

1-2 Thessalonians

*Life Group
Study Guide*

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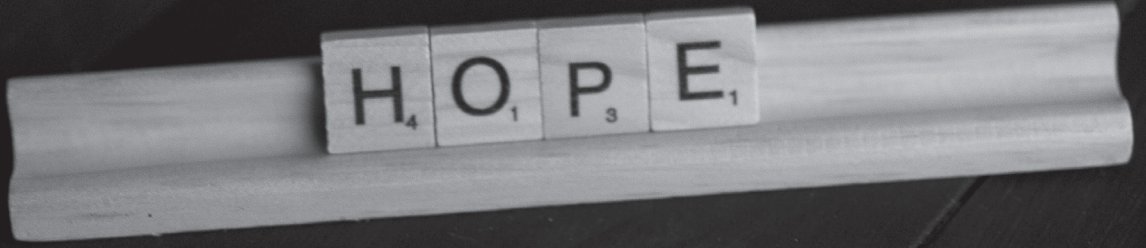
How to Use this Study Guide

This guide was written as a companion to our Life Group study in 1-2 Thessalonians this summer, beginning in May and continuing through July. We've prepared this guide in hopes that it will encourage you in your daily walk and prepare you to engage well as you study with others in your Life Group.

Each week's lesson contains a brief overview of the week's passage, and then five days worth of study. Each day, you will find a short introduction, some questions to get you thinking about the text, and then challenges to apply the text and pray for God to use it in your life. A careful reading of the day's passage and answering the questions should take most people about 15-20 minutes a day.

However you use this guide, our prayer is that it would continually drive you to make the study of God's Word a regular habit. May the Lord richly bless and sustain you as you meditate on His Word.

The Study Guide Team



Introduction

By Pastor Jason Hall

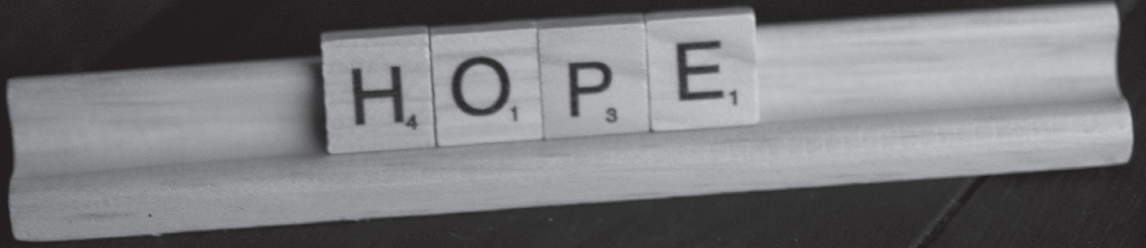
Where would you go if you could travel 30 years into the future? Would you want to peek in on what's coming for your kids or grandkids? Would you be interested in how things are faring in our world politically? How about checking out who wins the Super Bowl for the next three decades?

Human beings long to know what's next, but we can't. Despite all of our modern technology and advanced understanding, no human really knows what is going to happen in the next five minutes, much less the next five years. And such limitations on our knowledge often leave us fearful and anxious.

Paul's letters to the Thessalonian church have several themes, but the overarching theme is hope in light of Christ's return. Pastor Mark Dever writes, "we can know nothing about what lies ahead except for what God tells us." In these letters, the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will tell us to remain steadfast in our hope, believing the promise that Jesus will come again to bring eternal life to all who trust in Him.

We'll spend 12 weeks total walking through these two letters. Our study in 1 Thessalonians will take eight weeks, as we read of Paul's concern for the Thessalonian believers and their correct understanding of Christ's return. We'll take four weeks to read 2 Thessalonians, the shorter of the two letters, as Paul walks through important details about what Christians should expect before Jesus' second coming.

I hope that this study encourages and strengthens us as we wait in the "time between the times" of Jesus' first and second comings, and as we walk with our faithful Savior.



1 Thessalonians 1

Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians are intimately focused on living out Christian maturity in everyday life. These books reveal Paul's understanding of how the content of our beliefs affects the practice of our faith. Often when we think of Thessalonians, our minds first go to Paul's deep-dive into Christ's return in chapter 5, but we may forget that this teaching is motivated by Paul's desire to encourage believers dealing with death. These letters are deeply pastoral and overflowing with zealous discipleship.

Even here, in the opening lines of 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul is already encouraging these young believers in their faith, hope and love, the three-part virtue that you've likely seen elsewhere in Paul's writings. This chapter, and even the entire letter, can be considered as footnotes to this one concept. My Christian life will be a constant outworking of my faith, hope and love towards God, my brothers and sisters, and my neighbor.

Prepared by Jase Brown

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3

Paul addresses these new believers as “the church of the Thessalonians,” giving them a unified identity, and, as he often does, he refers to them with family language. Understanding the adversity that this church was born into (see Acts 17 for the full story), it was critical that Paul continue to press them together and solidify their unity under God in the Spirit. His constant prayer for them is for their continued growth.

According to verse 1, who is this letter from?

How does reminding this church of their identity strengthen their unity and nurture their faith?

How does the fact that Paul prays for these believers “constantly” illustrate his heart for discipleship?

Apply: Discipleship is a difficult, sometimes messy, process but we are all called to it. A lack of obedience to that calling likely stems from a lack of zeal for the work. Think about how you came to know the Lord and grew up in Him. Who was instrumental to that? Now imagine that you have the privilege to do that for someone else, and you will start to see the heart for discipleship that Paul displays in this letter.

Pray: Father help me remove any excuse that I have for making disciples. Show me in you and in your servant Paul the joy of being used by you to grow others into mature worshippers.

Day 2: 1 Thessalonians 1:3

In the introduction we mentioned the three-part virtue that Paul uses often in his writings: faith, hope and love. He describes here what these virtues have looked like in the Thessalonian church as he praises them for living them out. Let's explore each of these virtues, and the phrases around them, to see how God works them out in our lives.

“Work of faith” is the most active of the three phrases. Why is faith tied to works? How is this related to Jam. 2:18 and its surrounding context?

The word “labor” in “labor of love” is meant to convey an agonizing labor. Why is Christian love painted as such a difficult, distressing endeavor? What does that say about the kind of love we're meant to show?

“Steadfastness” conveys an endurance. How does hope give us endurance in our walk? How does this relate to Heb. 6:17-19?

Apply: These Christian virtues are the practical outworking of what we believe. If I take Jesus at His word, and I build my life on it, then I will have a living faith, an agonizing love, and an enduring hope. Those virtues will shape who I am and produce in me a life of worship worthy of a child of God.

Pray: Lord, help me understand what each of these virtues means and how to cultivate them in my life so that I may be like you, reflecting your glory to the world.

Day 3: 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5a

Paul now encourages this fledgling church by reminding them of the circumstances of their salvation, starting with the most important detail: They are chosen by the Father. To know that one is chosen by God is to know His love in a deeply intimate way. And that love compels us toward faithful obedience. But Paul also provides evidence of their calling by reminding them of their reception of the gospel.

How does inserting the phrase “brothers loved by God” in the middle of verse 4 help Paul to accentuate his point?

What are all the components to Paul’s evangelism in verse 5? Why is each component necessary?

What does the word “conviction” mean in context in this verse? What steps would you need to take to proclaim the gospel “with full conviction”?

Apply: The first step to making disciples is making converts. While we cannot stop there, it is important to understand what that looks like. We see in this example that evangelism requires both our activity as well as God’s. Our job is to speak the gospel with conviction. May our faith increase as we learn to share the gospel with fervor while trusting in God’s power to save.

Pray: Jesus, please give me your compassion for the lost and your conviction for the truth of the gospel. May my heart be in tune with yours as you send us out into the fields which are ready for harvest.

Day 4: 1 Thessalonians 1:5b-7

While still focusing on the growth of this church, Paul next reminds the Thessalonians of the examples that he and his companions were for them, which the church then imitated, becoming an example themselves for their whole region. Paul is laying out a model for relational discipleship. As Paul shares his life closely with others, they see how his faith is lived out and then have the opportunity to follow his footsteps. This intentional investment of time and resources helps to shape others into the image of Christ.

What are the evidences that Paul gives of their salvation?

How do these evidences of salvation affect those around them?

The word “example” was also used for coins from a mint or a wax seal. How do we make sure that the image we exemplify is the image of Christ?

Apply: The Thessalonians received the Word with affliction and joy in the Spirit. This is their example of faith, love and hope lived out. Through receiving the Word and meeting it with faithful obedience, they became an example to others in the same way Paul was an example to them. As we mature and share life together, let’s consider who can grow spiritually by our example.

Pray: Lord, show me the way to further obedience and holiness, and help me see where I can be an example of living faith, love and hope for your glory and kingdom.

Day 5: 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

In the final verses of this chapter, Paul again praises this young church for their example. He says that because of this example, the gospel has spread throughout their whole region so that when Paul rolls into a town he doesn't have much left to say! Their lives were a pattern for the gospel in how they received the apostles, turned from idols to God, and awaited the Son.

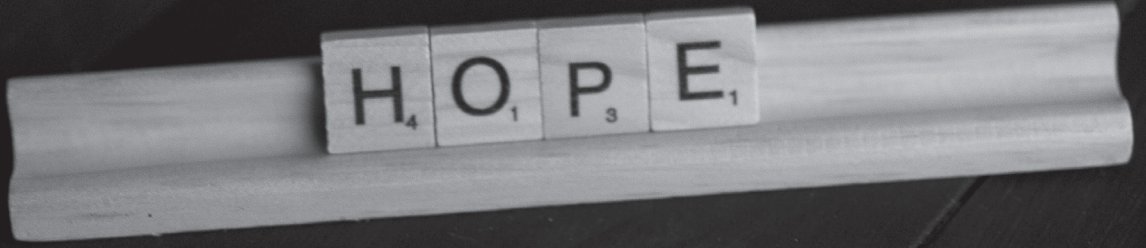
Verse 9 describes a picture of true repentance leading to true worship. How are repentance and worship related?

Verse 10 adds that the church was waiting for the Son's arrival. Why does Paul link anticipation for Jesus' second coming with worship?

Based on all of chapter 1, how would Paul define what a true disciple of Christ is?

