

Studies in the Book of
1 Thessalonians
Hope for a Hopeless World

Introduction

What does a church look like when it functions the way it is supposed to? It may resemble the church at Thessalonica. Of all the churches mentioned in the New Testament, the Thessalonians were perhaps the model in carrying out the instructions of the apostles. Their story of faith spread far and wide in the first century, impressing all who heard.

Their example still proves instructive today. Many people in our culture are choosing to live increasingly isolated lives, putting distance between themselves and the needs of the world. By contrast, Christians are challenged to engage the world and penetrate it with the light of God's love. As the Thessalonians did that in the first century, believers today can do the same. In a world that lacks hope, they can point toward the hope that is found in Christ.

Judging from his comments in the New Testament, the apostle Paul may have felt greater affection for the church of Thessalonica than any other congregation. The believers there didn't just talk about the gospel, they practiced it. In doing so, they were following the lead of Paul, Silas, and Timothy who had brought them the gospel message. The threesome had taken great pains to live Christlike among them. The demonstration of a Christlike lifestyle gave credibility to the Apostles message. Many Thessalonians were persuaded and encouraged in the faith. Even those who were unpersuaded recognized a power in these messengers, calling them the men who had "turned the world upside down".

The work that Paul calls for is the everyday work of making a living and maintaining a home. And yet there is an inner work that takes place in and through that day to day grind. As the Thessalonians carried out their everyday responsibilities, God was building character in their lives. When hope fades, people lose heart and doubts begin to grow. Two major questions are addressed in these letters: 1. What will happen in the end times? 2. How should believers live as they wait for the return of the Lord?

Two thousand years after Thessalonians, believers still are waiting for the return of the Lord. Has your hope faded? Have doubts flooded your mind so that you

wonder whether God will keep His Word? Has your lifestyle grown spiritually dull and undisciplined? The message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians remains the same. Keep working, stay faithful, don't lose heart, don't lose hope, God will honor His promises. He challenges you and I to live in a way that points to that hope.

When Hope Fades

Judging from his comments in the New Testament, the apostle Paul may have felt greater affection for the church at Thessalonica than of any other congregation. The believers there didn't just talk about the gospel, they practiced it.

In doing so they were following the example of Paul, Silas, and Timothy, who had brought them the gospel. The demonstration of a Christlike lifestyle lent credibility to the apostle's message, with the result that many Thessalonians were persuaded. Even those who were unpersuaded recognized a power in the messengers calling them men who had "turned the world upside down"

For a time, the gospel turned Thessalonica upside down. But after the apostles left and things quieted down, the new believers were left with an important reality of faith "that lasting change occurs over time." That's why Paul's two letters call for responsible, long term progress and the refusal to let hope fade. He reminds his readers his example how he worked among the Thessalonians. They should work as well, he says, and keep on working rather than burning out in the midst of doing good.

The work that Paul calls for is the everyday work of making and living and maintaining a home. And yet there is an inner work that takes place in and through that day to day toil. As the Thessalonians carried out their everyday responsibilities, God was building their character, so that Paul could speak of their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope.

When hope fades people lose heart and doubts begin to grow. Perhaps this was happening in Thessalonians. A major question that these two letters address is, what will happen in the end times? And how should believers live as they wait for the return of the Lord? Again, Paul exhorts his readers to a lifestyle of faithful service and steadfast hope.

Two thousand years after the Thessalonians, believers still await the coming of the Lord. Has your hope faded? Have doubts crowded in so that you wonder whether God will keep His word? Has your lifestyle grown spiritually lax and undisciplined? The message of 1 and 2 Thessalonians remains, keep working, stay faithful, don't lose hope. God will keep His promises. He challenges you to live in a way that points to this hope.

Author and Setting

Both 1 & 2 Thessalonians indicate that Paul is their author, and he apparently signed the second letter with his own hand. Paul wrote both of these letters from Corinth. The first was produced shortly after he left Thessalonica following an uprising of Jews and local troublemakers. Timothy who had remained with the new congregation, brought Paul an encouraging word of the young believer's steadfast faith. Paul responded to this joyful news by writing 1 Thessalonians.

However, the Thessalonians still had questions about their newfound faith, especially in regard to the latter days. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to address these matters.

Key Scriptures you will find in 1 Thessalonians

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father” 1 Thess. 1:3

“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children” 1 Thess. 2:7

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality” 1 Thess. 4:3

“For the Lord himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

1 Thess. 4:16-17

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things, hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.” 1 Thess. 5:16-22

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 1 - 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Hope for a Hopeless World
What Every Church Should Be

No doubt you have heard some preacher say, “If you ever find the perfect church, please don’t join it. If you do, it won’t be perfect anymore!” It is a wonderful thing when a pastor can think of his church and say, “We give thanks always for all of you!” Paul loved the church at Thessalonica; these people were on his heart, and he was concerned for their spiritual welfare. When we see the characteristics of this church, we should examine our own lives and ask, “Am I helping to make my church a model church in the Lord?”

