



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## 1 & 2 Thessalonians

### Lesson 4: 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

As we dive into our text this week, keep in mind the images that Paul painted of his relationship with the Thessalonians. Think of Paul as loving mother and disciplining father. He will once again this week, use family imagery to bring out his emotional connection to the Thessalonians. Don't forget before we begin to take a few minutes to read through this letter in its entirety.

**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13**

**According to 1 Thessalonians 2:13, what did Paul thank God for concerning the Thessalonians?**

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Even when the world around them was scoffing and running Paul and his companions out of town, these men and women had faithfully accepted the word of God. They truly believed it and allowed it to work in them and change their lives. They understood this was not the mere words of men, but the divine words of the living and true God and as such these words were continually working and changing them.

Sometimes, we are guilty of simply treating scripture as a book of notable quotes and lovely internet memes. While it is certainly a good thing to share our favorite verses, we must make sure we are not only treating scripture in this way. Am I really allowing scripture to penetrate my heart

and change me, or do I simply seek out the verses that applaud what I'm already doing and comfort my heart? If God's word does not continually transform and challenge me, then I am not allowing it to have its full affect. If Paul were saying a prayer of thankfulness for you, would he be able to say that the word of God performs its work in you?

**Read James 1:23-25. What does James say about this subject?**

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**What is one thing you can do this week to be sure you are allowing the word of God to change and transform your life?**

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**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16**

**According to 1 Thessalonians 2:14, how were the Thessalonians imitating the congregations in Judea?**

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**What were the Jews doing to hinder the Christians throughout Judea?**

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Throughout Judea, and even into the surrounding countries, the Jews were one of the first persecuting forces for Christians. In fact, it was Jews that instigated Paul’s stoning and left him for dead outside of Lystra (Acts 14:19). These Jews were a major source of contention for Paul throughout his ministry, which is evident in the strong language he uses here in 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16.

Paul draws an interesting parallel here, most of the Christians throughout Judea would have been Jews converted to Christianity. In this way, the Jews that were persecuting them were those to whom they likely had strong attachments. These may have been their families, friends, and fellow worshippers. It would have been crushing for these people whom they loved so dearly to be persecuting them in such a persistent and violent way. It was the same way for those in Thessalonica, they were not being persecuted by the Jews, but by their own people. Friends and family with whom they once shared strong ties. It is one thing to be mocked and maligned by strangers, but these were no strangers, these were loved ones. I believe this is one of the reasons that Paul focuses so much on family imagery in his relationships with them. He is making sure they know that, in Christ, they still have a family that loves them dearly.

**Have you ever been in a situation where friends or family were maligning you because of your faith?**

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**What are some ways that we can endure and stand firm through disdain from people we love?**

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**What are some ways that we can be more aware of others dealing with this in their lives and what can we do to help them?**

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## Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Once again, Paul uses family terminology to describe his emotional connection with the Thessalonians. This reference, however, is sometimes obscured by our English translations. The phrase “having been taken away from you” in verse 17 is the word APORPHANIZO in the Greek. You can probably see a familiar English word within that Greek word, orphan. This word literally means “to make an orphan of.” Paul feels like he has been torn away from his family and it once again shows clearly through his language. His time with them was abruptly brought to an end and he longed to see their faces.

We see in 1 Thessalonians 2:18 that Paul wanted very much to visit them but in some way Satan “hindered” him. The word for hinder (ENKOPTO) is another interesting study. It was a military term that described the practice of an army tearing up a road so that the opposing force could not get through (Kittle, Bromliey and Friedrich). The enemy was doing everything he could to make sure that the Thessalonians felt discouraged and alone. Paul wanted them to



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understand that this could not be farther from the truth.

**How does Paul describe the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20?**

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There are two types of crown mentioned in Scripture, DIADEM and STEPHANOS. DIADEM is a ruler's crown, STEPHANOS is the type of crown they would give the Olympic athletes, the reward for their achievements. In this verse Paul uses the word STEPHANOS, meaning the Thessalonians themselves are the reward for his hard work. They were a symbol of the things he had achieved. What a beautiful sentiment!

There are so many people that have a massive affect on our lives in various ways. Sometimes they are people that have been our teachers, and sometimes, as in this case, they are the ones who have sat at our feet. Those that we have taught or influenced in some way can be a huge encouragement to us. It feels great to see someone making a difference in God's kingdom and knowing that you had a little part to play in molding them into the person they are today. Paul felt this deeply and never shied away from sharing it with those people.

**When was the last time you reached out to someone who you have influenced or taught to encourage and support them?**

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**Think of one person that you have influenced or that has influenced you that you can reach out to this week. What is one thing you can do to encourage them?**

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One of Satan's favorite tricks is to make people feel lonely and isolated. He loves to sew seeds of doubt and discouragement and watch them run rampant in our longing hearts. God could have left us here to fight this battle on our own. He could have sat back to see who could stand firm on our own two feet. But the truth of the matter is that none of us could have done that. That is why God gave us one of his most precious gifts, the church. We as the church should be God's biggest tool to fight the loneliness and discouragement that Satan throws our way. In order for this to be the case, we have to be actively reaching out and encouraging one another. We must be seeking out ways to support one another in times of need. We should constantly be showing our love and appreciation for one another. As you go throughout your week, be sure that you are searching for ways to follow Paul's example and surround your brothers and sisters in Christ with love. You can never remind people enough how much you cherish them.