Apply: When we think of “doctrine” we often only think of the content of our beliefs. However, Paul understands that right belief necessarily leads to right practice. Here in chapter 1, Paul praises the Thessalonians for how they have received truth and then built their lives on it. We also must find what is lacking in our beliefs and practices so that our lives can be a living illustration of true doctrine.

Pray: Jesus, you have walked in my shoes and know the struggles of my life, yet you are the perfect example. Please show me the places where my mind, heart and will fall short of your glory.



1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Last week, we studied Paul's thankfulness for the Thessalonians and his confidence in God's work in their lives. This week, Paul will shift his focus as he calls the Thessalonians to remember his ministry among them. He wants them to confidently consider what God has done through Paul and his fellow missionaries. Paul defends his ministry as authentic and blameless through courtroom-style appeals and heart-tugging analogies. His desire is not only for the Thessalonians to believe the right teaching but also to trust the right teachers. While he is thankful for the steadfastness of the Thessalonians' faith, he has more that he needs for them to hear. So before he bends their ears, he attempts to capture their hearts.

In an age in which relationships tend toward surface smiles and fake ministers care more about filling their buildings and pockets than tending their sheep, Paul's transparent affection for the Thessalonians arrests our attention. Paul loves the Thessalonians dearly, and he is not ashamed to expose his heart for the world to see. As you read this week, ask yourself how you can follow Paul's example of transparent affection and selfless service.

Prepared by Robin Hall

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

As Paul begins the defense of his ministry among the Thessalonians, he reminds them of the circumstances surrounding his initial missionary visit to them. Although these circumstances were difficult, God was faithful to produce fruit in their lives.

Why was Paul's trip to Thessalonica not in vain? Look back at 1:6-10 and forward to 3:5-7 for evidence of the fruit it produced.

Read Acts 16:19-24. What specifically happened to Paul and Silas at Philippi?

Despite these hardships and the further difficulties when they reached Thessalonica, how did Paul and Silas declare the gospel there (verse 2)?

Apply: If Paul and Silas had looked only at their circumstances to judge how their missionary journey was faring or whether they should continue, they likely would have never made it to Thessalonica or seen the amazing work that God would do there. However, they looked instead to the power of their God to give them the boldness to persevere.

Pray: Father, help us persevere in faith even when the circumstances around us tempt us to quit. Strengthen and embolden us through the power of your Spirit so that the gospel will continue to bear fruit in our lives and the lives of those we encounter, all for your glory.

Day 2: 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6

Paul reminds the Thessalonians in these verses that God had entrusted him with the ministry of the gospel to the Gentiles, which included his ministry to them. Paul's investment in them did not come from merely human motives or means but from God.

Read through today's passage and list below all the false motives or incorrect ways of sharing the gospel that Paul mentions.

What was Paul's (correct) motive for sharing the gospel with the Thessalonians?

The Bible uses words like "declare" and "proclaim" and (in Acts 17:2-5) "reason," "explain," "prove," and "persuade" to describe Paul's teaching ministry among the Thessalonians. What do these words reveal about Paul and his ministry?

Apply: Paul knew that his ministry came from God and that his aim should be to please God, not man. God alone would test his heart and hold him accountable for the stewardship he had been given. God will likewise test the motives of our hearts as we seek to serve Him.

Pray: Father, search our hearts and show us any impure motives or inappropriate means in how we serve you and share your good news. Let it be the love of Christ that controls us, not selfishness, greed, or the glory of men.

Day 3: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

Paul reveals his heart for the Thessalonian church tenderly in today's passage. His gentle, affectionate self-sacrifice is a model of grace and love for all of us.

What simile does Paul use in verse 7 to describe his care for the Thessalonians?

How does Paul's heart toward the Thessalonians compare with Christ's heart for us? See Matt. 11:29.

To what extent was Paul willing to serve the churches God had put in his care? See verse 8 as well as 2 Cor. 12:14-15, Phil. 2:17 and 2 Tim. 2:8-10.

Apply: The apostle Paul is a fitting example for us as a servant of Christ who “left it all on the field” as he served Christ's church. He poured himself out, body and soul, on behalf of unbelievers and believers. We are called to do likewise.

Pray: Father, you have called us to be your ambassadors of light in a dark world. Help us to follow in Paul's footsteps and the steps of Christ as we pour ourselves out in transparent love and selflessness to serve our families, our church, and our neighbors.

Day 4: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

As we read further in chapter 2, we see Paul continue his previous discourse with the same themes but additional examples and illustrations. Let's see what we can continue to learn from his example of servant leadership.

Following closely on the heels of verse 8, we see in verse 9 one specific way in which Paul and Silas shared not only the gospel with the Thessalonians but also their “own selves.” Read verse 9 as well as 2 Thess. 3:7-8. What “labor and toil” is Paul referring to?

What specific words does Paul use in today's passage to describe his ministry among the Thessalonians? Note how this additional list continues to build Paul's defensive case regarding his ministry.

What final simile does Paul use to describe his ministry? How does this illustration complement the previous analogy he used in verse 7?

Apply: While God alone is the author of salvation, we see here that Paul is not a passive observer of the Thessalonians' salvation and growth in the gospel. Like a hovering parent, he cares for, attends to, exhorts, encourages, and challenges. He is fully invested and actively engaged. How can you emulate his example this week?

Pray: Father, thank you for calling us into your kingdom and glory. And we thank you for the people you used in our lives to get us to the place we are today. We also thank you for the gift of being your fellow workers (1 Cor. 3:9). We are not worthy, but we are eternally grateful.

Day 5: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Today we will review this week's entire passage. As you read through the passage as a whole, look closely for the following:

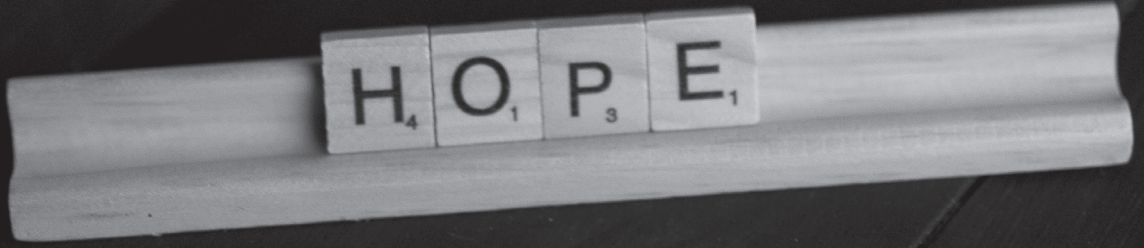
Note the number of times Paul uses defense-building type words such as: “you know,” “you remember,” “you are witnesses,” and “God is witness.”

Look for clues within the passage and in verses surrounding it as to why Paul is defending his ministry of love toward them.

Paul doesn't just want the Thessalonians' ears; He wants their hearts. List below the words Paul uses to appeal to their emotions.

Apply: Paul uses words of logic as well as emotion to describe his relationship with the Thessalonian church. This is because the mission of the gospel appeals both to our heads and our hearts. When we are saved, our minds, affections, and wills are transformed, as well as our relationships. Therefore, our message and ministry toward others must reflect this full-life focus.

Pray: Father, transform us so that we love you with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. This is your will for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Help us pursue this with selfless abandon and sincere affection.



1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Since its beginning, the church at Thessalonica had been in the midst of conflict. On his initial visit, Paul preached for “three Sabbaths,” or three weeks, at the synagogue in Thessalonica. Acts 17 records that many Greeks and Jews were genuinely converted. The time these Christian “children” had with their spiritual “parent” was relatively short — Jews who opposed the gospel drove Paul out of the city.

In chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy encouraged their Thessalonian brothers and sisters by recounting the faith and truths they possessed and had been taught. These believers also needed assurance that, although they were suffering, their faith was genuine and their eternity secure. Indeed, suffering had been, and always will be, a mark of genuine Christian faith. Throughout this recounting is a sweet undertone of love. Paul was eagerly trying to come to them, calling them a “glory and joy.”

Prepared by Stef Dowd

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy continually thanked God over the Thessalonians' response to the gospel. Today we will look at the specific steps that led to this response.

Which phrase does Paul use (twice) in this verse to describe the gospel?

Read Rom. 10:17. Using this verse with verse 13, what was the first step of the Thessalonians' response to the gospel?

Following the progression in verse 13, how did the Thessalonians respond after hearing the Word of God?

Apply: Paul finishes this verse by acknowledging that the Word of God is still at work in these believers. Heb. 4:12 describes the Word as “discerning the thoughts and motivations of the heart.” God uses His Word to work in a Christian’s life to bring true heart change. Are you in His Word enough that it works in you, causing you to grow in Christlikeness?

Pray: God, thank you for allowing me to hear and have an opportunity to accept your word. Please give me the grace to see your work in my life through your Word.

Day 2: 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

Neither God's Word nor His ways ever change. Since the Word of God was at work in the Thessalonian believers, the fruit of the Word's work among them led to suffering, just as it led to suffering for their brothers and sisters in Judea, and as the Lord Jesus Himself had suffered for righteousness.

What was similar about the Thessalonian and Judean churches?

How are the Jews, who caused the churches in Judea to suffer, described in verses 15-16?

What in verse 16 would encourage or give hope to these suffering believers? Why?

Apply: Ultimately, we will all imitate someone. Whom will you choose to emulate, and what consequences will result from that choice? The Thessalonians imitated the early churches of Judea, who had imitated Christ. This led to suffering but also fruit and eternal reward.

Pray: Lord Jesus, I praise you for being the only one worthy to be fully imitated. Reveal the areas in which my life does not look like yours and help me change. May my imitation of you encourage those around me to pursue you.

Day 3: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had run into problems in Thessalonica shortly after this church had begun. In Acts 17, we are told that unbelieving Jews incited a mob against Paul and his companions, so much so that the three had to leave in the middle of the night.

Here in verse 17, how does Paul describe their necessary departure? This phrase refers to an orphaned child's separation from their parents. Why would Paul use such a strong word?

What other words in verse 17 display Paul's love for the Thessalonians?

Paul had tried to get back to the Thessalonians in many ways but could not. To whom does he attribute this hindrance?

