

# Walk Worthy Of God

A Study In 1 & 2 Thessalonians



GodSaidSo Press

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**Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series**

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# Lesson 1: Introduction

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 summarizes the importance and purpose of the two letters written by Paul to the Thessalonian Christians. Paul had encouraged, comforted, and implored them to walk worthy of God while he was with them and was continuing to do that through these two letters.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some background information about Paul's letters to the church of the Thessalonians.

## Background Of The Church In Thessalonica

**The city of Thessalonica.** The city of Thessalonica benefited from a strategic location. It was located on the Balkan peninsula, north of Greece, along the northwestern corner of the Aegean Sea (known as the Thermaic Gulf), at the intersection of major trade routes. The city found itself situated along the Egnatian Way, a road constructed by the Romans to connect the region east of Rome (nearly 700 miles long, from the Adriatic Sea to Byzantium). During the time of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and the most populous city of the province. Although the city consisted primarily of Gentiles, there was a large enough Jewish population to have a synagogue there (Acts 17:1).

**Establishment of the church in Thessalonica.** During Paul's "second missionary journey," while Paul was in Troas, he had a vision in the night that urged him to go and preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10). So, Paul traveled to Philippi (a leading city of the district of Macedonia). Then, he likely followed the Egnatian way from Philippi, through Amphipolis and Apollonia, to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). He stayed at least three Sabbath days in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2). Silas and Timothy appear to be with him (Acts 17:4, 10, 14).

Paul's work in Thessalonica is summarized in Acts 17:1-4. As the gospel was finding those willing to turn to Jesus in Thessalonica, Paul and his companions experienced trouble at the hands of the Jews, who formed a mob (Acts 17:5-10). When night fell, the Christians in Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas away to Berea (v. 10), where the agitators from Thessalonica followed and caused more trouble (vv. 13-14).

**Facts about the Thessalonian church.** First, the members of the church had welcomed God's word despite opposition and persecution (1 Thessalonians

1:6; 2:13). Second, the Christians became imitators of Paul and his companions and of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Third, the Christians faced persecution (1 Thessalonians 1:3, 6; 2:14-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:4). Fourth, the Christians were diligent in living for Christ and in spreading the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:3, 6-8). Fifth, the Christians were providing a good example for believers in other areas (1 Thessalonians 1:7). Sixth, the Christians had made significant changes to follow the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Seventh, the faith of these Christians was flourishing and their love was increasing (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

### **Background Of 1 Thessalonians**

**Recipients.** The letter is addressed to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1). First, these were Christians who belonged to Jesus and had left their prior life of sin to serve Jesus (1:9). Second, these Christians were located in Thessalonica and had joined themselves together as a local congregation of the Lord's people.

**Author.** The author identifies himself as Paul (1:1). Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy are with him at this writing. Though they are with him, the contents of the letter are clearly written from Paul's perspective (3:1). Also, it is important to note that Paul claims the message he preached was really from God (2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 14:37)! Also, Paul had deep concerns for the Thessalonians, like a father toward his own children (2:11-12, 19-20).

**Date and place of writing.** Paul gives several details about his travels in the letter that help reach a conclusion about the circumstances of the writing. After Paul and his companions were forced to leave Thessalonica (2:17), Paul was left alone in Athens (3:1; Acts 17:15-16). By the time this letter was written, Timothy had returned to join Paul (3:6). The record of Acts says that Paul went from Athens to Corinth (Acts 18:1) and was joined by Silas and Timothy, who had come from Macedonia (Acts 18:5). Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). And, Luke records Gallio was proconsul of Achaia when Paul was in Corinth (helping us affix a date to this, Acts 18:12). These factors lead to the conclusion that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from the city of Corinth, around 51 A.D. (making it one of the earliest New Testament letters).

**Purpose of writing.** The purpose of this letter is tied to the circumstances in which Paul had to abruptly leave them (2:17-18). Paul was deeply concerned about them, fearing the tempter had succeeded in his efforts and Paul's work among them had been for nothing (3:5). After Timothy visited them, though, he brought good news about their faith (3:6-10). This letter is then written to express

the joy and encouragement Paul experienced because of the Thessalonians and to encourage them to live and please God even more (4:1).