The word “church” in Greek is *ekklesia*, which means “a called-out group.” The church is not a social club; it is a spiritual organism, an organization composed of people whom God has “*called out of darkness into His marvelous light.*” This calling is purely of grace. Though we are in the world physically, we are not of the world spiritually. These saints lived in Thessalonica but dwelled in Christ. God sent Paul and Silas to Thessalonica with the Word of God. The people heard the Word, believed, and were saved. After receiving Christ, they discovered that they had been chosen in Him by God through grace!

It is wonderful when “hearers” become “followers”! These people heard the Word, welcomed it, believed it, and suffered for receiving it into their lives. Having believed, these new Christians followed Paul, associated themselves with a local fellowship, and became examples to all around them. Christians were expected to be a vital part of the local fellowship. Their testimony reached throughout the whole area and helped lead others to Christ.

The second coming of Christ is a basic theme in this book. Each chapter relates Christ’s return to a basic Christian truth. While the lost are blindly worshiping and serving their idols, the saved are serving the living God and rejoicing in the living hope that Christ will come again. How are Christians supposed to wait for Christ’s return? By occupying their time well. Paul warns the saints to be awake and alert, and not to sleep and be drunken, like the people of the world.

How do we know Christ is coming again? God proved Christ is His Son by raising Him from the dead. Christ could not come again if He were dead and His body decomposing in a Jewish tomb. We cannot separate the living hope and the living Christ!

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 and answer the following questions

1. What does the words “*in God*” suggest to you about the Thessalonians spiritual standing before God? (See 1:1)

2. Consider the order in which Paul uses the terms “grace” and “peace.” How is one the foundation of the other?

3. What three characteristics does Paul mention as being true of the Thessalonians? (See 1:3)

4. In light of Paul’s previous life as a proud Pharisee, what meaning do you see in his calling this large Gentile group “*beloved brethren*”? (See 1:4)

5. Take a look at Paul’s description of the “gospel” in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. What do you think Paul means by “*our gospel*” in 1 Thessalonians 1:5?

6. In what sense should Christians be followers of inspired teachers and of the Lord? What can we learn about the importance of following Biblical examples? (See 1:6)

7. How is it possible to have joy even when following Christ leads to suffering? (See 1:6)

8. What had the Thessalonians done after they received the Word? Why is this important? (See 1:7)

9. The Greek word for “*turned*” in 1:9 indicates that they turned from idolatry once and for all. It was a single, definite act, a deliberate choice to turn to God from idolatry. What is Paul telling us about idols in this statement?

10. What effect did the preaching of the gospel have among the Thessalonians according to 1:9? What does this tell us about the background of the Believers in Thessalonica?

11. In Genesis 6, God rescues Noah and his family before He sends the flood to destroy the heathen people. In Genesis 19, God rescues Lot before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. What does this say about God’s heart as He rescues His people before sending wrath? (See 1:10).

Great Word from Warren Wiersbe

1 Thessalonians 1:3

Faith, hope, and love are the three cardinal virtues of the Christian life, and the three greatest evidences of salvation. **Faith** must always lead to works. It has been said, “We are not saved by faith plus works, but by a faith that works.”

Love is also an evidence of salvation: “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” We are “*taught by God to love one another.*” We serve Christ because we love Him; this is the “*labor of love*” that Paul mentioned. “*If ye love Me, keep My commandments.*”

The third evidence of salvation is **Hope**, waiting for Jesus Christ to return. The return of Jesus Christ is the dominant theme of both of these Thessalonian letters. Unsaved people are not eagerly awaiting the Lord’s return. In fact, when our Lord catches His church up into the air, unsaved people will be totally surprised.

“*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*”
1 Cor. 13:13

“*For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*” Gal. 5:5-6

“*Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.*” Col. 1:4-5

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Heb. 6:10-12

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 2 - 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
Hope for a Hopeless World
Paul's Ministry

Chapter 1 describes the ideal church, while chapter 2 provides a picture of the ideal pastor or Christian servant. Paul has told us how the Gospel came to Thessalonica, now he tells us how he ministered to the young believers.

What a tremendous privilege “*to be entrusted with the gospel.*” We often speak of the stewardship of material things, but we need also to remember that every believer is a steward of the Gospel and the Word of God. In order to be faithful to his or her stewardship, a believer must be willing to suffer. Paul and Silas had been treated shamefully in Philippi, and they could have made all kinds of excuses for taking a vacation. But they knew that God had entrusted them with the Gospel and that they had to carry the message to other cities. Instead of being fearful, they were bold to proclaim the Good News.

The faithful steward must live to please God, not men. It is tempting to compromise the message in order to win friends, but God cannot bless a steward whose message and ministry are not according to His divine pattern. In verse 3, Paul states that his message was not of deceit or error. It was the true Word of God. Verse 5 states that Paul did not resort to flattering people for personal gain.

It seems odd that the man Paul should compare himself to a “*nursing mother*” in verse 7. New Christians need love, food, and tender care, just as a mother would give to her own children. Newborn babes need the milk of the Word and then must “graduate” to the meat. How a mother feeds her child is almost as important as what she feeds it. How important it is that we who are older Christians feed the younger believers lovingly and patiently.