Apply: Paul's ability to love others is outmatched only by the love of Jesus. It was a rare occasion that he spent a long time with a church after beginning it, yet he always expressed sincere parental and brotherly love for them. In what ways do you also express selfless love for other believers?

Pray: O God of perfect love, I praise you that those who are in you will never be "torn away" from you. Please help me use my security in your love to love those around me freely and without hesitation.

Day 4: 2 Corinthians 11:23-30

One of the themes of this chapter is perseverance — the work of the kingdom sometimes comes at a significant cost to God's servants. In his ministry to the Thesalonians, Paul was opposed and hindered much more than he would have liked, and the Thesalonians themselves faced opposition.

Today we'll look at a passage from another of Paul's letters that demonstrates Paul's attitude toward suffering and how he viewed opposition.

Read verses 23-28 and list below all of the physical challenges Paul faced in his ministry.

Considering all these hardships, what word does Paul use to describe himself in verse 29?

Apply: One chapter later, in 2 Corinthians 12, Paul continues reflecting on his weakness and concludes: "...when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). Take time today to consider all the ways you are weak, and then praise the Lord for your weakness.

Pray: Lord, I am constantly tempted to trust in my own strength and boast in it. Please help me see that the only way to find your strength is to embrace my weakness.

Day 5: 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

When a child hears a parent say, “I’m proud of you” or “You are the joy of my life,” a huge, happy smile comes to their face. Verses 19-20 are Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy’s way of sharing those loving truths with the Thessalonians.

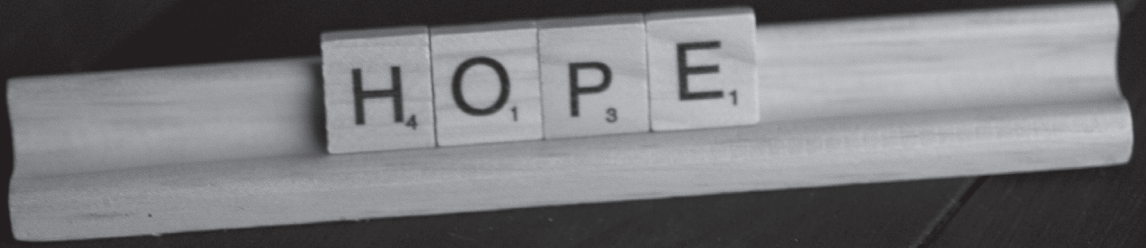
How is the “boasting” in verse 19 different than the “boasting” referred to in Eph. 2:8-9?

In the Greco-Roman world, a victorious athlete received a crown or wreath at the end of a race. How does this affect your understanding of verse 19? To what future event does this verse point?

Why would this (or any) church need to focus on the coming of our Lord Jesus?

Apply: Paul ministered and lived with Jesus’ second coming in constant view. It gave him a sense of urgency to share the gospel and the confidence to live boldly. What does thinking about Christ’s second coming stir you to do?

Pray: Lord Jesus, I believe you are coming again according to your Word. May my life have a peaceful urgency that looks for opportunities to boast in your salvation. Help me seize those opportunities and bring glory and joy to you.



1 Thessalonians 3

In the first part of Paul's letter to the Thessalonian church, he recounts his meeting with the Thessalonian believers who eagerly received the gospel message and became followers of Christ. Though Paul was only with them for a short time, he loved them deeply and cared for them as a spiritual father who was constantly concerned for their welfare and spiritual growth. Paul was not just concerned with leading them to trust in Christ; he wanted to make sure they developed spiritually to the point where they could stand firm on the foundation of God's Word so that they would not be deceived or persuaded to follow false doctrine. Paul was a living demonstration of one who fully carried out the Great Commission of Matt. 28:18-20.

Disciple-makers lead people to know Christ and teach them how to live according to His Word so that they too may grow spiritually strong and become disciple-makers themselves. We are all commissioned to be disciple-makers. As disciple-makers, we should follow Paul's example by developing a love for people and a passion for leading them to know and follow Christ.

Prepared by Chuck Bounds

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Today we begin our study with the word “therefore,” which points our attention to the end of chapter 2, where Paul began to show concern for his friends in Thessalonica. Though he could not be with them at the time, he shared his desire to know that they were steadfast in their faith and progressing in their walk with Christ. He was thrilled to have led these believers to Christ, yet he was concerned lest they get discouraged and abandon their faith.

Read verse 1 and then look back to 2:17-19. What was Paul referring to when he said, “when we could bear it no longer?”

Who was Paul referring to when he wrote “we” in verse 1? Refer to Acts 17:14-15.

Read verses 1 and 2. Paul was hindered from returning to Thessalonica to spend more time with the new believers there. Which one of Paul’s friends did he send to help and teach them, and how did he refer to this young man?

Apply: Paul demonstrates his love for people and his passion for making disciples, driven by his love for Christ. Our love for people flows from our love for our Savior. If we do not love people as we should, we do not love Jesus as we should.

Pray: Dear Lord Jesus, teach me to grow in my love for you. Please forgive me when I am less than loving toward others and help me by the power of your Spirit to love others as you have loved me.

Day 2: 1 Thessalonians 3:2-4

Paul was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ as a missionary and church planter to the Gentiles. God not only equipped Paul for the task, but He also provided him with faithful men and women to help him in the work. Timothy was one such young man who served under Paul's leadership. He had apparently re-joined Paul in Athens and went back to Thessalonica on Paul's behalf at Paul's request.

Read verse 2. What were the two assignments Paul gave Timothy as he sent him to the Thessalonian church?

Read the first part of verse 3. What was Paul's main reason for sending Timothy back to Thessalonica?

Read verse 4 and Acts 17:5-9. When Paul was in Thessalonica, he warned the new believers that they would suffer persecution or "affliction." Who was behind this persecution, and what were their claims?

Apply: Timothy was a young man who was prepared to serve and help others grow in their faith. Ask yourself: "Am I prepared to help someone else grow into a disciple-maker?"

Pray: Lord, thank you for the privilege of having access to your Word. Please create in me a stronger desire to know your Word well so that I may help others to grow strong in their faith in you.

Day 3: 1 Thessalonians 3:4-5

In today's verses, Paul continues his thoughts on being prepared for affliction and tribulation. Paul had only spent about three weeks with the Thessalonian believers before the spiritual opposition pressed him to leave. He knew that Satan's cunning temptations could deceive them. His desire for these new believers was to establish them in their faith so that they would not be moved away from following Christ when they faced persecution.

Read verse 4. Paul warned these new believers that affliction would come. What forms of affliction may we suffer because of our faith in Christ?

Read verse 5. Paul talked about having unbearable concern for knowing how the Thessalonian believers were holding up amidst the hardship of persecution. What did he fear may happen to these believers who were new to faith in Christ?

At the end of verse 5, Paul said, "our labor would be in vain." What do you think Paul meant by this statement? Do you think Paul was selfishly concerned about his own time and efforts?

Apply: Paul, like a caring parent, expressed his anxious desire to find out how his spiritual children were faring in the face of affliction. When God entrusts us with the discipleship of a new believer, we must take on the responsibility with all of the love, concern, and care that we would have for our own children.

Pray: Lord, thank you for allowing me to take part in sharing your gospel with others. Help me remember that it is both a privilege and great responsibility to disciple a brother or sister in Christ. I will give you all the glory for what you accomplish through me.

Day 4: 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

Today we will look at the importance of relationships between brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul served with his heart, taking a personal interest in those he led to Christ. Communication was slow in the first century, and it was often difficult for Paul to stay in touch with the people he had won to Christ. In the verses we looked at yesterday, we learned how difficult it was for Paul not knowing if his new converts had grown in their faith or turned away amidst persecution. In today's passage, we learn that Paul received good news from the mission field!

What was the good news that Timothy had brought to Paul concerning the spiritual state of the Thessalonian believers?

Take another look at the end of verse 6. According to Timothy's report, how did the Thessalonian believers feel about Paul and his friends who had led them to faith in Christ?

Read verses 7-10. Paul had learned that the believers in Thessalonica were doing well and growing in their faith. In a couple of sentences, describe Paul's response to this great news.

Apply: Taking a personal interest in the people we lead to follow Christ is essentially a commitment to love them with the love of Christ. It is hard work, often rewarding and sometimes discouraging, but worth all our efforts. It is loving as Jesus loved.

Pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me and for your Word that teaches me about your love. Help me love others so that when they look at me, they see you. May my love for others bring you glory.

Day 5: 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

A commitment to making disciples includes loving others, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, teaching God's Word, and prayer. Paul ends this chapter by praying for the Thessalonian believers he viewed as his spiritual children. Paul knew that his efforts were limited, and his spiritual children were sometimes out of his reach and sight, but he also knew that no one is ever out of God's reach or sight. Paul knew that the one thing, indeed the best thing, he could do was to pray to God on their behalf.

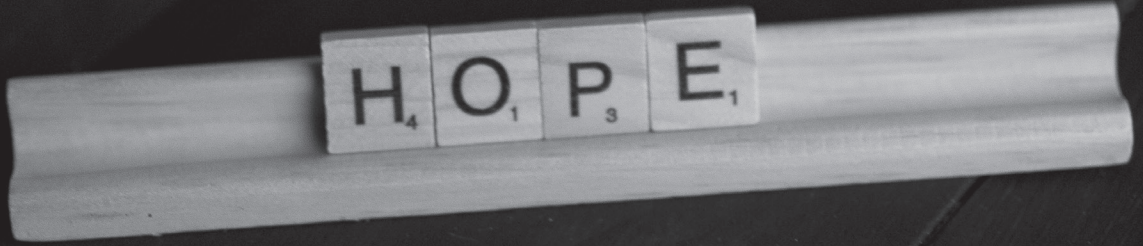
Read verse 11. What did Paul pray for himself and his friends?

Read verses 12-13. Paul told the Thessalonian believers that he was praying for them. What two things was Paul asking God to do for these new believers?

How do you pray for those whom you want to come to know Christ? What do you ask God to do?

Apply: Jesus told us to make disciples. Our main tools for disciple-making are God's Word and prayer. Paul was a master with these tools and an excellent example for us to follow.

