

Contrary to All Men

1 Thessalonians 2:14 - 20

<+> <+> <+>

~ Our Spiritual Safari is visiting lofty vistas of truth in this chapter of the Bible. We now know, from unquestionable authority, that the rapture of the church is our hope - a *working* hope. While we look and wait for our Blessed Hope to call us to be with Him in the air, our work should be getting right down on the sidewalk of the street corner we live on – right up to the threshold of the door of your life. There should be no question in our minds that Paul was giving out the Word of God in this epistle. Naturally, that irritated certain people, because Scripture is likened to salt. When we who are salty get into the fresh open wounds of someone’s heart, it can hurt. Jesus told us to be the salt of the earth. Can you receive the Bible as the Word of God, friends? If God gives a church a Bible-believing teacher or pastor, and they misuse him or neglect him, and will not receive the Word of God that he gives to them, then God will shut the door of that church. The modern church must return to mirroring the family of God with love in action if it ever hopes to be effective at reaching the lost world again....

14 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:

~ The Word of God must be taught with authority, or it has no credibility. Naturally, that requires an educated, sincere, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-led man who loves God and trusts God, and yields his life to God, so that God can work through that man and use him for Christ’s glory. Paul was one of those men – Timothy and Silus were two more – and there are others; but not many. The Word of God must be revered as Holy Writ, dictated directly by God Himself or, my friends, you are literally wasting your time with the person who cannot receive it this way; I don’t care if you speak in fifteen different unknown tongues! Assurance is how our contact with a lost world is created, displayed, and established; and when contact is made properly, correctly, and completely, it is a tremendously powerful experience. That’s the responsibility we have to a lost and dying world. We all have a blood-

brotherhood relationship in that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Every man, woman and child in the human family falls into the category of sinner. That's not a loving brotherhood, either, by the way. Well, these brothers of Paul were brothers because they had suffered the same persecutions and afflictions Paul was experiencing in furthering the Gospel. That gave them genuine love for each other.

The Thessalonian church was likely one hundred percent Gentile. The Roman authority persecuted Christians severely; in a different way from other religions. Although the extreme brutality that would break out later under the empresses had not yet begun, they were still suffering tremendously in Thessalonica at the time in which we are studying. Well, nothing brings two people together quite like suffering does, friends. It is cement which should spiritually bind people together permanently. Unfortunately, the modern church has come unglued. As our prophetic expedition in the Old Testament continues later on safari, we'll read that "... *Ephraim waxed fat and kicked.*" They entered into affluence; and then they became very critical of the poor brethren. Today, severe persecution is right around the corner for the church of affluence; I don't see how it could be otherwise. That will draw more acute persecution on the poor church – which already suffers tremendously.

I hear a whole lot of praying for healing and prosperity, but I don't hear ANY prayer group praying that they all might suffer a little more and be persecuted more harshly for the cause of Christ to initiate revival. Now, I hate to burst your bubble, but we're not going to see revival with the present state of the church. There is a renewed interest in the Word of God that is staggering, but it's not revival – it's far from it. It's Baal worshipping curiosity and religious racketeers seeking to scam a quick buck. Actually, this huge turning to religion is not conducive to an educated, sincere, systematic, proper, correct, complete, Spirit-filled, and Spirit led Bible study – because everyone already assumes they are Bible masters. The average person today is simply searching for someone or something that will affirm erroneous misconceptions they hold. If true revival were happening, no one would have to ask, "... *is this revival?*" Suffering in the church is what's needed to draw believers together. The church can't teach the truth of suffering. But getting back to the truth would reduce much of the nonsense

being taught by the church. It would also send the unsaved person to the altar — or immediately back to the parking lot — either of which would be the best thing that could happen. Let's move along.

If you tell me that you have trusted Christ and accepted Him as your Savior — then that's good enough for me; that makes you my brother in Him. My family are those who obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the church mirrors that way of life before the world, then revival comes. There is no detour or shortcut; when we were in the Books of Chronicles, we learned revival was a long, rocky, unpaved, uphill, dangerous road. It's a course that has many bridges; most of which are in complete disrepair. Some have been burned down completely. There also must be prayer for conditions that are conducive to revival. Well, either way, it was times of extremity that brought revival in the past. Wesley lived in a direly dark day. Revolution seemed inevitable in England at that time. Suffering is required to bring about revival. I'm just parroting what Paul said. You're not the only one who isn't comfortable with this tenet of truth....

15 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:

16 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.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Bible with God permitting sin to run its full course. The figure of speech the apostles used was for the "... *cup of iniquity to be filled up.*" If God were to intervene in the affairs of the world at this time, then Satan, who is the god of this world, would say, "... *see, Jesus, you didn't even give me a chance.*" God is permitting the devil to pursue his desire all the way down. That would be my interpretation of the Great Tribulation period, too, by the way. Brothers in Christ will make up the true ecumenical movement in that day — in Heaven. And, on that note, they ran Paul the apostle out of town. I'm sure he hated to leave them. Paul loved them very much. Paul also, obviously, saw Satan's way of pulling him down. Satan means adversary here. The adversary doesn't care about your sins, my beloved — the devil only wants to stop the Word of God from being taught in sound doctrine —

and to keep *YOU* from learning it. The devil has no other objective. Period.
Full stop....

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy ~

<+> <+> <+>