### **Background of 2 Thessalonians**

**Recipients.** This letter is addressed to the same congregation of Christians in Thessalonica (1:1). They had been standing strong in service to the Lord, despite persecutions and various obstacles. However, some problems had emerged.

**Author.** Paul again identifies himself as the author (1:1) and as having Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy with him. Paul authenticated the letter in the final greeting he wrote (3:17). Perhaps he used a scribe (maybe Silas and/or Timothy) to write the rest. This authentication was important because of some who were evidently writing letters that claimed to be from Paul (2:2).

**Date and place of writing.** There is less circumstantial evidence concerning the date and time of writing for this letter than the first. We can know Paul, Silas, and Timothy were all together (1:1). It is commonly believed they were not together for long after this. In fact, Acts 18:5 is the last mention of Silas in Acts. This has contributed to the conclusion that the letter was written shortly after the first letter, from Corinth. Perhaps around 52 A.D.

**Purpose of writing.** This letter appears to have been written in response to some problems that had been brought to Paul's attention (3:11). For one, some were troubling the Thessalonians by teaching the Day of the Lord had already come (2:2). Then, others were being idle and not working as they should have been (3:6). So, Paul encouraged them to stand firm and hold to the traditions they had taught the Thessalonians (2:15). Paul wanted them to find the encouragement and strength in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ so they might continue to serve Him faithfully (2:16-17; 3:3-5).

### **Theme: Walk Worthy Of God**

**Key verses.** Consider some verses that reflect this theme in 1 Thessalonians (2:11-12; 4:1). Then, consider some verses that reflect this theme in 2 Thessalonians (1:5, 11-12).

**What it means to walk worthy of God.** The word "walk" refers to how one conducts his/her life. To walk worthy of God, then, is to conduct oneself in a way that is pleasing to God. Walking worthy of one's calling is to live according to the standard of the gospel, which calls us (2 Thessalonians 2:14). And, to be counted worthy of God's kingdom is to live in the way that pleases God so as to inherit the eternal kingdom God has prepared for the faithful in Heaven. Paul was urging the

Thessalonian Christians to live to please God despite the challenges they were facing since he left them.

**Obstacles to walking worthy of God.** All Christians face obstacles to walk worthy of God. Consider some mentioned in these two letters that the Thessalonians faced. First, they had received the gospel in persecution and continued experiencing such (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-8). Second, they had fleshly desires that worked to distract them from their mission and entice them to sin (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). Third, they had a misunderstanding about the coming of Christ that worked to discourage them (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Fourth, there were some who were evidently troubling them with false teaching (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). Fifth, there were negative influences working as busybodies (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Sixth, as they were being challenged, it could be tempting to give up (1 Thessalonians 3:2-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:13). Yet, they and all Christians today have the choice as to how they live so as to walk worthy of God!

### **Conclusion**

We have explored some background information and surveyed some aspects of Paul's two letters to the church in Thessalonica for the purpose of preparing our minds for a deeper study of them. In the next lesson, we will study 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12.

# Walk Worthy Of God

## Lesson 1: Introduction

What does 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 indicate about the purpose and importance of the letters to the Thessalonians?

### 1. Background Of The Church In Thessalonica

What are some significant points about the city of Thessalonica?

How did a local church begin in Thessalonica?

What are some significant facts about the Thessalonian church?

### 2. Background Of 1 Thessalonians

Who were the recipients of the 1 Thessalonians letter?

Who wrote 1 Thessalonians?

When and from where was 1 Thessalonians written?

What was the purpose of writing 1 Thessalonians?

### **3. Background Of 2 Thessalonians**

Who were the recipients of the 2 Thessalonians letter?

Who wrote 2 Thessalonians?

When and from where was 2 Thessalonians written?

What was the purpose of writing 2 Thessalonians?

### **4. Theme: Walk Worthy Of God**

What are some key verses that identify the theme of this letter?

What does it mean to walk worthy of God?

What were some obstacles the Thessalonians faced in walking worthy of God?



# Lesson 2: 1 Thessalonians

## 1:1-2:12

Paul had not gotten to spend much time with the Thessalonians when he traveled and preached there. The Jews caused quite a stir and Paul and Silas had to be sent out of the city. But, they had already spread the gospel and some were converted there so that a church was established.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn from Paul's introduction, the Thessalonians' faithfulness, and Paul's conduct in Thessalonica in a study of 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12.