Pray: Dear Lord, I want to be obedient to your call to make disciples. Teach me what to say and how to pray. Forgive me when I am shy or afraid to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Give me the boldness to tell others about my wonderful Lord Jesus, who loves me and saved me.



1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Some people view Christianity as just a ticket to heaven. For others, it may be a family tradition or a ritual. However, biblical faith is trusting fully in the work of Christ and surrendering completely to His lordship. It requires loving Him above all else. The tangible evidence of true faith is a transformed life. This transformation is an ongoing process defined by God's Word and enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit. A transformed life will pursue holiness, love others and reflect Christ in the world around them.

The Lord raised the Thessalonian church up from a pagan environment. Believers still had to contend with the old culture as they pursued new life in Christ. Paul recognized their transformation and encouraged them not just to be different but to excel. He urged them to walk in a manner that pleased God and to love others and to do so more and more. This message rings true for the church today. It is God's will for you to be holy, that is, set apart for Him; and to love others as He has loved you, and to do so more and more and more.

Prepared by Mike Greene

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 3:11-4:12

Paul continues to develop themes introduced in the previous chapters by shifting to practical application. Review 1 Thess. 3:11-13, and then read the entire text of this week's passage to get the big picture. Pay particular attention to the action words.

Is it possible to obey God and still not please Him? Why, or why not? Review the story of Jonah and see how it affects your answer.

The Thessalonians seemed to be doing the right things. Why do you think Paul needed to address these things again? Make a list of the key things that Paul exhorts them to do.

Paul not only instructed and exhorted his readers, but he also explained why they should respond. See how many reasons you can find in the text.

Apply: What was true for the first readers of any passage of Scripture is still true today. Prayerfully examine your walk with Christ and your relationships with others. How has it changed in the last month? In the last year? What will you do differently tomorrow?

Pray: Thank you, Father, for the life-changing power of the gospel. Thank you for loving us enough to save us and change us. Help me to walk in your ways more and more.

Day 2: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

Reread the entire passage and then focus today on verses 1-2. Note that Paul is not just concerned about the present condition of the believers in Thessalonica, but more so about their ongoing spiritual growth. Your walk with Christ is an outworking of your love for Him and your desire to please Him.

According to the text, what is the source and authority of Paul's instruction? (Note the phrase that is repeated in verses 1 and 2)

Paul recognizes that the church is following his prior instruction, so what does he call them to do now? What does he mean by "walk"?

What reason or motivation does Paul give here? Compare with 1 Cor. 10:31.

Apply: Your embrace of the gospel was just the first step in an eternal adventure. Determine to step out of your comfort zone this week to do more, not to earn favor, but to show love for God. Your love for God is demonstrated in your love for others.

Pray: Father, please forgive me for the selfish choices I have made and the times I have wandered from you. Help me change the affections of my heart and make pleasing you the ultimate goal in my life.

Day 3: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

The Thessalonians came out of and were still surrounded by a culture where sexual immorality was considered normal. Pagan Greek religion even included sex in its version of worship. Sexual immorality is certainly not the only sin to abstain from, but Paul addresses a practical situation as an example of what new life in Christ looks like. As you study the text today, consider how these principles apply to us today.

According to the text, what is God's will for you? How does this compare to the significant events in life where we desperately want to know God's will to make a decision?

How would you define sanctification? Let the text form your answer. See Rom. 6:1-7, 19 for additional help with your answer.

What reasons does Paul give in this passage for abstaining from sexual immorality?

Apply: Paul identifies sanctification as God's will for you. In verse 13 of the previous chapter, holiness is the goal. 1 Thess. 5:12-23 lists several more actions that are the will of God for you. These are not contradictory but are all manifestations of Christ-likeness. Resolve to please God by submitting to His will for your everyday life before seeking His will for life's significant events. He calls you to be holy and to love others every day.

Pray: Lord, help me love others so much that I am not inclined to sin against them. Thank you for your Holy Spirit, who enables my transformation to be more like Christ. (See 1 John 1:9 and include that in your prayer).

Day 4: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

After citing a danger to be avoided, Paul turns to a practice to be cultivated: loving others. Loving others is not a box to check, it is an outward sign of life in Christ, and it is to be learned and practiced as we grow in Christ. Paul exhorts the believer not to cause problems and not be a burden to others.

If the Thessalonians already love others, what is Paul exhorting them to do now? Why do you think this is necessary?

In what ways does God teach us to love one another? What are some ways He has demonstrated love to us? How does the idea of learning to love compare with what we see in our culture today?

How does living a quiet (settled) life and working show love to others? What does the text say?

Apply: Don't be satisfied with just getting along with people when God has called you to grow and excel in loving others. To be an effective ambassador for Christ, you must love others as He has loved you.

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for showing your love for me in that while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me. Help me to show love to others so that I cause them no trouble and so they see Christ in me.

Day 5: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Sexual purity is a practical application of biblical doctrine. Paul never claims that sexual desire is evil in itself, but it must be sanctified like everything else in the life of a believer. Loving others is both a choice and a command.

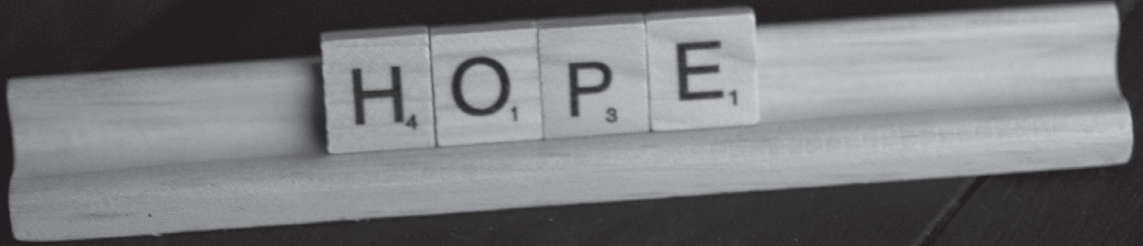
Why do you think Paul mentions sanctification, particularly abstaining from sexual immorality, and brotherly love in the same passage? What do these have in common?

Read Gal. 6:7-10. How does Paul's instruction to the Thessalonians relate to the principle of reaping what you sow?

Based on this text, how would you respond to someone who claims that the Bible is not practical?

Apply: While we are exhorted to put off old behaviors and put on new ones, be encouraged that the Holy Spirit enables our transformation. Regardless of where you are in your spiritual growth, the most important thing is to obey what you know as you continue to grow. When you love others, you are not as likely to sin against them.

Pray: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14)



1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

At the beginning of chapter 4, Paul began the conclusion to his letter by addressing the Thessalonians on the issues of personal holiness and brotherly love. Now, beginning in verse 13, he shifts his topic a bit to encourage them about their fellow church members who had passed away. Apparently, some of the Thessalonian believers were distraught because some of their members had died. While this concern seems strange to us, we must remember that many of these Thessalonian believers were new in their faith. They did not yet understand all of the glorious benefits of the resurrection.

Prepared by Jason Hall

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Paul's primary desire for the Thessalonians is that they be informed. He wanted them to have the proper understanding of death, and its place in the Christian walk, before he could explain further God's ultimate plan.

Two times in these verses, Paul uses the euphemism of “falling asleep” to describe Thessalonian believers who had died, either of natural causes or because of persecution. According to verse 13, why does he want them to be informed?

The Thessalonians were grieving their loved ones who had died, which is understandable. How would the hope that Paul wants to give them help them in their grief?

What is the good reason for the Thessalonians to have hope, according to verse 14?

Apply: Grief is a proper response to the pain of death, which is itself a result of sin. But to grieve with hope is the special grace given to Christians because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. When we are tempted to lose hope, we must cling by faith to the truth of the resurrection.

Pray: Lord, thank you for the bottomless grace of the new life found in Christ. Based on your promise, we believe that those who have died as Christians will live again. Strengthen us to live in this hope and share this hope with others.

Day 2: 1 Thessalonians 4:15

Having established that all of those who die in Christ will live again because of the promise of the resurrection, Paul moves one to answer what may have been the Thessalonians' next question: Will we see them again? Does the promise of the resurrection contain an inherent promise of reunion for the saints of God?

What does Paul say is the source, or authority, of his teaching in this passage?

What event does Paul refer to in verse 15 to clarify his statement, “we who are alive”?

At the end of verse 15, does Paul imply that the fate of those who have “fallen asleep” will be any different from those who are “left until the coming of the Lord?”

Apply: All those in Christ — those who have died and are alive when He returns — will enjoy the same blessings of being in Christ for eternity. While it is natural for us to fear death, we need not do so because of the promises of God in Christ.

Pray: Father, when we think of cherished friends and loved ones who were believers and have preceded us in death, lead us to rejoice that we will see them again and that all of those in Christ will join Him in His triumphant return.

Day 3: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:11 and Matthew 24:29-51

When Paul mentioned, in verse 15, that his teaching for the Thessalonians came “by a word from the Lord,” he was looking back to Jesus’ teaching on the Lord’s second coming. Let’s notice what Paul learned from Jesus by comparing Paul’s letter with Matthew’s Gospel.

Only one question today, but it’s a long one. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:11, and then read Matthew 24:29-51. In the space below, list words, phrases, or themes that occur in both places.

Apply: The more we read about the second coming of Christ, the more confident we should be of His authority. Further, we should grow more urgent in our obedience and the sharing of our faith since unbelievers are oblivious to these things. Whom will you share with today?

Pray: Lord, like Paul, we do not know when you will return. But we do know that you have told us in advance to be prepared so that we can encourage each other and warn the world. Give me the strength, boldness, and love to be faithful in my witness.

Day 4: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Today, let's look at how Paul describes the Lord's second coming, particularly from the church's perspective. What will Jesus' return be like for those who are in Him?

What sounds will accompany the return of Christ?

Paul delineates what types of believers will be reunited, or “caught up together,” at the return of Christ. What will happen to each of them?

What is the final statement of verse 17, and what encouragement does it bring you?

Apply: While we don't know the exact timing of the Lord's return, we do know what will happen. There will be a great reunion of all saints from all time as we celebrate Jesus' reign and return to earth to rule with Him forever. Don't lose sight of the main idea: “We will always be with the Lord.” Hallelujah!

