

I Thessalonians 2:13–18

I Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

No other verse so clearly explains why the Thessalonians were such a model church. Their faith grew into love, and their love grew into hope.¹ They became examples to all other believers throughout Macedonia and Achaia,² and from them sounded out the Word of the Lord, which proclaims Jesus as Lord.³ All this happened because they received the Word of God spoken to them *not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God.*⁴

(Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Rom. 10:17) Before men can believe, there must be something for them to believe. That something is the word of God, which we preach and they hear.

If men do not believe in the divinity of the Scriptures⁵ or the prophecy brought

forth from them,⁶ they cannot have true faith in God. It was the preached Word that the apostles brought to the Thessalonians that produced their conversion, just as it is the preached Word,⁷ coupled with the written Word today, that saves men. *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls* (Jas. 1:21).

It is faith that indicates whether a man is humble enough to come under God's government or whether he has chosen to reject it. By faith and/or unbelief we can determine who has accepted God's sovereignty as well as any who have rejected it. By God's Word the hearts of men are revealed, and by It are the thoughts and intents of the soul brought to the surface. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Heb. 4:12). None can be exposed to the true Word of God and not

1 *I Thess. 1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;*

2 *I Thess. 1:7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*

3 *I Thess. 1:8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.*

4 *Rom. 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

5 *II Tim. 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

6 *II Pet. 1:20–21 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

7 *Rom. 10:14–15 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

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subsequently have their own inner feelings and motives revealed in the process.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Heb. 4:12) *And is a discerner of the thoughts*— ... It is true that God searches the heart, and knows the thoughts, but that is not the truth which is prominent here. It is, that the thoughts and intents of the heart are brought out to view by the Word of God. And can anyone doubt this? see Romans 7:7.⁸ Is it not true that people are made to see their real character under the exhibition of the truth of God? That in the light of the Law they see their past lives to be sinful? That the exhibition of truth calls to their recollection many long-forgotten sins? And that their real feelings are brought out when the truth of God is proclaimed? Men then are made to look upon their motives as they had never done before, and to see in their hearts feelings whose existence they would not have suspected if it had not been for the exhibition of the truth. The exhibition of the truth is like pouring down the beams of the sun at midnight on a dark world; and the truth lays open the real feelings of the sinner as that sun would disclose the clouds of wickedness that are now performed under cover of the night. Many a man has a deep and fixed hostility to God and to his gospel who might never be sensible of it if the truth was not faithfully proclaimed. The particular idea here is, that the truth of God will detect the feelings of the hypocrite and self-deceiver. They cannot always conceal their emotions, and the time will come when truth, like light poured into the soul, will reveal their unbelief and their secret sins.

Received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God. Because of

their astute spiritual perception, the Thessalonians realized that the gospel Paul and his companions brought to them had its origin not in man but in God. Knowing that the gospel was from above and sent from God prompted them to believe it. Because the Thessalonians believed that the Word preached to them had its source in God, they heartily and with great joy received its message. Thus, at the center of all true belief lies the internal confidence that the Word of God can be trusted because of its spiritual nature and divine source. This made the Thessalonians' faith unique, and it also distinguishes those called by Christ today. Jesus' sheep recognize His voice⁹ and perceive that it comes from God, and upon hearing it they will seek to obey His commands.

Jesus said that His words were both Spirit and life, and this statement is true concerning the entirety of the gospel: *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life* (John 6:63b). The words of Christ contain the life and presence of God. Just as God breathed into Adam's nostrils to bring life into his organic body, so too has God brought forth life from the words of God's Son. For this reason the Bible is vastly different from any secular book ever written. Since it originated in God, His spiritual life remains present within it. In truth the Word of God is supernatural in every respect. Because it is given to us by God's own person, it contains His own spiritual power.

Nothing is more impactful, moving, or transformative than the Word of God, the

⁸ Rom. 7:7 *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

⁹ John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:*

John 10:1–5 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. ²But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. ⁴And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. ⁵And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

same Word that at creation brought forth all things, material and living.¹⁰ God's Word produced light out of darkness,¹¹ and by God's Word both the heavens and earth were created.¹² All that is both natural and celestial in the known universe can be traced back to a living and spiritual God, Who through His own spoken Word created all forms of life and matter. *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork* (Ps. 19:1).