### Paul's Introduction (1:1)

**Author (1:1a).** Paul is the author of this letter and it is clearly written from his perspective. But, the message was really God's message (2:13). Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy were with Paul when he was writing and had been with Paul during his visit in Thessalonica.

**Recipients (1:1b).** The letter is addressed to a local church composed of Thessalonians who were in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, they had a right relationship with the Father and the Lord Jesus through obeying the gospel. These had obeyed the gospel initially and were now continuing to live in the Lord's favor.

**Greeting (1:1c).** Paul extends grace and peace to the Thessalonian Christians. For Christians, this grace of God is crucial to everything that matters. And, peace is the result of experiencing God's grace (peace with God, others, and self).

### The Thessalonians' Faithfulness (1:2-10)

**Paul and his companions gave thanks for them (1:2-3).** Paul and his companions always extended thanks to God on behalf of the Thessalonians, constantly mentioning them in their prayers (compare 3 John 1:3-4). Particularly, Paul recalled the following in the presence of God when he prayed. First, their work produced by faith, as their trust in God resulted in actions that pleased God

(James 2:14-26; Matthew 7:24-27). Second, their labor motivated by love, as their love for God and others resulted in labor in the Lord's service (1 John 5:3; 1 John 3:16-18). Third, their endurance inspired by hope, as their hope for salvation in Jesus served as an anchor that helped them endure the challenges of life (Hebrews 6:19). In this, we see that faith, hope, and love are cornerstones of Christian living (5:8; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Colossians 1:3-5; 1 Peter 1:21-22). And, they all have powerful effects in the life that pleases God!

**They received the gospel (1:4-6).** Paul expressed his thankfulness and confidence that God loved and had chosen the Thessalonians. Although God loves all people, there is a special sense in which Christians are actively experiencing the love of God. They had been chosen by God through a combination of God making salvation available to them and their choice to obey the gospel. For, God has chosen that those in Christ will be saved (Ephesians 1:4) and gives people the free will as to whether they will believe and obey the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15).

Paul remembered how the gospel they preached did not come to the Thessalonians as empty words. Rather, the gospel was powerful in their lives through the working of the Holy Spirit (who inspired its message, likely in connection with miracles and signs through the Holy Spirit). They were fully convinced and convicted of the message. But, they did not just respond in an intellectual way. They knew the way Paul and his companions lived among them and became imitators of them. Namely, they welcomed the message of the gospel with joy despite the severe persecution Paul and the others were experiencing (Acts 17:1-9)!

**They became an example for other believers (1:7-10).** The Thessalonians became an example to all believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, providing a model for other Christians. They also demonstrated how God's people should be committed to ringing out God's word for others to hear – not only in their own region of Macedonia, but also in Achaia and beyond! They continue to be a good example for Christians and churches today also.

Paul and his companions were hearing the report of the Thessalonians' faith from others, including the kind of reception they had among the Thessalonians. This included how they had turned to serve the one living and true God and away from idols, thus demonstrating the power of the gospel to transform lives! Then, they were now waiting for Jesus to return from Heaven – this Jesus God raised from the dead and will rescue the saved from the wrath that will come on the disobedient when He returns (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Notice the connection between verses 9 and 10 and verse 3: They worked to turn their lives to God, they labored in serving the Lord, and they endured hardships as they waited for Jesus's return.

## **Paul's Conduct In Thessalonica (2:1-12)**

**Emboldened to preach (2:1-2).** Paul now begins a defense of their conduct in Thessalonica. Perhaps there were accusations that had been made against him (i.e. that he preached for monetary gain). The Thessalonian Christians knew what had really happened and that their visit was not in vain. Paul and his companions were clearly not preaching out of selfish motivation. For, they previously suffered and were treated outrageously while they were in Philippi (Acts 16). This included them being flogged and their feet put into the stocks in prison. Yet, they were emboldened by God to speak God's gospel in Thessalonica despite opposition. In the same way, how others treat us and how they respond to the gospel should never determine how we will serve God. Rather, we should be emboldened by God to labor diligently in His service, regardless of our circumstances!