Pray: Jesus, we praise and glorify you as the King of heaven and earth. You reign right now, in our hearts and through your church, having conquered the spiritual powers of death and hell. One day, you will return to claim your throne over your earthly creation. Until that day, Lord, sustain and strengthen your church to do your will.

Day 5: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

It is an unfortunate side effect of our innate curiosity that discussions of the Lord's return among believers sometimes focus more on less clear issues of secondary importance, like specific timing and world events. While these issues are worth discussing — there is a correct answer, after all — we should nonetheless not lose sight of the main point. Today, re-read the whole paragraph but focus your attention on verse 18.

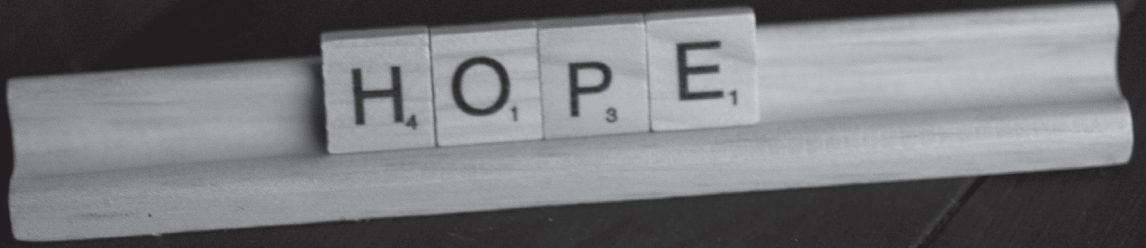
What does Paul want the Thessalonians to do because of his teaching?

How does he want them to do it (hint: What is the last word in chapter 4)?

In what ways will you commit to taking Paul's advice?

Apply: We are told to encourage one another using our words. Paul isn't talking about bland compliments. We are to remind each other, in conversations, about the return of Jesus, the reunion of the saints, and the eternal reign of our Lord. These truths aren't meant to divide but to build up!

Pray: Lord, thank you that your soon return is an encouragement to our souls. We have the privilege of speaking these words of encouragement to each other all the time, so enable and remind us to do just that.



Prayer Week

As we look ahead to Life Group meetings on June 19, we're going to spend our time together praying for ourselves, our groups, and our church.

As we prepare our hearts this week for our time of prayer in Life Groups, we'll look back on what we've studied and reflect. Feel free to use the suggestions below as you move through this week.

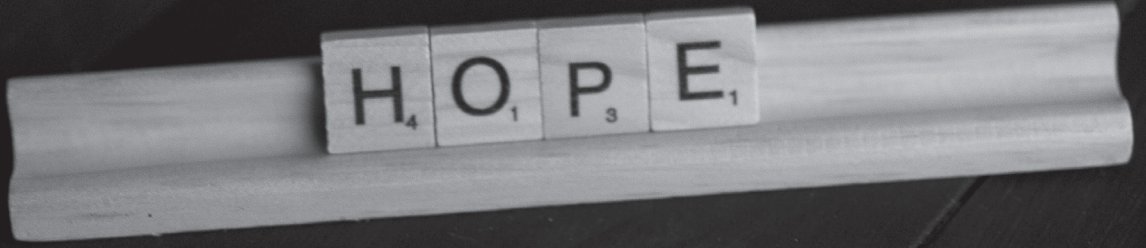
Day 1: Re-read 1 Thess. 1:2-5. Thank God for the specific instances of faith and hope you have seen among our church family.

Day 2: Re-read 1 Thess. 1:8-10. Thank God for those who have been saved through our church's witness, and pray for continued fruit.

Day 3: Re-read 1 Thess. 2:6-8. Pray for our pastors to be gentle and affectionate in their service to their church.

Day 4: Re-read 1 Thess. 2:13-16. Pray for the Word of the Lord to be taught accurately in our church, and for the Word to be at work in all of us as we obey.

Day 5: Re-read 1 Thess. 3:6-10. Pray that we would be encouraging to one another so that in all distress and affliction we may be comforted in Christ.



1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

We've already had a preview of this week's passage when we looked last week at these verses and compared them with Matthew 24. So we know that what Paul shares here, about the second coming of Christ, he shares because Jesus himself taught it. At the end of chapter 4, Paul's primary concern was to address the Thessalonians' anxiety regarding their deceased friends by reminding them of Jesus' resurrection and the Lord's return. At the beginning of chapter 5, he will address those same events but from the perspective of timing and the judgment of unbelievers.

Prepared by Jason Hall

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

Having encouraged the Thessalonians, and encouraged them to encourage one another, Paul turns to something they know about: the timing of Jesus' return, which he refers to here as the "day of the Lord."

What do the Thessalonian believers already know, according to verse 2?

What are the contrast statements in verse 3?

What will be the fate of unbelievers, according to the end of verse 3?

Apply: For unbelievers, Christ's return will be unexpected. We should not be surprised when worldly people are comfortable in the world. But believers know better and should live in joyful and fearful expectation of His coming.

Pray: Lord, teach me to be a faithful witness, knowing that the message of Christ's return may ring hollow in a world obsessed with its own "peace and security." May we be undeterred by adversity and press on toward the upward call of God in Christ, by faith in His name.

Day 2: 1 Thessalonians 5:4-7

While the world continues in ignorance of its coming destruction, believers' knowledge of Jesus' return should lead them to a particular posture or mindset. Today we'll examine Paul's encouragement toward how we should live in light of Jesus' coming.

What metaphors does Paul use in these verses to illustrate the difference between believers and unbelievers?

Paul calls us to be “children of light.” When you turn on the lights in a dark room, what happens? How does that apply to our lives now?

What are some ways we can be tempted to be “sleepy” regarding Christ's return?

Apply: As children of light, we are to exemplify our Lord, who is himself the “light of the world.” God has revealed to us His purposes and plans so that we may redeem the time we have left for His glory and fame.

Pray: Lord, equip us to be awake, sober, and children of light as we live in a dark, sleepy, and drunk world. We are tempted each day to focus on the temporal rather than the eternal. Forgive us, and lift our eyes to see that you are coming soon.

Day 3: **Matthew 25:1-12**

We'll continue meditating on yesterday's theme of preparedness by looking at Jesus' parable of the ten virgins.

In reading these verses, what makes the wise virgins wise and the foolish virgins foolish?

The exact timing of the bridegroom's coming was unknown to both the wise and foolish virgins. What does that tell you about Christ's second coming?

What do the shut door of verse 10 and the anxious cries of the foolish virgins in verse 11 reveal about the opportunity to come to Christ in faith?

Apply: No one knows when Jesus will return — the difference between believers and unbelievers is that we will be prepared, while they will not. That preparation is the difference between eternal life and death. Are you prepared?

Pray: Lord, let these verses remind me to be sober and awake to the reality of eternal judgment. Let it drive us not only to holy living but to bold warning and loving encouragement of unbelievers to trust you for salvation.

Day 4: 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11

We know that believers are to be prepared for the coming of the Lord, but what does that look like for us? In verses 8-11, Paul turns toward specific encouragement in holiness and faith as we wait for Jesus.

Using the metaphor of a soldier preparing for battle (breastplate, helmet), what three words does Paul use to describe our thinking?

The promise of eternal life awaits all believers, Paul says, for those who are “awake or asleep.” What does this metaphor refer to (remember 4:13-18)?

As at the end of chapter 4, Paul ends his teaching with an admonition for believers. What is it?

Apply: Faith, love, and the hope of salvation are our message and mindset until Jesus returns. 1 John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Pray: Father, thank you for your perfect plan and eternal purpose, to unite all things in Christ, in heaven, and on earth. Fill me with your Spirit to walk with you in faith and love, and to love others selflessly until Jesus returns.

Day 5: Revelation 21:1-4

We're going to end this week, and Paul's focus on the return of Christ, by reflecting on John's vision of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation. This vision should encourage us because it reminds us of what is ours in Christ and what awaits us when Christ returns. These verses give us more and more details with which to encourage each other about our future together.

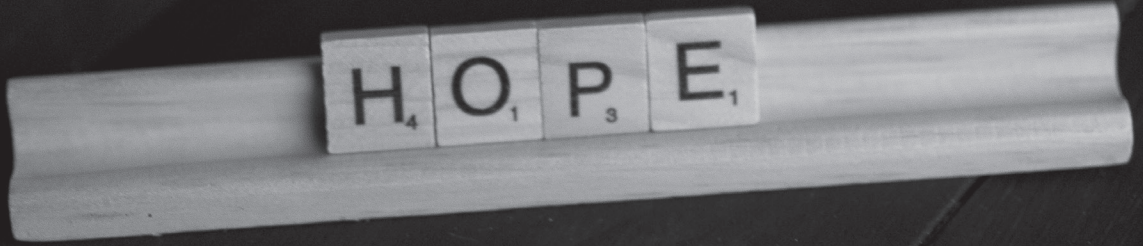
In the first two verses, we see the unveiling of the eternal city. How does verse 3 describe the relationship between God and us in this new city?

What things will be gone from this city, according to verse 4?

How do these verses remind us of Paul's encouragement for the Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11?

Apply: Whatever we are struggling with fades away in the glorious light of the truth of Revelation 21. If you are holding on to fear, anxiety, anger, or despair, re-read these verses and fix your hope on the certain promises of God in Christ.

Pray: "To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!" (Psalm 123:1). Lord, keep my vision fixed upon this eternal city, in which you will dwell with your people forever. Let this be the song of my soul and the cry of my heart.



1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

Would you compose a letter to a family member the same way you would to a business associate? What language would you include to indicate it was written to family? In this final chapter of Thessalonians, pay close attention to Paul's language as he makes his final points.

Paul has focused throughout this letter on the second coming of Jesus. In closing, he gives a final set of instructions and a blessing. He calls the Thessalonian believers "brothers" five times in these final verses, continuing a pattern in Paul's writings - he uses the word 60 times throughout his letters and 27 times between 1 and 2 Thessalonians. This language shows us how Paul views his fellow believers — he is writing to his family. Every believer is part of the family of God, and each local church should reflect this truth. Every family has its difficult members, and the church body is no different. As members of one family, we must cooperate to build the family. We must admonish and encourage, patiently strengthen the struggling, use wisdom in our judgment, and trust the Holy Spirit as we seek to do what is good. As Paul has just said in the verses before this passage: "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (5:2). As a member of God's family, will you be found faithfully laboring for the Lord?