One of the duties of fathers is to exhort and educate their children. Paul not only taught them the Word, but he encouraged them from his own experiences in the Lord. He knew that the Spirit of God would work in their lives if they received the Word and believed it. Finally, Paul warned his spiritual family of the enemies who would persecute them. If Christians become followers of the Lord and of the churches, then they can expect to be persecuted by Satan and his followers.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 and answer the following questions

1. How did Paul describe their coming to the Thessalonians in 2:1? What does Paul mean by the statement “*our coming to you was not in vain*”?
2. Despite this bad treatment, how had they taught in Thessalonica? How should we apply this lesson to our own teaching?
3. What example did Paul use to describe his relationship with the Thessalonians in 2:7? What do you think he wants to get across by using this image?
4. How devoted was Paul to their well-being according to 2:8? What reason does he give for his concern for them?
5. In verses 11-12, Paul uses the example of “father” to describe his relationship to the Thessalonians. How does this image of spiritual fathering build on Paul’s description of spiritual mothering?

6. What is the importance of Paul describing his relationship to the Thessalonians as “parent-child” rather than say, “teacher-student” or “commander-soldier”?

7. What was the purpose of Paul’s teaching according to 2:12? What should we learn?

8. How had the Thessalonians received the word according to 2:13? Explain why it’s important for people to recognize the gospel is God’s word, not just the word of men. What problems result when people fail to truly appreciate the gospel as God’s word?

9. How did the Thessalonians become “imitators” of God’s churches in Judea? (See 2:14)

10. What accusations did Paul make against the Judeans? (See 2:15)

11. What have you learned from 2:1-16 that you can apply to your life personally?

A Straightforward Approach

1 Thessalonians 2:5

“For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness, God is witness.” 1 Thess. 2:5

Many people in today’s culture have grown cynical about religion. So as we believers think about presenting the gospel to others, we need to be careful to make our message credible and straight forward.

Paul mentions two dangers that he avoided so as not to compromise his credibility. The use of “*flattering words*” which amounts to telling them what they wanted to hear, and “a cloak for covetousness” which involves hidden motives. To use either of these approaches is to deceive people. That’s unacceptable for someone who presents himself as a representative of Christ.

The key to Paul’s integrity was his realization that God Himself had entrusted him with the message. The task of taking the gospel to the Gentiles was not something that Paul had thought up, but was a calling from God. His aim was not to please people, but to please God.

Paul did not need to worry about his material blessing, even less to covet what others had. As a messenger of God, he could rely on God to provide for his needs and remain content in whatever circumstances came his way.

As we consider ways in which to communicate Christ to people around us, we might ask ourselves the following questions: 1. What other obstacles to our credibility might there be? 2. Are there things about our methods or motives that conflict with the message we have been entrusted?

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 3 - 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5
Hope for a Hopeless World
Paul's Desire

How Paul loved to call these saints “brethren”! He used the word twenty-one times in his two Thessalonian epistles. He saw himself as one of them, a part of the family. In vs. 17 he says that he was “orphaned” from them for a short time, like a child away from home. He loved them, prayed for them, and greatly desired to see them again. After all, the test of our spiritual life is not what we do when we are in church with “the family,” but how we behave away from church. Paul was not the kind of church member who “took a vacation” from the house of God. Why was Paul able to minister faithfully and lovingly to these saints? Because he saw them in the light of Christ’s coming. He was looking forward to the day when he would rejoice over them in the presence of Christ.

What an asset young Timothy was to Paul. Every Paul must have his Timothy and every Timothy his Paul. The younger person who works with the older. Paul knew how to select and train Christian leaders, and Timothy was one of his finest. This young man had proved himself for several years in his own local church before Paul enlisted him to be a helper. Young Timothy did not start his ministry by teaching or preaching; his main job was to help Paul in the tasks of daily travel and living.

God uses gifted believers to strengthen the church. If church members would “adopt” new Christians, encourage them, teach them, and fellowship with them, there would be fewer spiritual casualties. The mature saints in the church must help younger Christians to grow in Christ.

The believer is built up by the Word of God. Note how Paul reminds them of the Word he had already taught them. He had warned them that afflictions were coming. Timothy reminded them of the Word Paul had taught them, and this encouraged and established them.

He reasoned, which suggests debate or discussion; he opened the Word, which implies explaining its meaning; he alleged certain truths, which means he gave evidence for them or laid them out in an orderly way for all to see, and he preached, which means the proclaiming of the Gospel. The pastor and Christian worker must be sure to have a balanced ministry of the Word.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17- 3:5 and answer the following questions

1. How do you think Satan blocked Paul from returning to the Thessalonians? What do you think he means in verse 17-18?
2. Satan was able temporarily to stand in the way of Paul's plans to see the Thessalonians. In spite of Satan's temporary success, what do verses 19-20 indicate about the ultimate victory that awaited Paul?
3. How do think it might have affected the Thessalonians to have Paul tell them this in the midst of their struggles? "*For you are our glory and joy*"
4. What decision did Paul make according to 3:1-2? Why would this decision be so difficult at the time?
5. What two reasons can you find in 3:2 for Paul sending Timothy to visit the Thessalonians? Why do you think his visit was so important?
6. What can we learn from verses 3-4 about suffering for the cause of Christ?

