has long been the case in point, that whenever the church is persecuted, it thrives and spreads in strong degree. So came that famous quote from Tertullian, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

B. for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen. Here Paul states that they faced the “same sufferings” in Macedonia even as the Jerusalem church “did from the Jews.” We see the suffering of the “churches of Judea” was severe from the record of Acts and of the passage in Hebrews we just looked at. But notice here that this suffering came from “your own countrymen,” whereas theirs was “from the Jews.” See Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org
here the hostility of both Jews and Gentiles to the Gospel. We know from the account in Acts 17 that their persecutors where both Jew and Gentiles, who were also residents of Thessalonica. But consider for what reason mankind should be so hostile to the good news of salvation and eternal life. Why should men so vehemently oppose that which can save their souls from death and fill them with glorious peace and joy? See here the desperate state of sinful rebellion and darkness that all unregenerate people are in, whether they be Jew or Gentile, they are under the dominion of darkness and zealously reject the light which can lead them to freedom. They oppose the very medicine that can cure their dreadful disease.

**John 3:19-21**
- 19 “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” NASB

**1 Thessalonians 2:15-16** – 15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost. NASU

A. who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out – The Jews have a long history of opposing God and His messengers. So much so that they would frequently be enraged with the men God had sent to give them His messages, to the point that they would kill them. For this deadly persecution, Jesus sternly rebuked them and even pronounced upon them a final woe of judgment for this behavior.

**Matthew 23:31-39** - 31 "Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 "Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? 34 "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city. 35 that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 "Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. 37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! NASB

Of this killing the prophets, Steven condemned them with a fiery rebuke:

**Acts 7:52-53** - 52 “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become: 53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.” NASB

Not only did they “**kill the prophets,**” but they killed God Himself, who had come in the form of a man to save them. They “**killed the Lord Jesus,**” their own promised Messiah whom God had sent.

**Acts 3:14-16** - 14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. NASB

See here the Jews killed their own Messiah, the Lord Himself, and they “**killed the prophets**” as well, and to heap sin upon sin Paul records, they “**drove us out.**”

B. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men. 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins – The Jews referred to here in this passage by Paul are the general populous of religious Jews who uphold the religion of Judaism through all of its traditions and rites. These are the religious Jews who meet regularly on the Sabbath in the synagogues. And these are the synagogues that Paul would enter to begin to try and convince them that their Messiah had come

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in the person of the Lord Jesus and that they could be saved through faith in Him. These Jews had become so steeped in their own tradition that it blinded them to the true worship of God. So much was this the case that, when their promised Messiah finally came, they did not recognize Him and receive Him, but instead they “killed” Him. This reflects the same religious spirit which was always among them when they would kill the prophets and those God would send to speak His Word to them, the very Word they held in such high esteem. Now it is these Jews that Paul speaks of when he says “they are not pleasing to God,” a fact which is manifested in the rejection of God’s messengers. But moreover he says they are “hostile to all men,” because they are “hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.” This was true at the establishment of the church in Jerusalem and characterized the Jews response to the Gospel in every place. They persecuted the Apostles and prophets in Jerusalem and had them beaten and killed.

Acts 4:1-4 - 4 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. NASB

Acts 5:40 - 40 And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them. NASB

And so even now, the Jews oppose the true message of God, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And even though God’s ultimate purpose has now been completed through Christ, they utterly reject the very thing God had designed to do through them for long ages past. Of this rejection and killing of the Messiah and the prophets, it has culminated in them “hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.” of this Paul writes and says, “with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins.” The idea here is that they pile up their sins to the limit before God or that the judgment for their sins is finally ripe. Consider that not only had they “killed the prophets,” but even their own Messiah, sent by God to save them. In order to pile up sins even more, they not only persecuted and killed Christians in the first church in Judea, but even in Thessalonica they were opposing God’s Gospel of salvation to the Gentile world and continuing to persecute God’s people. This piling up of sins causes Paul to speak about them as if their judgment was finally ripe.

C. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost - This is to say that as the Jews have reached that place of judgment where they are beyond hope, having rejected the final fulfillment of the Word of God, for whom and through whom did they exist as God’s people. The very purpose for which God called them, to manifest His great name and salvation, they have come to utterly and finally reject. This was a heartbreaking situation for Paul, a devout Jew himself. Consider his words from Romans 9.

Romans 9:1-5 - 9 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. NASB

All that the Jews stood for, their election by God, their calling to be His servant and bear His Word down through the ages, to be God’s covenant people, to be the chosen race of the Messiah Himself, all of these they have rejected to the utmost, even now continuing in their opposition and stiff-necked rebellion against God’s Gospel. This causes Paul to make this woeful statement, “But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.” What more could be said of this Jewish rejection of the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Their sins had piled up and reached their limit. Paul knew their religious system and the age of their glory had passed. Even though

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