(*Benson Commentary*, Ps. 19:1) The Hebrew, מְסַפְּרִים, *mesapperim*, is literally, *they tell*, or, *preach*, the glory of God. And this language of the heavens is so plain, and their characters are so legible, that all, even the most barbarous nations, that have no skill either in languages or letters, are able to understand and read what they declare. *The firmament*—Or, *the expansion*, all the vast space extending from the earth to the starry heavens, and especially the atmosphere, comprehending that fluid mixture of light, air, and vapours, which is everywhere diffused about us; and to the influences of which are owing all the beauty and fruitfulness of the earth, and all vegetable and animal life: all these by their manifold and beneficial operations, as well as by their beauty and magnificence, *show his handiwork*—As Creator, Preserver, and

Governor. The excellence of the work discovers who was the author of it, that it did not come by chance, nor spring of itself, but was made by a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness.

The Scriptures are a window into the higher spiritual realm, where God lives and maintains His being. Thus, by God's Word and His Holy Spirit an entirely different realm is open to man: the spiritual, heavenly, and celestial world, where God; His Son, Jesus Christ; and all divine beings abide. *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel* (Heb. 12:22–24). This text reveals what faith in God opens to sinners like ourselves: a breathtaking snapshot of heaven and the wonders of believing souls who have gone before us, abiding with the Son of God even now. God is the God not of the dead but of the living,¹³ and His spiritual realm

10 Gen. 1:11 *And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.*

Gen. 1:14 *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:*

Gen. 1:20 *And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.*

Gen. 1:24 *And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.*

Gen. 1:26 *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

11 Gen. 1:2–3 *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. ³And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

12 Gen. 1:6–10 *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. ⁷And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. ⁸And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. ⁹And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. ¹⁰And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called the Seas: and God saw that it was good.*

13 Matt. 22:32 *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

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is where the spiritual lives of the holiest who have ever walked the earth now maintain residence.

(*Matthew Poole's Commentary*, Heb. 12:22) *But ye are come unto mount Zion*: this is not literally to be understood for the mount on which the city of David was built, for that was as visible and touchable as Mount Sinai, to which it is opposed; but that mount which is higher than the highest, as high as heaven itself, Hebrews 12:25 9:24 John 3:13;¹⁴ where is the most orderly government of God for holiness, Micah 4:7;¹⁵ whence all good gifts and gospel blessings are conveyed to the church, of which these believers were members, Isaiah 8:18 28:16 59:20 Revelation 14:1.¹⁶

And unto the city of the living God; of which the living God is the Builder and Maker, and wherein he dwelleth, where nothing but life is, and whence Christ's voice giveth life to dead souls, enabling them to live a life of holiness to God, as Psalm 46:4,5 48:1,8 87:3 Isaiah 40:14 John 5:25.¹⁷ To distinguish this from any earthly city or corporation, it is said to be

the heavenly Jerusalem, its original, nature, and end being all heavenly; a fruitful place, whence believers are made partakers of the most spiritual influences for holiness; where there is nothing carnal, terrible, deadly, barren, but all causal and productive of holiness issueth thence, Isaiah 42:1–25,65:17–19, 66:10 John 17:24 Galatians 4:26 Revelation 3:12, 21:2,10.¹⁸

Mark 12:27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

Luke 20:38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

14 Heb. 12:25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Heb. 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

John 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

15 Mic. 4:7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

16 Isa. 8:18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

Isa. 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Isa. 59:20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

Rev. 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

17 Ps. 46:4–5 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. ⁵God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

Ps. 48:1 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

Ps. 48:8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

Ps. 87:3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

Isa. 40:14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

John 5:25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

18 Isa. 42:1–25 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. ²He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. ³A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. ⁴He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. ⁵Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: ⁶I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; ⁷To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. ⁸I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to

And to an innumerable company of angels; in which city are many excellent inhabitants with whom believers are incorporated, and to whom they have relation, as myriads of angels, who are ministering spirits under the gospel, as under the law, full of holiness, power, agility, and endowments, fit for their work and end; who, though for number are thousands and millions of them, Psalm 68:17