7. Explain why it is helpful for Christians to know ahead of time that serving Christ is going to require sacrifice and hardship.

8. What can a strengthened faith prevent, according to 3:3?

9. Paul states in 3:3-4 that Christians are “*appointed*” to “*suffer tribulation.*” What’s the purpose of trials and tribulations?

10. Paul sent Timothy to find out how the Thessalonians’ faith was holding up in the face of severe persecution. Why does persecution sometimes make faith falter? What area does Satan tempt you to falter in your faith?

11. What sobering possibility is suggested in the words “*Our labor might be in vain?*” (See 3:5)

Purpose for Trials and Tribulations

What constructive uses for trials are mentioned in these Scriptures?

Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. Psalms 119:67

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Acts 11:19-21

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Romans 5:3-4

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 4 – 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13
Hope for a Hopeless World
Good News from Timothy

The two-fold ministry of the Word of God and prayer is what establishes a church. If there is all teaching and preaching and no prayer, then the people will have light but no power. If there is all prayer but no teaching of the Word, you may have a group of enthusiasts who have more heat than light! The pastor, Sunday School teacher, missionary, or Christian worker who talks to God about his people, and then talks to his people about God, will have a balanced and established ministry. Christ's ministry consisted of both the Word and prayer.

Paul's concern was not so much their safety or happiness, but their faith. The word "faith" is used five times in this chapter. Satan is the enemy of our faith, for if he can get us to doubt God and His Word, he will rob us of the enjoyment of every blessing we have in Christ. Paul wanted to see these people abounding in love, established in hope, and growing in faith. There is no substitute for a consistent prayer life.

When there is a combined ministry of prayer and the Word, Satan is defeated and the church is established. No truth establishes the believer faster or better than this one. In the midst of testing and tribulation, these believers could assure and encourage themselves with the promise of His coming. When temptations came their way, as they did daily in those heathen cities, they could keep themselves clean by remembering that Christ might come that very day. If weary of laboring and witnessing, they could take on new strength and courage by looking for His return. No truth in the Bible has a greater effect on the believer's heart, mind, and will than the truth of the second coming of Christ.

Paul was anxious that their hearts be established blameless. Christians are supposed to be blameless and harmless. This does not mean they are sinless, for perfection is not possible until Christ returns. The little child, copying his name on the blackboard, does not perform faultlessly, because he is only a child; but if he does the best he can, he is blameless. If we live up to the light God has given us and seek to grow in Him, we can live lives that are blameless in God's sight. The daily hope of Christ's return will help the believer keep his or her life holy.

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 and answer the following questions

1. Why do you think faith and love are so important to Paul's message in view of the Thessalonians circumstances?
2. What did Paul mean when he acknowledged that the Thessalonians were, "standing fast in the Lord"? (See 3:8)
3. Paul was certainly a believer in frequent and continuous prayer. Why is persistence in prayer so important? (See 1:2-3, 3:10)
4. Why do you think it was so important to Paul that he get back to the Thessalonians? (See 3:10)
5. What prayer did Paul offer regarding the Thessalonians? (See 3:10). What can we learn about prayer from this verse?
6. Paul asks God for three things in 3:11-13. List them and explain their purpose?

3:11

3:12

3:13

7. So far, Paul has closed every chapter in 1 Thessalonians with a reference to Christ's return (1:10, 2:19, 3:13). What do you think his purpose was in doing this?

8. By now you can see that spiritual parenting is a theme of this letter. When Paul was with the Thessalonians he acted as a spiritual mother and father to them. Their growth gave him the joy that a child's success gives most parents. What bond made this possible between Paul and his spiritual kids?

9. Have you personally ever had a spiritual parent like this? Explain.

10. What hope did Paul express in 3:13? Define "blameless." Why is this trait important to Christians?

11. Define "holiness." Why is this trait important to Christians?

Great Word from the Word in Life Study Bible

Gentle as a Nursing Mother

Paul felt great love for the Thessalonian believers, and he drew upon a touching image to communicate his affection, that of a woman nursing an infant (1 Thess. 2:7). Most mothers in the first century world nursed their own infants. However, some wealthy women employed wet nurses. In that case, the child lived in the home of the wet nurse, who agreed to certain conditions. Such as not nursing other children and avoiding alcohol. The wet nurse took responsibility for not only feeding the child but also for raising it until it was weaned, often up to three years of age. Many contracts specified that the wet nurse fee had to be returned if the child died.

Paul, clearly intended to convey a sense of tender affection and responsible loving care for his spiritual children, the Thessalonians. In doing so, he showed a side of spiritual leadership and nurture that Christian leaders do well to emulate today.

