

Last time, we finished our study of the previous verses considering the 3 evidences of a healthy church found here in Thessalonica. They were hearers, doers, and endurers. Now we get some insight into those responsible for the persecution that they had to endure.

v. 15 – There's quite a charge leveled against the Jews here, and it's much further reaching than simply what happened in Thessalonica. They had persecuted the apostles, their own prophets, and the Lord Jesus Himself! Why are they singled out? Gentiles were also involved in Christ's death. (**Act 4:27**) But remember **Luk 12:47-48. They had far greater light than the Gentiles!** This truth magnifies the mercy of God in verses like **Rom 10:12**. There is both an exhortation and a warning in our text today.

v. 15-16- I don't want us to overlook here an attitude described as displeasing to God and "contrary to all men". "Contrary" means "against". It's the word used when the disciples were rowing but couldn't make any progress. So these Jews were a hindrance to ALL men, and that includes themselves. Nobody was made better by their convictions and actions. **V. 16a** tells us the manifestation of this opposing nature. This is a description of those who don't want some men to be saved. Remember the accusation against Jesus—"this guy associates with sinners!" I keep running into this topic of prejudice in declaring the gospel. Is there a soul you don't care about? Be careful! These people with that attitude were making themselves ready for wrath! Don't read **Php 3:18b-c!** First read **Php 3:17** to see we're to follow the apostle's example here, next **18a, d-19**, then go back to **3:18b-c**. No attitude of "I hope they get what they deserve." Weeping he warns of them. The exhortation of our text then is to follow this pattern of the apostle in pitying the lost.

Why are you here, believer? Why didn't God just take you on to be with Him when he save you? Why did He fill you with His Spirit? (**Act 1:8**) We are here, church, b/c we are His witnesses! We are His ambassadors! **2Co 5:17-21** applies to all who have been made new creations. Is that message of **v. 21** worth sharing? Is there any better news? When you get the best (fill in the blank) you've ever had, do you keep that to yourself? People post it on social media, tell it to friends, family, AND strangers, and they go back for more themselves! The former demoniac had one message that stirred up the ten-city region around him: "Go and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and how He's had mercy on you." (**Mar 5:19**)

What's the point to the description of the church given in **Mat 5:14** according to **v. 15,16**? Was **Mat 28:18-20** just for the apostles? No! Why do you have the skills (or talents) you do? To use them for the Master's glory for the furtherance of His kingdom! Why are you getting the degree you are or pursuing the career you are? Why are you living where you are or want to live where you do? Why do you have the opportunities you have as your life intersects others? It should all be primarily for us to declare Christ, to point others to Him, for us to share the BEST meal we've ever had, the Bread of heaven! I know there are secondary purposes. You work a job to be able to eat and pay the bills, but that's a far second to making Christ known! When your path crosses someone else's, anyone's, is your first thought, "Does she know Christ, and if not, how can I point her to Him?" "If so, how can I encourage him in the Lord?" There's our priority! That's why we are, where we are, and when we are! We're still here to be witnesses of Him! And to everyone!

What will help us in this endeavor to without prejudice desire all to be saved? Don't try to sugarcoat what you were outside of Christ! A practice that will keep us from hardheartedness towards certain classes of sinners is to remind ourselves of the "But" in passages like **Eph 2:1-5** and **Tit 3:3-5**. God made the difference in our lives, not us!

v. 16 – Now for the solemn warning. When we read this verse, we may be confused by the past tense verb, but it's actually the aorist form of the verb. That form can refer to past tense but one Greek scholar puts it this way: "B/c time is secondary, the aorist can describe a future event and emphasize the certainty of the action." I think that may be exactly what we have here. We haven't made it to AD 70 yet, but the event is already determined. Jesus made that clear in **Mat 24:1-2**. There's no "may" or "perhaps" here. Just a certainty that these things will be. God had been merciful over and over again to the unbelieving Jews, but there would be severe consequences to their dullness of heart and rejection of the Messiah. Remember why Jesus said He spoke to them in parables in **Mat 13:13-17**. Not so they'd get what He was saying, but so they wouldn't! Now, clearly this isn't a wholesale rejection of anyone of Jewish descent. It's Jews that Jesus is saying are among the blessed ones. But for the most part, they had rejected God. They had a system of religion that had so abandoned the truth that they didn't rejoice at the coming of the Christ but instead killed Him! What a fearful state for your coming judgment to be spoken of as past tense! Remember, as great a love and mercy is displayed in **Joh 3:16**, we can't forget the reality for those who reject that love and mercy in the verses that follow. (**Joh 3:16-19**)

One final thought regarding God's mercy in this reality declared in **v. 16**. This isn't the first time it's revealed! Daniel prophesied about it, the Lord did in **Mat 24**, and now Paul is BEFORE it happens. It was at this time of great soon-to-be judgment that Jesus entered the world warning men to repent. Think about that! God HIMSELF came to warn and call to repentance unto salvation. Some of the Jews were saved and followed Him! God has done the same for some here today. Great soon-to-be judgment coming. How will you respond?