103:20 104:4 Acts 7:53 Galatians 3:19 Revelation 5:11,¹⁹ yet are all fulfilling their Lord's pleasure in every place, as ordered by him. Their ministrations of the law was terrible in flaming fire, but of the gospel, most sweet and gracious, Luke 2:13,14.²⁰ At Sinai they ministered externally and sensibly, affecting senses; but from Zion they minister spiritually, to hearts, Matthew 4:11 Luke 22:43 Psalm

graven images. ⁹Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. ¹⁰Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. ¹¹Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. ¹²Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands. ¹³The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. ¹⁴I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once. ¹⁵I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. ¹⁶And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. ¹⁷They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods. ¹⁸Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. ¹⁹Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD's servant? ²⁰Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not. ²¹The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. ²²But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. ²³Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come? ²⁴Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. ²⁵Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart. Isa. 65:17–19 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. ¹⁸But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. ¹⁹And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. Isa. 66:10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Gal. 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Rev. 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Rev. 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

19 Ps. 68:17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

Ps. 103:20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

Ps. 104:4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

Acts 7:53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

Gal. 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Rev. 5:11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

20 Luke 2:13–14 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

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91:11,²¹ resisting evil spirits ministering wickedly. Their ministry little effectual under the law; but under the gospel, saving, Acts 7:53 Hebrews 1:14 Revelation 19:10.²² Their former ministration temporary and ceasing, but this everlasting, till they bring all their trust into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22.²³ They are promoting holiness by God's sending things to us by them, and by their observing the goings and doings of Christians, whether holy or not, 1 Corinthians 11:10,²⁴ and giving an account of the success of their ministry towards them, as to this end, Matthew 18:10.²⁵ And the neglect of this means to help our pursuing holiness, will God require, Hebrews 2:2.²⁶

Which effectually worketh also in you that believe. When a man believes in the Word of God, he will see the Word proved to be of God by the personal witness of what it accomplishes in his life. The Greek word for *effectually* is #1754 *energēō*. HELPS *Word-studies* describes it as “(from 1722 /en, ‘engaged in,’ which intensifies 2041 /*érgon*, ‘work’)—properly, energize, working in a situation which brings it from one stage (point) to the next, like an electrical current energizing a wire, bringing it to a shining light bulb.”²⁷ God's Word will prove itself to be divine by its ability to move things, even men's hearts, from one point to another. This includes the conversion of sinners, the healing of diseased bodies, the bringing of peace to a trou-

bled soul, or any other situation whereby God's power transforms either man or creation itself. He who believes the Word will receive personal proof of God's existence through the spiritual power experienced in his life. Practically, no one can sincerely believe in the Word of truth and not spiritually experience the mighty power of God in the process.²⁸

Conversely, to those who do not believe the gospel, its power will remain hidden, simply because God rewards none who instead of exercising faith in Him are content to live in spiritual unbelief. *And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief* (Matt. 13:58).

(Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Matt. 13:58) He did not many mighty works there.—In St. Mark the language is stronger, “He *could* do no mighty works there.” The wonder-working power was not absolute and unconditioned, but depended on the faith of those who came to Him. Without that, the will and the power were alike thwarted.

By this we can see that both faith and unbelief have consequences. While faith in the Word reveals the Lord to men, unbelief estranges them from Him and all deliverance offered through the higher spiritual realm. Ultimately, how the Word

21 Matt. 4:11 *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

Luke 22:43 *And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.*

Ps. 91:11 *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

22 Acts 7:53 *Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.*

Heb. 1:14 *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

Rev. 19:10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

23 Luke 16:22 *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*

24 1 Cor. 11:10 *For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.*

25 Matt. 18:10 *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

26 Heb. 2:2 *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;*

27 HELPS *Word-studies*

28 Isa. 55:11 *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

of God, spoken by the Son of God, is received will determine a man's entire spiritual destiny. For none can truly be saved by God who do not embrace the very Word of God purposed to save them.²⁹

I Thessalonians 2:14 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:

What befell the Thessalonians by their being persecuted is the very same thing that

the churches of God in Judea had experienced. Christ's own people had sought His crucifixion,³⁰ and one of His chosen disciples, Judas, betrayed Him, delivering Him into the hands of evil men.³¹ This teaches us that a man's own house and countrymen will often seek to do more evil to him than even strangers. *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household* (Matt. 10:36).