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 5 - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
Hope for a Hopeless World
Living to Please God

We move now into the second half of the letter dealing with the practical instructions for these new believers in Christ. The key word is “walk,” and Paul encourages them to obey the Word. The Christian’s behavior is compared to a walk for several reasons: 1. It demands life, for the dead sinner cannot walk. 2. It requires growth, for a little baby cannot walk. 3. It requires liberty, for someone who is bound cannot walk. 4. It demands light, for no one wants to walk in the dark. 5. It cannot be hidden, but is witnessed by all. 6. It suggests progress toward a goal. Paul continues on to describe the kind of walk the believer should have.

Here Paul deals with marriage and the home. The marriage vows in heathen cities said nothing about purity, so there was great danger of immorality in the lives of these new Christians. The Christian has the responsibility of building a Christian home that will glorify God.

Immorality is basically selfishness and robbery. Paul directs them to live lives that please God and not themselves. He had commanded them, from the Lord, to live in holiness and purity by the power of God. God’s will for their lives was that they be sanctified “set apart for a purpose.” We have the daily responsibility of devoting ourselves more and more to God so that in body, soul, spirit we completely belong to Him.

Now Paul talks about the believer’s occupation and his contacts with the unsaved in the world. One of the problems in the Thessalonian church was that some people had misunderstood the promise of Christ’s return, quit their jobs, and had become “parasites” who lived off the other Christians. It is a sad thing when Christians have nothing to do and become busybodies in other people’s lives. The Christian who does an honest day’s work and who is careful to maintain a good testimony will influence the unsaved. Those who do not work, should not eat. Let us not practice unscriptural Christian “charity” by taking the Lord’s money to support “Christian loafers” and encourage them in their careless way of life.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 and answer the following questions

1. Why do you think Paul felt the need to remind the Thessalonians that his instructions were given under the authority of Jesus Christ? (See 4:1-2)
2. What goals should Christians pursue according to 4:1? Discuss the importance of pleasing God and how we ought to walk with Him.
3. In verse 4:3, what did the will of God require of them? Define your answer.
4. What do you believe Paul meant by the statement, “*possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor*”? (See 4:4)
5. Paul describes “*the Gentiles*” as those “*who do not know God.*” There is a difference between “knowing God,” and “knowing of God.” What does knowing God involve according to the following Scriptures?

Jeremiah 9:23-24

1 John 2:4-6, 4:7-8

6. In what way is it possible to “wrong” a brother or sister in regard to the issue of sexual immorality? (See 4:6)

7. There are three different references to God in verses 4:6-8. These verses indicate that each person in the Trinity is involved in the lives of the Thessalonians. Keeping in mind that God is normally used to refer to the Father while Lord normally is used for Jesus, summarize how each person of the Trinity relates to Paul’s command about holy living.

Jesus (See 4:6)

The Father (See 4:7)

The Holy Spirit (See 4:8)

8. What do you think Paul means when he says that the Thessalonians have been “*taught by God to love each other*”? (See 4:9)

9. Nowhere in 1 Thessalonians does Paul encourage his readers to evangelize the neighborhood in the sense of preaching. Instead, he outlines a very different evangelism strategy in 4:11-12. What is the strategy?

10. How should Christians live according to 4:11? What reasons are given for such a life according to 4:12?

Quiet Living in a Hectic World

1 Thessalonians 4:11

If any one word characterizes life in the modern world it may be the word hectic. Better known as: “the rat race,” “the grind,” the fast lane,” the laser lane.” Things seem to move faster and faster, and anyone who cannot keep up is in danger of being run over or left behind.

For that reason, Paul’s encouragement to “*lead a quiet life*” seems out of touch with today’s culture. How can we live a quiet life when technology accelerates change and increases complexity? When television, internet and other media sources bring the world into our homes and broadcast private lives to the world. When a global economy makes everybody’s business our business.

The challenge to live a quiet life in a not so quiet world can be just that, a real challenge. As believers we can take certain steps in preparing us to live a quiet, God centered productive life.

As far as quiet living, Paul probably wasn’t objecting to noise and sound, but to needless distractions. One way that most people could bring a little more peace and quiet into their homes would be to cut their television and social media viewing in half. Imagine the time left for spending more time with family members, neighbors and most importantly, personal time with the Lord.

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 6 - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Hope for a Hopeless World
The Comfort of His Coming

This is the classic passage on the rapture of the church. Sorrow had come to the lives of these saints, and they were wondering whether their dead fellow Christians would be left behind at the return of Christ. Paul assures them that their dead will be raised first, and that all the saints will be gathered together to meet Christ in the air.

Christians are expected to mourn when loved ones die, but they are not to grieve as do the people of the world who have no hope. Christ expects us to shed tears and feel loneliness as we go through the valley; but in the midst of our sorrow, there must be the testimony of the living hope we have in Christ.

The hardest thing about death is separation from our loved ones; but when Christ comes, we will be together with the Lord forever. The living saints will not precede those who have died; all will be caught up together to meet Christ.

We shall “*always be with the Lord.*” We shall obtain new bodies. Paul says that the body we place in the cemetery is like a seed awaiting the harvest. Of course, the body turns to dust, and that dust becomes a part of the earth. The Bible nowhere teaches that God raises and unites every particle of the believer’s body. What it does teach is that the resurrection body has identity with the body that was buried. Just as the seed that is planted in the ground has identity and continuity with the seed it produces, so the resurrection body will have identity and continuity with the body that was buried. Resurrection is not reconstruction.