Prepared by Faith Cross

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Paul begins this final section to his family in Christ with an admonition. While he is polite, the authoritative tone is clear. A family with no respect for its leaders will fall apart. Those who labor for the family of God deserve and require our respect and support.

In verse 13, who is Paul explicitly referring to that is “over you in the Lord?” Read Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5.

What specific words does Paul use to describe how the believers should be treating these elders? What does this suggest about how they are treating the elders?

According to Heb. 13:17a, how significant is the responsibility of leaders in the church?

Apply: Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to be at peace among themselves. While we do not know the exact cause of these believers’ disunity, we know from God’s Word that quarrels and fights come from selfish desires (see James 4:1-3). As Christ’s family, we must not get caught up in selfish sins that keep us from appreciating and respecting these leaders.

Pray: Lord, help me to be an agent of unity and peace in this body of believers: “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness,” James 3:17-18.

Day 2: 1 Thessalonians 5:14-16

Paul has addressed the believers' relationship with their leaders. He now turns his attention to the relationships among themselves. There are some difficult people in this Thessalonian church — lazy, discouraged, selfish, unkind... does this sound familiar? Life in a family of believers can be challenging. However, we must evaluate ourselves first — are we part of the problem or the solution?

Look at verse 14. “Idle” can also be translated as unruly, disruptive, disorderly, or unquiet. “Fainthearted” can also be disheartened, feeble-minded, discouraged, timid, or lacking spiritual courage. “Weak” is specifically referring to spiritual weakness. How do these additional translations help your understanding of what was going on in the Thessalonian church?

What imperatives (commands) does Paul give the believers for how to deal with the struggling church members?

Read Rom. 15:1-3. What is our responsibility as believers in the church family? Who is our example of bearing with the weak and glorifying God?

Apply: It can be difficult to be in community with others who disrupt fellowship and are weak in their faith. We are commanded to “be patient with them all” (verse 15). Before judging others, we must first evaluate ourselves. Are we struggling in any of these areas? We must also choose compassion and kindness, turning our eyes to Christ, who “daily bears our burdens” (Ps. 68:19).

Pray: “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” (Gal. 6:1-3)

Day 3: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Paul now turns his attention to behaviors that distinguish and define the Christian life. Easily memorizable, this next set of verses is often quoted in Christian circles. They are short and to the point. What are the hallmarks of the Christ-follower?

“Rejoice” means to show great joy. Joy is a theme in Paul’s writings. Read Rom. 14:17. How does Paul describe the kingdom of God? Read Gal. 5:22. Where does true joy come from?

“Pray without ceasing” indicates having prayer as a recurring pattern of life. Read James 5:13-16. In what circumstances should we be praying?

To “give thanks” is an expression of gratitude. Read Eph. 5:20. Who are we to be thankful to? Read Heb. 12:28. What can we always be thankful for?

Apply: God desires that we be joyful, grateful people in close communion with Him. While we will face difficult people and circumstances, both inside and outside the church, we should focus our eyes on our glorious God’s unchanging nature. We know we have victory in the end; why not celebrate it now?!

Pray: “Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.” Ps. 95:1-3

Day 4: 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

When we need guidance in the truth, we can turn to the entire canon of Scripture. The earliest churches did not have a completed New Testament but depended on the work of the Holy Spirit to provide spiritual knowledge. And these “prophecies” (verse 20) needed to be tested — did they conform with the Old Testament and the apostles’ teaching? Was it edifying and “good” (verse 21) for the body? Paul’s admonition to believers, then and now, is to use spiritual discernment and careful evaluation as we practice our faith in the local church.

Read Acts 2:3. How is the Spirit described? Read Heb. 12:29. How is God referred to? Is the fire in these verses the fire that destroys or purifies?

Read 1 Cor. 2:12-13, 16. From whom do we receive spiritual wisdom to impart to others? Whose mind is in us as believers?

In verses 20-22, what four specific instructions does Paul give about how not to quench the Spirit?

Apply: To recognize counterfeit money, you do not need to know every fake bill. But you should know authentic money so well that errors stand out immediately. We, as believers, are called to be people who carefully evaluate what we hear, both inside and outside the church. To do this well, we **MUST** know the Word of God intimately, so any error in teaching stands out immediately!

Pray: Lord, I thank you that I have the Holy Spirit and your Word to guide me in this life. Help me prioritize and know your Word so well that I see immediately when there is any falsehood. Thank you for the mind of Christ in me, transforming me to look more like Jesus.

Day 5: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

Paul has provided much instruction in the previous verses about “practical sanctification” — what a believer must do daily to grow in their faith. He concludes these verses by reminding them of their “positional sanctification”- their assurance that they have been set apart by the will of God through Jesus Christ once and for all.

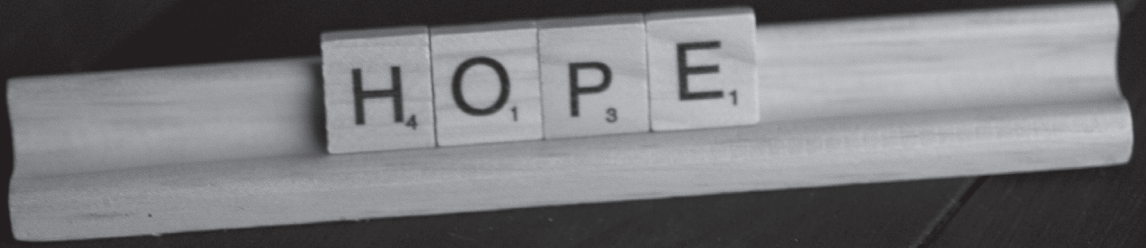
How is God referenced in verse 23? What action is He performing in the life of the believer?

“Sanctify” means to set apart. Read the words of Jesus in John 17:17. This is part of a longer prayer for believers. By what means are we sanctified?

Read Phil.1:6. Who is working in the believer from start to finish?

Apply: We have responsibility for our spiritual growth, yet ultimately God has a plan that He is working in and through us as well. Through God’s enabling and empowering grace, we can grow in Christ-likeness. Phil. 2:12-13 expresses these important truths perfectly: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Pray: Lord, help me rest in your enabling grace as I grow in my faith. Empower me to be obedient in the areas of responsibility you have given me.



2 Thessalonians 1

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is similar to his first letter in its themes. Still under great persecution, the church stands firm in its faith in Christ and love for one another. In fact, Paul affirms that these characteristics are growing. In addition to encouraging the continued growth and faith of the Thessalonians, Paul will also correct some wrong beliefs and wrong behaviors in this epistle.

Paul pens his prayers of thanksgiving and petition for the church in this first chapter. He is thankful for the Thessalonians' steadfast faith amid great suffering, and he desires to lift their eyes to the relief that awaits them at Jesus' return. While the oppressive unbelievers must fear the judgment and eternal separation from God that is to come, these persecuted believers can look forward to a future of glory because of God's abundant grace and power toward them. Although they are suffering now, Paul reminds this church that the great reversal will soon occur when they marvel at their beautiful Savior for all eternity.

Prepared by Robin Hall

Day 1: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

Paul begins his second letter to the Thessalonians in much the same way that he started his first letter. After this familiar greeting, Paul again thanks God for these courageous and faithful believers.

Why does Paul give thanks to God for the Thessalonians?

What reason does Paul give for why he is boasting about the Thessalonians to other churches?

How can we follow the example of the Thessalonians, growing in our faith in God and love for one another? See, for example, Ephesians 4:11-16.

Apply: We also “ought always to give thanks to God” for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Rather than saying something negative about another believer, who can you brag on today instead?

Pray: Father, we thank you for the church of Christ all over the world, many of whom are suffering persecution for the name of Jesus. Help them know you are with them and give them continued faith to stand firm in the gospel. And we thank you for our local church brothers and sisters. Help us build one another up in love this week as we walk in your Spirit.

Day 2: 2 Thessalonians 1:4-6

As we follow Paul's thoughts into verses 5 and 6, Paul not only commends the Thessalonians but also affirms that their lives display the characteristics necessary for entrance into God's kingdom.

We must look back in verse 4 to see what evidence Paul is referring to in verse 5. What characteristics of the Thessalonians from verse 4 are evidence of God's proper judgment?

Paul says that this evidence from verse 4 is proof that the Thessalonians have been counted worthy of the kingdom of God. Look ahead to verse 11 to find out who makes the Thessalonians worthy.

What characteristic of God is Paul highlighting in verses 5 and 6? See also Deuteronomy 32:4 and Romans 3:26.

Apply: As we connect the dots in these beginning verses, we see that the Thessalonians' enduring faith proves that God is right in considering them worthy of His kingdom. However, before we begin to try to produce this kind of faith in ourselves, remember that it is God who is the author and finisher of our faith — which is why Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians' faith (verse 3) and gives God credit for making them worthy (verse 11).

Pray: Father, thank you for your grace in my life. Only you can make me worthy of salvation, worthy of your kingdom. And you do make me worthy by giving me a faith that clings to you even through suffering.

Day 3: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-8

As we look around the world today, it is difficult to find the justice of God being carried out in the affairs of mankind. However, in today's verses, Paul speaks of a day when God will right all wrongs and reveal His just judgment toward all people.

When will God's justice be meted out, according to verse 7?

What great reversal will take place, according to verses 6 and 7? How does this truth line up with Jesus' teaching in Luke 6:20-26?

What more do you learn about this time of judgment from Matthew 25:31-46?

Apply: Is your heart weary from enduring trials and affliction? Consider your Christ who was made perfect through suffering (Heb. 5:8-9), and take comfort that you walk in His steps. Through suffering, He was made worthy to receive all praise (Rev. 5:9-12). And we too must suffer with Him if we are to be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17).

Pray: Lord, how we look forward to your return when we will experience true rest and relief from the afflictions of this life! We thank you that the sufferings of this life are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Help us wait for Christ's return with eagerness, patience, and steadfast hope.

