



What suffering shows

Ultimately, there are only two ways to hear the gospel, and only two ways to treat Jesus of Nazareth.

Whose word?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2 v 13

- ❓ *What is Paul thanking God continually for?*
- ❓ *What two views of the gospel does Paul highlight?*

To some, the word comes, and it is interesting, but makes no difference. It is like water off a duck's back. To others, the word comes and is recognised as a God-given message of salvation—and it goes to work in them. It is water to a parched soul. Notice Paul uses the present tense, not the past. The gospel is not just the ABC of the Christian life; it is the A to Z.

Which suffering?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2 v 14-16

Paul begins verse 14 “For...”. Here is the visible outworking of receiving the gospel as “the word of God”—the pudding that provides the proof of conversion.

- ❓ *In what way had this church of Greeks become imitators of the churches in Judea?*

In times of suffering, especially times of suffering because we are Christian, we and those around us can see whether being “in Christ Jesus” really is more precious to us than the respect of others or even our own safety.

- ❓ *What kind of Jews is Paul speaking of, does he make clear in verses 15-16a?*

Paul is *not* saying that all Jews are persecutors and murderers—after all, he is Jewish. He is looking at his experience in the towns of Greece, where again and again the Jews not only rejected the gospel but persecuted him, and he’s saying: *These Jews are just like the Jews who killed the prophets, killed Jesus, and threw the Christians out of Jerusalem.*

- ❓ *What do those Jews now face, both in the present and in their future (v 16b)?*

Again, Paul is *not* saying there is no way out for these Jews. After all, one of the Jews who had driven the church out of Jerusalem was the writer of this letter! But Paul is saying, of these salvation-opposing Jews and all others who follow them (including those today who say that the gospel is a private matter, not for sharing) that there is and will be great suffering for them, for God’s wrath is upon them. In other words, there are two ways to suffer: suffer persecution now because you’re “in Christ Jesus”, or suffer wrath eternally because you’re opposed to Christ Jesus.

Apply

- ❓ *Are you willing to suffer for Christ? What evidence in your life is there of this?*
- ❓ *Read 1 v 10. Why is suffering for Christ worth it?*