The words “*caught up*” are full of meaning. They mean: 1. To catch away speedily, for there will be no warning. 2. To seize by force, for Satan will seek to hinder our rapture to heaven. 3. To claim for one’s self, just as the Bridegroom claims the bride. 4. To move to a new place. 5. To rescue from danger, for the church will not go through the Tribulation. “***Therefore comfort one another with these words.***”

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and answer the following questions

1. What is the subject discussed beginning in 4:13? What is meant by those who are asleep? (See Matt. 9:24, John 11:11, 2 Peter 3:4)

2. Paul indicates that when a Christian dies, his body sleeps until Christ returns to earth. Where does the Christian's spirit go when this happens? (See 2 Cor. 5:8, Phil. 1:23-24)

3. What assurance does Paul give to those who sleep in Jesus? By what authority does he speak?

4. Why does this hope change how we think about death and how we think about the present as well?

5. What do you learn about the nature of a resurrected body from 1 Corinthians 15:35-55?

6. How is the coming of the Lord described in 4:16? Look up the following Scriptures on the Lord's second coming: Matt. 24:30, 1 Cor. 15:51-52.

7. What three events will initiate the Rapture, and what do you think is the importance of each? (See 4:16)
8. Paul didn't write about the Rapture in order to give a prophetic time line. What was his purpose according to 1 Thessalonians 4:18?
9. How does it make you feel that as a believer one day you will live in this amazing place called Heaven in the presence of God? How has knowing this helped you cope in a time of need or tragedy?
10. What difference does the guarantee of the Lord's return for His people, living or dead, make to you in your day to day life?

What Does 1 Thessalonians 4:18 Mean?

In this verse Paul appeals to his readers to encourage one another with the truths of the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). The fact that departed and living Christians will be caught up to be with Jesus forever is a solid reason not to grieve hopelessly, but to anticipate a great reunion with fellow Christians in the presence of Jesus.

When we are united with Christ, pain and suffering will be over (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Our bodies, which now age and deteriorate, will become imperishable (I Corinthians 15:54). Death will have lost its sting (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). Our bodies will be glorified, just as Jesus' body is a glorified body (Philippians 3:20-21). Joy will last eternally (Psalm 16:11). We will live in a place that Jesus promised to prepare for us (John 14:1-3). All the stresses and strains of earthly life will be gone. We will never again be victims of crime or fraud. Eternal joy and pleasure will delight our hearts in the presence of God (Psalm 16:11). What an encouraging promise that is.....

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 7 – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Hope for a Hopeless World
An Attitude of Watchfulness

The final chapter gives a series of instructing the Christians how to live in the light of Christ's coming. As we read these many warnings, we see that there were some definite problems in the infant church. Christians were living carelessly; some were not respecting their church leaders; others were abusing the public services; and there was a general need for love and harmony among the saints. These instructions point out how the local church can live in harmony and purity.

Paul presents a series of contrasts here between the Christians and the lost. Christ's coming, as far as the world is concerned, will be sudden and unexpected, like a thief in the night; but not so for the believer. We are looking for Him to come. Unbelievers are in the dark. Their understanding is darkened, they love the darkness, they are controlled by the power of darkness, and they are headed for eternal darkness. But the Christian is associated with the light, for God is light, and Christ is the Light of the world. The Christian is a child of light, though at one time he was darkness itself. Since Christians belong to the day, they should live in the light and be ready for Christ's return.

Satan likes to keep people in the dark. Judas was in the dark and so were Ananias and Sapphira. The world is ignorant of God's plans because the world has rejected Christ and the Bible. They go by appearances and say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" But the Christian who reads his Bible and keeps his eyes open knows the way God is working in this world and is not ignorant.

The unsaved world lives in false security, like the people before the flood or the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. When Christ has taken the church out of the world, the Day of the Lord will begin, a seven-year period of tribulation and suffering for the world. The Day of the Lord will come to the world as a thief in the night.

Christians who are looking for Christ to come will stay awake and be alert; they will not become drunken like the people of the world. "Wake" and "sleep" here do not mean "alive" and "dead" as in 4:13-18; they mean "alert" and "careless." Christians should be living holy lives when Jesus comes.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and answer the following questions

1. What does 5:1-2 indicate about how complete Paul's description had been in his original instructions about "The day of the Lord" to the Thessalonians?
(See Matt. 24)

2. What does Jesus say in Matthew 24:36 about forecasting dates for His return?

3. Why do you think they are saying "*peace and safety*" when danger is so near?
(See 5:3)

4. What does it mean, in practical terms to be "*in darkness*"? (See 5:4). How does living in spiritual darkness affect a person day to day?

5. Paul compares the coming of destruction to the coming of "*labor pains*." What does that image recall for you?

6. Even though Paul had already told the Thessalonians that Jesus would come at an unexpected time, like "a thief in the night," they still evidently wanted to know when it would happen. Why do you think people desire so strongly to know the date of Christ's return?