Day 4: 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

Today's passage speaks of the glory of God — the weightiness of His holiness and other perfect attributes — and how that glory will be revealed in two distinct ways at the coming of Christ. For believers, the revelation of the glory of God in Christ will result in eternal wonder and praise. Still, for the unbelievers who rejected Christ's kingship, the result will be a forever separation from the presence and glory of God.

Read through the passage and note below what you learn about the Lord Jesus. How will He be revealed? What will He do then? How will believers respond to His coming?

What words are used to describe unbelievers in this passage? What do they not know, and what do they not do? See also 2:10-12 for a fuller description.

What will God's vengeance on unbelievers look like? See also Isaiah 66:15-16, 24, and Mark 9:47-48.

Apply: The Bible consistently divides humanity into only two groups — the righteous who respond to God's grace through faith in Christ and the unrighteous who reject the knowledge of God in Christ. Have you responded to Christ's call by faith?

Pray: Father, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner, dead in sin apart from your grace. Save me from my sin and create in me a clean heart and a right spirit, that I may “teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you” (Ps. 51:13).

Day 5: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Paul begins his prayer for the Thessalonians in thanksgiving, but in these verses, he ends it with a petition for their continued sanctification, leading to future glorification. God's glory is the ultimate thrust of Paul's prayer.

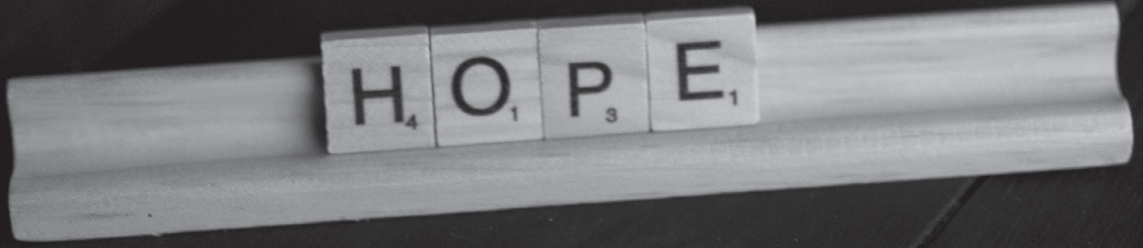
As you read through verse 11 carefully, notice how Paul identifies the various facets of a life worthy of God's call. First, note below what a believer's inner desire/resolve should look like.

Next, what should be seen on the outside of the believer (in his/her behavior)?

Finally, notice the desires and activity of God toward the believer in verses 11 and 12.

Apply: Is the process of sanctification (being made holy, worthy, acceptable) God's work or my work? These and other verses show us that God makes us holy by His power and grace that are at work within us, enabling us to turn our desire to do good into real-life transformation. Therefore, we can do the work with God's power as we submit ourselves to Him moment by moment.

Pray: Ask God to make your fellow church members worthy of His calling, as He fulfills every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified.



2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

After the introductory prayer in chapter one, we now get to the primary subject matter of the letter. Some of the believers in the church at Thessalonica were persuaded that the day of the Lord had already come. This happened sometime after the church had received Paul's first letter. As expected, this caused confusion and panic in the church. Paul learned about this new development and addressed these concerns in chapter 2.

Paul tells the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord will be preceded by certain events and developments—which had not yet taken place. This passage is one of the most difficult to interpret because he will remind them about teachings on this subject that he taught them when he was with them. Unfortunately for us, he does not pen those details in this letter, and therefore we are left with more questions than answers when we read some of the verses in this passage. However, we should not miss the main purpose of Paul's writing to address this concern—to give the believers hope and encouragement amid persecution.

Prepared by John Nyota

Day 1: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Today we will focus on the first two verses. It is clear that word has reached Paul regarding the confusion and panic among the Thessalonian believers caused by false teaching about the second coming of Christ.

Paul had already addressed the topic of the second coming of Christ in his first letter. As a recap, read 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Briefly describe what will happen to the living believers and those who have already died when Jesus returns.

From verse 2, what had caused some of the believers in Thessalonica to be shaken in mind and alarmed? What could have been the source of this false information?

How can we protect ourselves from false teaching or any deception? See Eph. 4:11-16 and 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

Apply: The best way to counter false teaching is to know the truth thoroughly. We should continually cultivate the discipline of regularly being in the Word through daily personal study, weekly corporate worship, and life group.

Pray: Lord, I pray that I will hunger and thirst for your Word and seek to obey what you are teaching me.

Day 2: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Paul will now refute these false teachings in the remainder of our passage. Today we will focus on verses 3-4. He argues to reassure the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord has not yet come.

While the coming of the Lord will be unexpected (1 Thess. 5:2-3), what things will certainly precede His coming according to verse 3?

What do you learn about the man of lawlessness in verses 3-4? See also Dan. 11:36-37.

Who is the power source behind the man of lawlessness, and what will happen to him when the Lord returns (verses 8-9)?

Apply: The Lord controls all the world affairs, even when the culture seems to be against us. Therefore let us face our spiritual battles in confidence since victory is on our side (Eph. 6:10-18).

Pray: Father, thank you for the victory I already have in Christ. May I remember this as I face the world and all the challenges it offers.

Day 3: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-7

Paul had previously taught the Thessalonian believers about the end times. He gives a summary, without getting into the details, as a reminder to them. As a result, we are left in the dark regarding some of the discussions about the restrainer, particularly in verses 5-7.

The verb translated “told” in verse 5 is in the imperfect tense in the original language. This means he continuously told (taught) them these things. What could have caused them to be gullible to false teachings?

Read 2 Peter 3:17-18. How can we protect ourselves from false teachings and lawless people?

Verses 6 and 7 are some of the most difficult verses to interpret. But one thing is clear: The restrainer’s purpose is to ensure that the man of lawlessness is “revealed in his time” (verse 6). What does this teach you about God?

Apply: We might not know who/what the restrainer is. But we know with certainty that God is ultimately in control of everything, including Satan and his agents. This should motivate us to continue to live faithfully no matter what circumstances we might face.

Pray: Lord Jesus, you created everything, and through you, all things hold together (Col. 1:16-17). May I live in the assurance of these truths found in your Word rather than fear of a world about to disintegrate into chaos.

Day 4: 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

Once the restrainer is removed, the man of lawlessness will be revealed. The world will follow and trust him because of his works and deception. There will be lawlessness with no restraint.

What will accompany the coming of the man of lawlessness (verses 9-10a)?

According to verses 10-11, what will be the effect of the works of the lawless one?

Who are the people who will be deceived by the lawless one (verses 10-12)? And why will they fall to his deception (contrast these people with those mentioned in 1 Thess. 2:13)?

Apply: God has given us the freedom to either believe the truth (the gospel) or reject it. Either choice has eternal consequences (John 3:16-18). What have you chosen?

Pray: Father, thank you for the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Day 5: **2 Peter 3:1-13**

Other passages in the Bible also teach about the day of the Lord. Today we will focus on one of those texts in 2 Peter 3. There seems to be a debate concerning the timing of the Lord's return. Peter, the author of this letter, addresses these concerns in our study today.

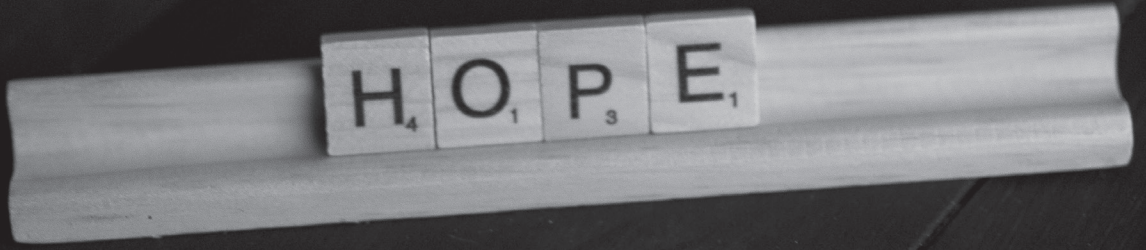
Read 2 Pet. 3:1-7. What will the scoffers challenge? What is Peter's response?

According to verses 8-10, is the Lord slow in keeping His promises? Why or why not?

How should we live given the return of our Lord Jesus Christ (verses 11-13)?

Apply: God has saved us, not just to escape the coming judgment, but to grow in the knowledge of Christ and obedience, resulting in holiness and Christ-likeness.

Pray: Lord, I pray the words of Psalm 119:105, that your Word will be a lamp for my feet and a light on my path every day.



2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

Paul began chapter 2 by describing some disturbing prophetic events of the last days. He now reassures the believers in Thessalonica that they would not be part of the great apostasy because God has loved them and chosen them for salvation. God called them not for judgment but so that they may obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this week's passage, we will see how Paul moved from prophecy to practical living, from the lies of Satan to the truth of God's Word, from warning to thanksgiving and prayer.

Prepared by Jamie O'Brien

Day 1: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

Paul transitions from teaching on the day of the Lord in verses 1-12 to instructing believers how to live in the present in light of that day. He emphasizes God's Word in contrast to the lies of Satan.

As you read verses 13-14, in what different ways does Paul refer to the Thessalonians' salvation?

How did God work in the lives of the Thessalonians?

Based on verse 14, what is the purpose for which God called them in the gospel?

Apply: To fulfill His eternal plan, God sent Paul, Silas, and Timothy to Thessalonica to preach the Word of God. God uses people, like you and me, as instruments to bring the gospel to lost sinners.

Pray: Dear Father, thank you for choosing me before the foundation of the world in your Son Jesus Christ. Thank you, Lord, that I have been saved by faith; thank you for all who have been set apart unto God. Help me take the gospel to the lost so that they might be saved.

Day 2: 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Paul had told the Thessalonians about the coming rebellion against the truth (2 Thess. 2:3) and the apostasy led by the man of lawlessness. He also warned in his letters that there was a present danger and that the church must guard God's truth and not turn from it. God works in this world through the truth of His Word, and Satan opposes God's truth with his lies.

Based on 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, what enabled the Thessalonians to “stand firm” when a trial came their way? What causes you to stand firm when you are faced with a trial?

When Paul used the word “traditions,” he was not talking about man-made religions that are not based on the Word of God. So, what are the “traditions” he referred to (verse 15)?