(Bengel's *Gnomen*, Matt. 10:36) A man shall have them of his household—his relations, servants, and acquaintances—for enemies, if he believes in Me; see Micah 7:6.³²

29 I Pet. 1:23 *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lieth and abideth for ever.*

Ps. 107:20 *He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*

Rom. 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

30 Matt. 26:3–4 *Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, ⁴And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.*

Matt. 27:22–25 *Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. ²³And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. ²⁴When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. ²⁵Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children* Mark 15:9–14 *But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? ¹⁰For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. ¹¹But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. ¹²And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? ¹³And they cried out again, Crucify him. ¹⁴Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.*

John 11:47–53 *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. ⁴⁸If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. ⁴⁹And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, ⁵⁰Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. ⁵¹And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; ⁵²And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. ⁵³Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*

31 Matt. 26:14–16 *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, ¹⁵And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.*

Matt. 26:47–50 *And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. ⁴⁹And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. ⁵⁰And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him.*

Luke 22:2–6 *And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. ³Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. ⁴And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. ⁵And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. ⁶And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.*

32 Mic. 7:6 *For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.*

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Even as Paul penned the letter to the Thessalonians, he was himself suffering persecution from the Jews at Corinth. Whenever the gospel is believed, it will produce great antagonism and consternation in those who have rejected it. It is not enough for sinners to reject the gospel without also persecuting those who proclaim its message. Those who do evil hate the light, simply because through that light their own evil deeds are made known. *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved* (John 3:20). Whenever sinners willfully and knowingly engage in evil, they will hate the light of the gospel, which exposes it. Ultimately the gospel and righteousness itself will be hated, because they reveal and reprove the nature of evil men. This began with Cain and Abel,³³ was evidenced in the persecution of Jesus, and continued up to Paul's time.³⁴

I Thessalonians 2:15 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:

(*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*, I Thess. 2:14) It is an undesigned coincidence, that Paul at this time was suffering persecutions of the Jews at Corinth, whence he writes (Ac 18:5, 6, 12);³⁵ naturally his letter would the more vividly dwell on Jewish bitterness against Christians.

We should never underestimate hatred for Christ and the gospel.³⁶ So great, then, is the sinner's hate of light that he will often resort to killing another in an attempt to extinguish it. This was the condition of the Jews in Jesus' day, when because of unbelief, violence ensued, first toward faith and then toward other men.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I Thess. 2:15) *And are contrary to all men*—They do not merely differ from other people in customs and opinions—which might be harmless—but they keep up an active opposition to all other people. It was not opposition to one nation only, but to all; it was not to one form of religion only, but to all—even including God's last revelation to mankind; it was not opposition evinced in their own country, but they carried it with them wherever they went. The truth of this statement is confirmed, not only by authority of the

33 Gen. 4:8 *And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

34 Acts 14:19–20 *And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.* ²⁰*Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.* Acts 16:37 *But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.* II Cor. 11:23–26 *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.* ²⁴*Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.* ²⁵*Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

35 Acts 18:5–6 *And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.* ⁶*And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*

Acts 18:12 *And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,*

36 John 15:18 *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

John 7:7 *The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.* Matt. 24:9 *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*

Luke 6:22 *Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.*

apostle and the uniform record in the New Testament, but by the testimony borne of them in the classic writers. This was universally regarded as their national characteristic, for they had so demeaned themselves as to leave this impression on the minds of those with whom they had contact. Thus Tacitus describes them as “cherishing hatred against all others.”

In Christ’s day the Jews as a people had corrupted themselves. Though they had previously been chosen by God,³⁷ they had abandoned His path of righteousness. And though some in the Jewish nation would be saved, the vast majority were purposed for destruction. The sacking of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 initiated this divine judgment,³⁸ which Jesus also foretold when He revealed the upcoming destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.³⁹ Understandably those who commit violence will reap as they have sown,⁴⁰ and Jerusalem and its inhabitants bear testimony of this being true. *And as*

he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down (Mark 13:1–2).

(Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Mark 13:2) The temple was constructed of white marble, and the blocks were of a prodigious size. Josephus says that these stones were, some of them, 50 feet long, 24 feet broad, and 16 feet in thickness.