7. Even though we don't know when the day of the Lord will come, why won't it be a surprise for Christian?

8. What lesson does Paul intend for us to learn according to 5:6?

9. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8, how does a person who belongs to the light think and behave?

10. The breastplate and the helmet probably were the most important items in a soldier's equipment, because they protected the most important body parts. What does this picture tell you about the importance of faith, hope and love? (See 5:8)

11. To what are we appointed and not appointed? What did Christ do to make this possible? (See 5:9-10)

12. What is the final encouragement Paul gives from this passage? (See 5:11)

The Day of the Lord

The day of the Lord is a future period of time in which God will be at work in world affairs more directly and dramatically than He has been since the earthly ministry of Jesus. This extended “day” includes the second coming of the Lord and the Rapture, as well as judgement for those who reject Christ.

The “day of the Lord” is a huge concept in the Bible. Cross references include: Isaiah 2:12, 13:6-9, Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3, Joel 1:15, Amos 5:18, Zephaniah 1:7, Acts 2:20, 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 2 Peter 3:10. Take some time and go through these Scriptures, paying particular attention to the characteristics of “Day.”

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 8 - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15
Hope for a Hopeless World
Life in the Church

Paul's favorite name for believers was brethren. He used it at least sixty times in his letters; and in the two Thessalonian letters, he used it twenty-seven times. Paul saw the local church as a family. Each member was born again by the Spirit of God. They all were part of God's family. It is tragic when believers neglect or ignore the local church. No family is perfect and no local church is perfect; but without a family to protect him and provide for him, a child would suffer and die. The child of God needs the church family if he is to grow, develop his gifts, and serve God. What are the essentials for a happy, thriving church family? How can we make our local churches more spiritual to the glory of God? In this closing section, Paul discussed this subject.

The church family must have spiritual leadership. The church may establish whatever organizations it pleases (so long as these groups are organized according to biblical guidelines). The pastor, however, must lead the flock as God directs. Certainly, he needs, and wants, the prayers and counsel of the people, especially the elected leaders; but all in the church must respect the leadership that God provides. Christians should: (1) accept their leaders; (2) honor their leaders, recognizing the work they do; (3) love their leaders; (4) and follow their leaders. Whenever a church is not united, it is often because the pastor will not take the responsibility of leadership, or because the members will not permit him to lead. Keep in mind that leadership is not dictatorship. The leader sets the example, pays the price, and seeks to help others in Christian love. The dictator uses law, not love; he does not lead, he drives; and his motives are selfish, even if he thinks he is working for the good of the church.

It is not enough to have church leadership; there must also be partnership, with each member doing his or her share of the work. 1 Peter 4:7–11 reminds us that each Christian is a steward of a spiritual gift, and that we must use that gift for the good of others and the glory of the Lord. Paul specifies certain kinds of Christians who need special help: 1. **The unruly** “the careless who will not be ruled, those who are out of line, must be warned.” 2. **The feebleminded** “The fainthearted must be encouraged. 3. **The weak** “Those not mature in the Lord must be supported until they can walk in the Lord.” Our attitude toward all people ought to be one of patience and love, never returning evil for evil.

Read 1Thessalonians 5:12-15 and answer the following questions

1. What two encouragements does Paul give the Thessalonians in regards to their church leaders?
2. What is the significance of Paul's referring to the church leaders as those who "*labor among (care for) you*"?
3. Why should the Thessalonians hold their leaders in great respect? What "work" is Paul talking about? (See 5:13)
4. Does holding leaders in high respect mean never voicing your disagreements? Explain?
5. Why do you think Paul thought it necessary to tell all the Thessalonian Believers to live at peace with each other?
6. What four encouragements does Paul give the Thessalonians in 5:14? Explain what each means.

7. Paul told the Thessalonians to “*be patient with all*” (5:14). He speaks of patience in many of his letters. Patience is an essential quality of love and is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Why should patience be especially necessary for a young church with inexperienced church leaders on the one hand and childish behavior among church members on the other hand?

8. What are some ways that you could apply what you have learned about patience at home? At your work place? At Church? With yourself?

9. In Romans 14:1-5 Paul talks about helping the spiritually weak. He says those whose faith is weak require more rules and structure to keep them growing in Christ than those whose faith is stronger. What do you think his point is?

10. Why is it important for us to learn not to pay back wrong for wrong?

11. What does it mean in practice to do good both for yourselves and for all?

Great insight on 1 Thessalonians 5:14

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all”

Who is this verse directed toward? It is for the brethren. In other word's it is for all believers including me and you. These jobs are not only for the leaders of the church. Every member of the body has their part and we are to be helping and building up each other on a regular basis.

Warn the unruly: We are to warn those whose behavior is not appropriate, specifically those who are a bit out of control. Sometimes believers are also out of line. What should we do? Well, we don't kick them out of the church. Neither should we ignore them. We should come to them, encourage them in the Scriptures which can help in the area they are struggling with. This is not an easy thing to do. But it is necessary. If the church doesn't correct its own, who is going to?