What traditions are you holding on to? Do they help you “stand firm” in your faith?

Apply: “Stand firm” is a present tense command, indicating that this isn't a “once and done” thing. It could be translated as “Keep standing firm.” Trials never cease. The first thing you need to do when a trial comes your way is to “stand firm” in the Lord and the truth in Him.

Pray: Dear Father, Thank you for my salvation, your Word, and your Holy Spirit, who will strengthen me on the day of testing to stand firm in Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, until He returns for His church.

Day 3: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

It's not enough to believe the truth and guard it. We must also practice it. If we hear the Word and do not obey it, we are only fooling ourselves (James 1:22-25). These two verses are a picture of Paul's love for the Thessalonians.

Based on verse 16, what has God given to the Thessalonians (and every believer)?

Given what we have learned in verse 16, what should be our response (verse 17)?

In verses 13-14, the focus is on eternity. In verses 16-17, the focus is on the past but points us to the future. How do both eternal and temporal perspectives help us stand firm even amid trials?

Apply: When God broke into our lives with the good news about Jesus, and we believed and trusted Him for salvation, He gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace (verse 16). If you struggle with discouragement, think back to your salvation. You have come to know God's love and encouragement. When going through trials, look back on the beautiful salvation that God freely gave you in Christ!

Pray: Dear Father, I thank you, and I praise you for the eternal comfort and encouragement and good hope that You have given me by Your grace. I pray that my heart would be strengthened and established in every good work, to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Day 4: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

The Thessalonian believers were new converts going through intense persecution. There were also false teachers spreading damaging teachings in the church. After commanding them to stand firm, Paul now asks them to pray for his protection. His focus was not only on his personal safety but also that the gospel would spread so that God would be glorified, as happened among them.

What prayer requests did Paul share with the Thessalonians (verses 1-2)?

How did Paul describe the people threatening him (verse 2)?

How did Paul describe God? And what will God do for the people threatened by the evil one (verse 3)?

Apply: The Word of God is glorified in the lives of those who share it and those who receive it. Verse 1 is asking the new believers in Thessalonica to pray the first part of the Lord's Prayer on behalf of Paul and his fellow missionaries: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9-10).

Pray: Thank you, Father, for your steadfast love. I pray that you would guide me in the choices I make and that you would use me as an instrument of your grace and protect me from all evil so that I may grow in the knowledge, wisdom, and grace of my Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Day 5: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5 (Review)

Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). The only command in this week’s passage to the persecuted believers of Thessalonica is in chapter 2: “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (verse 15). Satan uses persecution and trials to get God’s people to doubt His sovereignty and love. So, Paul emphasizes both God’s sovereignty and His love.

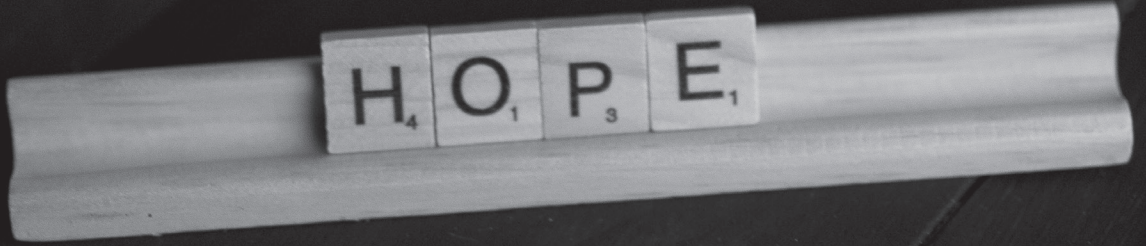
As you review this week’s passage, list how Paul demonstrates the sovereignty and the love of God.

In 2 Thess. 2:16-17, what is Paul asking Jesus to help believers do? What has God already done to help them?

Paul opened chapter 3, asking his brothers in Thessalonica to “pray for us.” What were his other two requests? What confidence did Paul have in the Christians in Thessalonica (verse 3)?

Apply: One day, Jesus is coming back for us. This has been the theme of Paul’s two letters to the Thessalonians, and he related this truth to everyday practical living. As we wait, let us believe the truth, guard the truth, practice the truth, and share the fact.

Pray: Thank you, Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Thank you, Lord, for your eternal comfort and encouragement. I pray that you would direct the hearts of all your people into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ.



2 Thessalonians 3:6-17

Paul moves from the theological to the practical in this final section of the letter. Thus far, the apostle Paul dealt with the church's incorrect regarding the end times. But now, he addresses the sinful behavior of a specific group within the church and exhorts the rest to practice church discipline. Paul rebukes those within the church who became idle and refused to work. These people most likely became idle because they incorrectly believed that the second coming had already occurred. As you study this week's passage, reflect on how incorrect theological beliefs affect our daily lives.

For the last two days of this week, we'll focus on Paul's benediction (final farewell or closing remarks). As you read, notice the important theological themes packed into short, simple sentences. Paul's final words are not throw-away statements; they are meaningful, intentional, and most importantly, the words of God Himself.

Prepared by Caleb Acuna

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Day 1: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

Paul sometimes commends the practice of excluding persons inside the church to produce a shame that leads to repentance (1 Cor. 5:5,11-13). This practice also stops the spread of sinful behavior within the church (1 Cor. 5:6-7). In our passage for today, Paul commands the Thessalonians to “keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness.

How does Paul describe those who walk in idleness?

In verse 9, Paul explains that he did not take advantage of his right. What was that right?

What is the example that Paul sets for the Thessalonians to imitate?

Apply: Paul gives the Thessalonians a strong exhortation against idleness in the church. In this scenario, people took advantage of the charity and care of other believers and refused to work because they were provided food free of charge. In what ways are you tempted to take advantage of the love and care given by others within the church?

Pray: Lord, help us serve our brothers and sisters sacrificially. Even when we have the right to receive, grant us the ability to give.

Day 2: 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12

Paul moves from a general exhortation against idleness to the specific issues in the Thessalonian church. In verse 11, Paul uses the term “busybodies” to call out those who gossiped and meddled in other’s business (compare to Paul’s use of this word in 1 Tim. 5: 13).

According to verse 11, does this seem to be a church-wide issue or only a small portion of the congregation?

What does the idea of walking in idleness convey?

Verse 12 says that Paul commands them “in the Lord Jesus Christ.” At first glance, the command to “earn their own living” seems more pragmatic. How is this command related to their spiritual lives?

Apply: The way we express ourselves outwardly reflects our inner person. Paul rebukes the specific practices of meddling and idleness. These practices might not seem alarming to some, but they reflect a heart that has not entirely surrendered to Christ. What other actions in your life show a lack of surrender to Christ?

Pray: Father, expose my sins and unfaithfulness in everyday actions. Help me see how I fail you so that I may repent and turn to you in awe of your amazing grace. Forgive me for when I do not take my sin seriously.

Day 3: 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15

As noted on day 1 of this week's study, Paul at times encourages a congregation to exclude others within the church. This exclusion is done to avoid the spread of sinful behavior within the church and hope that the unfaithful person might repent (1 Cor. 5:5-13). In our passage for today, Paul teaches the Thessalonians how to deal with unfaithful people within the church.

What can keep the Thessalonians from growing weary? (See Paul's use of this phrase in Gal. 6:9)

In Matt. 18:17, Jesus gave authority to the church to disfellowship those who refuse to repent. What should this process look like?

According to verse 15, what should our attitude be towards those who refuse to repent and continue to practice sin?

Apply: The New Testament clearly teaches that we should not tolerate ongoing sin within the church. We must be loving towards those inside and outside the church, but it is unloving to allow our brothers and sisters to continue in sin. Are there any sins, either yours or others, which you have tolerated?

Pray: Lord, give us boldness to confront our brothers who live in habitual sin. Give us meekness to recognize the imperfection of our own souls. Give us the wisdom to speak the truth in love.

Day 4: 2 Thessalonians 3:16

In this verse, Paul gives his closing words to the Thessalonian church. It is not uncommon for him to include the idea of peace in his final words (1 Thess. 5:25, Rom. 15:33). The notion that God is the giver of peace is not unique to Paul, for we can trace it back to the Old Testament (Num. 6:26). For Paul, wishing for peace is not a throw-away sentence; he has experienced the great joy of God's peace and desires the Thessalonian church to experience it. Today's study will focus on the peace of God.

Read Zech. 9:9–10. This passage prophesies the coming of the Messiah; how does the rule of the promised Messiah bring about peace?

According to Rom. 5:1, how do we accomplish peace with God?

God not only promises peace as right standing with Him but also promises peace from our earthly worries. According to Phil. 4:6–7, how can we have peace amid our difficult circumstances?

Apply: The peace of God is both reconciliation with God and a life that is not consumed with worry (although not worry-free). Jesus commands us in Matt. 6:34 to “not be anxious about tomorrow.” What areas of your life have you not surrendered to the peace of God? How does knowing that you have been reconciled to God by grace through faith bring you peace?

Pray: Father, fill me with your peace. In times of great sorrow, help me weep but not as one without hope. In times of great joy, help me share the great mercies you have given with those around me.

Day 5: 2 Thessalonians 3:17-18

In the last verses of his letter, Paul clarifies that he writes the final farewell in his own hand. The certainty of Paul's authorship was necessary because these letters carried crucial doctrinal information. The stamp of approval from an apostle is foundational for Christian thinking and practice. Today we will survey texts that speak of Paul's role as an apostle.

In the story of Paul's conversion (on the Damascus Road), what does Acts 9:15-16 tell us about Paul?

Read Gal. 1:15-17 and Rom. 11:13. What was Paul's specific mission as an apostle?

When defending his apostleship in 1 Cor. 9:1, Paul asks the rhetorical question, "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" What does this imply for the authenticity of an apostle?

Apply: The words of Paul are authoritative to all Christians today because God chose him to be an apostle and inspired him to write these letters to churches. The words written in 2 Thessalonians, although given by Paul, are commands that have divine authority. Are there any passages in 2 Thessalonians, or the rest of Scripture, which you struggle to submit to? In what ways do you struggle to submit to the authority of God?

Pray: Lord, help me submit to your word. Take away my pride and stubbornness and make the truth of the Scriptures my final authority.