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck,

37 Gen. 17:7–8 *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.* ⁸*And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*

Exod. 6:7 *And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*

Exod. 19:5–6 *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: ⁶And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

Deut. 4:20 *But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.*

Deut. 7:6 *For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.*

38 “Siege of Jerusalem, (70 CE), Roman military blockade of Jerusalem during the First Jewish Revolt. The fall of the city marked the effective conclusion of a four-year campaign against the Jewish insurgency in Judaea. The Romans destroyed much of the city, including the Second Temple.” (britannica.com)

39 *Matt. 23:36–38 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.* ^{37O} *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* ³⁸*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

Luke 19:41–44 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ⁴²Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. ⁴³For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, ⁴⁴And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

40 *Gal. 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Job 4:8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

Hos. 8:7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk; the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

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in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:20–24).

(*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Mark 13:2) *there shall not be left*] Though now they seem fixed in their places for eternity. And even as He said, less than forty years afterwards, “Zion was ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem became heaps, and the mountain of the House as the high places of the forest” (Micah 3:12). Titus himself was amazed at the massive buildings of Jerusalem, and traced in his triumph the hand of God (Jos. Bell. Jud. vi. 9. 1).⁴¹ At his departure after the capture of the city, he left the tenth legion under the command of Terentius Rufus to carry out the work of demolition, and Josephus tells us (Bell. Jud. vii. 1. 1)⁴² that the whole inclosing walls and precincts of the Temple were “so thoroughly levelled and dug up that no one visiting the city would believe it had ever been inhabited.”

I Thessalonians 2:16 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.

Sin grows until it must be divinely dealt with. When the Jews sought to prevent the Gentiles’ salvation after crucifying God’s Son, the Lord’s wrath was ready to be revealed. Their sin had progressed too far, and divine judgment would no longer be held back.

(*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*, I Thess. 2:16) Their hindrance of the

Gospel preaching to the Gentiles was the last measure added to their continually accumulating iniquity, which made them fully ripe for vengeance.

Though God’s longsuffering toward sin is extensive, it is not indefinite. Thus, if sin is not ultimately repented of, then the execution of divine wrath is God’s final way of dealing with it.⁴³

(*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*, I Thess. 2:16) *For. . .* “The Jews have been working up to the rounded perfection of their sin; but (they had not much left to do) the wrath burst suddenly upon them to its uttermost.” The word for “is come” (which should be the simple preterite “came”) is the same as that used in Matthew 12:28, Luke 11:20,⁴⁴ of a sudden, unexpected apparition. “The wrath” is the wrath from which Jesus is delivering us (1 Thessalonians 1:10),⁴⁵ and it had already come upon the Jews, though its outward manifestation in the destruction of Jerusalem was not to come yet awhile. The particular moment at which St. Paul means that the wrath “came” must have been the moment of their final rejection of the Messiah.

I Thessalonians 2:17–18 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.*

Paul does not say how he was delayed in coming to the Thessalonians, only that Satan was the reason for his failure to come. One can rarely preach the Word of truth

41 Josephus’ “The Jewish War” (Bellum Judaicum), Book 6, Chapter 9, Section 1

42 Josephus’ “The Jewish War” (Bellum Judaicum), Book 7, Chapter 1, Section 1

43 Rom. 2:5 *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*

44 Matt. 12:28 *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*

Luke 11:20 *But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.*

45 I Thess. 1:10 *And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

without at the very same time coming into contact with the high and dark spiritual forces that despise It. What this teaches us is that not only do sinners despise the truth,⁴⁶ but evil spirits equally do as well. God's Word is as foul and distasteful to Satan as the evil that Satan does is to God. No creature also despises the truth more than the one who from the earliest days of creation has sought to prevent men from believing it.⁴⁷ Because Satan wishes to possess the worship God receives,⁴⁸ he seeks to turn men away from Him. Satan's intent in Genesis was purposed to bring doubt upon God's Word so that he could lead Adam and Eve to rebel against God's commandments. To accomplish this, both deception and lies were needed, teaching us that ultimately believers wrestle not against mere flesh and blood,⁴⁹ and this is most evident when the truth is spoken and devilish forces seek to turn men away from it.⁵⁰ Practically, the greatest threat to Satan's deception and his evil influence over men is the Word of truth and the light of the gospel—simply because if the gospel of Jesus Christ is tru-

ly believed, then the power Satan holds over men will be lost.⁵¹ For this reason the god of this world will exert great effort to blind men to the truth that reveals Christ's victory over the great deceiver of man.⁵² *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them* (II Cor. 4:4).