Comfort the fainthearted: Comfort is one of the key themes of this book. Paul has given us a great example about how to focus on comforting others. Many people just ignore the fainthearted. Instead of looking down on those who struggle in various areas, we should come alongside them to help them. This is what Christian fellowship is all about.

Uphold the weak: Can you think of any examples in the Bible of people who were weak that received help? In Ecclesiastes Solomon did not write, “Two are better than one, for when one falls the other will go to his friends and talk about him behind his back.” What should we do when someone falls? This is how God has designed the church and Christian fellowship. We too are often weak. What you hope others will do for you when you are weak and struggling is what we should do for them.

Be patient with all: Notice that words “*with all.*” Who is the most difficult person in your life to be patient with? That is the person that God is calling you to be patient with today. Some people are very easy to be patient with, but some are not. Perhaps God has brought those difficult people into our lives in order to help us grow in the area of patience. And perhaps God will keep challenging you in this area until you have learned the lesson. What tips can you think of that can help us when we are struggling to show patience to others?

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 9 – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-28
Hope for a Hopeless World

Holy Living

Rejoice, pray, and give thanks sound like ordinary encouragements; The Christian who walks with the Lord and keeps in constant communion with Him will see many reasons for rejoicing and thanksgiving all day long. “*Pray without ceasing*” does not mean a constant mumbling of prayers. True prayer is the attitude of the heart, the desire of the heart. When our hearts desire what God desires, we are praying all day long as the Spirit intercedes for us and in us.

“Prophesying” in the early church was the immediate work of the Spirit: the prophet would give the message from God. But Satan is a counterfeiter, so it was necessary to test the messages. The danger was that the believers would “go overboard” in emotional abuses or, the other extreme, quench the Spirit by rejecting His revelations. “*Test all things, hold fast that which is good*” is the encouragement we must obey whenever we hear or read a message from the Word.

“*Appearance of evil*” means “every form of evil.” Of course, no saint should allow anything in his life that others could misunderstand and criticize. God is faithful to build us up in holiness if we just submit to Him. Prayer, brotherly love, and attention to the Word of God will sanctify us and keep us ready for Christ’s return.

Paul ended with another reminder that the Word of God is the important thing in the local church. The Word must govern our conduct and guide our lives. We are to read the Word personally, but we also need to hear the Word in the fellowship of the local church, for the one experience helps balance the other.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-28 and answer the following questions

1. What should characterize us according to 5:16? For more on Christian joy, note the following verses: Matthew 5:12, Acts 15:31, Romans 5:2, 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, Philippians 3:1, 4:4. What do these verses point to in regards to Christian joy?

2. Verses 16-24 contain some final instructions from Paul to the Thessalonians. What do you think Paul's purpose is with sharing these instructions?

3. How does Paul describe how we should pray? (See 5:17).

4. Paul urges the Thessalonians "*in everything give thanks.*" What is the importance of Paul using the word "in" instead of "for"?

5. As a cross reference, read Romans 8:28. What insight does this verse give you in your understanding of Paul's encouragement here in 5:18. Explain the sense in which we can always be thankful?

6. What instruction is given in 5:19-20? Explain how people might be guilty of doing this?

7. What should we do when we determine something is good? (See 5:21) What does that look like for us today?

8. What should we do when we determine something is evil? (See 5:22) what does that look like for us today?

9. Paul often refers to God as “*the God of peace*” (See 5:23). A few examples in his other letters are: Romans 15:33, 1 Corinthians 14:33, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Philippians 4:9. Notice that these references always appear toward the end of each of these letters. Why do you think he does this?

10. What request did Paul make in 5:25? Why is it important to pray for those who preach the gospel?

11. Why do you think Paul wanted this letter “*read to all the holy brethren*”?

12. Paul always ended his letters with a blessing of grace. Why do you think he did this?

God's Grace

6 Ways to Understand Its True Meaning

Salvation Grace: The best grace is that God purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave all our sins. This immeasurable gift was given to you when you believed. You didn't work for it and you didn't even deserve it. If He stopped there it would have been enough, but He continues to give us even more grace, kindness, wisdom, and understanding.

Numerous Grace: I have sinned, I sin, and I will sin. I always seem to do what I don't want to do and not do what I want to do, even though I want to do right all the time. Yet God will forgive me each time if I repent. All sins, past, present, and future are forgiven after you believe in Christ.

Forgiveness Grace: Not only are all of my sins forgiven when I repent but I also gain a supernatural ability to forgive others of offenses they commit. God helps me to forgive little offenses, big offenses, and even previously unforgivable ones.

New Grace: Each morning I have the glorious chance to begin again. If I made mistakes yesterday, I can start over with a clean slate. Every new day, hour, and breath is a chance for me to act better and display more of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Freedom Grace: Grace gives me the freedom to forget about other people's opinions. I just need to be faithful to the One who created me, and He already loves me, so I have nothing to prove.

Future Grace: God promised to be with me at all times. He is with me in each present moment and those moments lead to a glorious future. Even when I go through trials, and I will, He is there to help me get through them and make the environment around me better. Always remember that grace is a gift. You can't earn it, but you get a lot of it. It's free and abundant.