Just as it is important to believe in the Word of truth, it is also essential to believe in how Satan's aim is to blind men to it.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Cor. 4:4) Hath blinded the minds of them which believe not—Of all who discern no beauty in the gospel, and who reject it. It is implied here:

That the minds of unbelievers are blinded; that they perceive no beauty in the gospel. This is often affirmed of those who reject the gospel, and who live in sin; see the 2 Corinthians 2:13 note; Matthew 23:16–17, Matthew 23:26 notes; Luke 4:18 note; John 9:39; John 12:40 notes; Romans 11:7 note.⁵³ The sense is, that they did not see the spiritual

46 Amos 5:10 *They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.*

Isa. 30:10 *Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:*

Jer. 36:23 *And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.*

47 Gen. 3:1–5 *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*

² *And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. ⁴And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

48 Matt. 4:8–10 *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. ¹⁰Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

49 Eph. 6:12 *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

50 Mark 4:14–15 *The sower soweth the word. ¹⁵And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

51 John 10:28 *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

II Thess. 3:3 *But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.*

52 Rev. 12:9 *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

53 II Cor. 2:13 *I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.*

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beauty and glory of the plan of redemption. They act in reference to that as they would in reference to this world, if a bandage were over their eyes, and they saw not the light of the sun, the beauty of the landscape, the path in which they should go, or the countenance of a friend. All is dark, and obscure, and destitute of beauty to them, however much beauty may be seen in all these objects by others.

Just as it was Satan who hindered Paul in coming to the Thessalonians, so it is the same *god of this world* who has, through the process of blinding *the minds of them which believe not*, prohibited true sight of the glory of Christ.

II Corinthians 4:4 (NIV) The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

It is not merely a knowledge of the Son of God that men are blinded to, but Satan has also blinded men to the true glory of the Son.

It is the *glory* of the Son of God that Satan most attempts to blind men to, simply because if Christ cannot be truly seen, then men cannot actually be saved. It also makes little to no difference what men believe in the Scriptures if they do not believe in the spiritual truth that relates to the present glory of Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ Ultimately, it is first the knowledge of, and then faith in, the glorified Son of God that Satan most desires to keep men ignorant of. There is a great war that exists between the Son of God and the devil; thus, just as Jesus appeared to destroy the works of the devil⁵⁵ and to cast him out of his reign in this world,⁵⁶ so does Satan attempt to keep men blind to the true glory of Christ and His redemptive work in the world. In the end, Jesus Christ is set against the devil and his evil deeds, just as the devil is set against the Christ and His holy mission.

Ultimately Satan hindered Paul, but he could not alter Paul's ability to strengthen the Thessalonians' faith and further instruct them in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Greater was He, Who was in Paul⁵⁷ and

Matt. 23:16-17 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!¹⁷ Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

Matt. 23:26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

John 9:39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

John 12:40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

Rom. 11:7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

54 Heb. 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:

I Pet. 1:21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

55 I John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

56 John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

57 I John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Who had called him into ministry⁵⁸ than he who was in the world. Because of this, though the devil might for a short time hinder Paul's efforts to spread the gospel, he could not prevent its final victory. What this teaches us is that though the devil may delay the spread of the truth, he has absolutely no power to prevent it.⁵⁹ Consider as well that if Paul had actually come to the Thessalonians in person, then

he would have had no reason to pen this wonderful epistle to them. Consequently, God allowed Satan to hinder Paul, even as he allowed Satan to do certain things in Job's life,⁶⁰ in order that a greater spiritual purpose could be accomplished—practically confirming that God works all things, even things that men might at first perceive as evil, to accomplish the good pleasure of His own good and divine will.⁶¹

58 Acts 26:13–17 *At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.*¹⁴*And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*¹⁵*And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.*¹⁶*But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;*¹⁷*Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,*
59 Acts 6:7 *And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

Acts 19:20 *So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.*

60 Job 1:13–19 *And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:*¹⁴*And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:*¹⁵*And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*¹⁶*While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*¹⁷*While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*¹⁸*While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:*¹⁹*And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Job 2:7 *So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.*

61 Eph. 1:11 *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