**Spoke to please God (2:3-6).** Their motivation in preaching (exhortation, appeal) did not come from error, impurity, or an intent to deceive so as to trick or manipulate those who heard their message. Rather, they had been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. As such, their preaching was to please God rather than people, as He is the one who examines hearts and knows everyone's motivations and will judge us all (contrast with Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-10). So, they never used flattering speech or had any kind of greedy motivation in their preaching. God was their witness of their pure hearts and motives. Yet, although Paul assures that their motives were pure and their actions were right, this did not evidently stop some from falsely accusing them of not having the right motives so as to deceive the Thessalonians. Paul is urging the Thessalonians to recognize their pure motives by recognizing the personal sacrifices they made for the sake of the gospel.

**Worked so as not to be a burden (2:7-9).** Although Paul could have exercised authority as an apostle and made burdensome demands (i.e. financial support), he and his companions were gentle as a mother cherishes and cares for her own children. Paul knew that while the work of spreading the gospel should never be a self-centered endeavor, God has given the right to this financial support. So, Paul even denied his right for compensation due to his care for them (1 Corinthians 9:14-15). Perhaps he did this so his enemies could not accuse him and his companions of preaching for selfish gain. Then, this deep care resulted in them sharing both the gospel and their own lives with the Thessalonians (2 Corinthians 12:15). As an example of their sacrifice, the Thessalonians should have remembered their labor and hardship, as they experienced persecution and worked diligently to provide for themselves so they would not be a burden on the Thessalonians (Acts 18:3). So, between their secular work and their preaching,

they worked night and day to preach without being a burden on them. This was all further evidence that their motives in preaching in Thessalonica were pure!

**As a father with his children (2:10-12).** Both the Thessalonians and God could provide witness testimony concerning the way Paul and his companions conducted themselves in Thessalonica. Their stay was not as their opponents were accusing. Rather, the Thessalonians and God could attest to their conduct as being devout/holy (devoted to God), righteous (devoted to God's standard of righteousness), and blameless (without any just reason to be accused of doing wrong). While living this kind of godly life will not keep you from experiencing false accusations, it does provide peace to the one being accused in knowing such are completely fabricated (Matthew 5:11-12; Titus 2:8)!

Paul and his companions conducted themselves in Thessalonica like a father should conduct himself with his children – trying to guide them to God by encouraging (exhorting), comforting (encouraging and consoling), and imploring (requesting and charging) them. Particularly, Paul's concern for each of the Thessalonians was that they should walk (live) worthy of God, who had called them to share in His kingdom and glory – just as He does with us.

### **Conclusion**

We have explored Paul's introduction to this letter, the faithfulness demonstrated by the Thessalonian Christians, and the conduct Paul and his companions displayed in Thessalonica. In the next lesson, we will study 1 Thessalonians 2:13-3:13.

## **Walk Worthy Of God**

### **Lesson 2: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12**

Highlight some key points from lesson 1.

#### **1. Paul's Introduction (1:1)**

1:1a – Who is the author of this letter?

1:1b – Who were the recipients of this letter?

1:1c – What kind of greeting was given?

#### **2. The Thessalonians' Faithfulness (1:2-10)**

1:2-3 – What did Paul do concerning the Thessalonians? Why did he do this?

1:4-6 – How had these individuals responded to the gospel? Why was this significant?

1:7-10 – What kind of impact had the Thessalonians had on others? What kind of transformation had the Thessalonians made?

### **3. Paul's Conduct In Thessalonica (2:1-12)**

2:1-2 – Why was it important for the Thessalonians to know how Paul conducted himself when he was with them? What was Paul's motivation in preaching?

2:3-6 – Where did Paul's motivation *not* come from? Where did it come from?

2:7-9 – What kind of authority could Paul have exercised? What did he choose to do instead – and why?

2:10-12 – Who could provide a testimony of how Paul conducted himself in Thessalonica? How could his conduct be described? What was Paul trying to do with the Thessalonians?

# Lesson 3: 1 Thessalonians

## 2:13-3:13

Paul has been expressing his thankfulness for the Thessalonian Christians concerning their reception of the gospel and their ongoing faithfulness to God. Furthermore, Paul has discussed how he and his companions conducted themselves while they were in Thessalonica.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn about the opposition the gospel experienced in Thessalonica and Paul's concern for the Thessalonian Christians in a study of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-3:13.

### **Opposition To The Gospel In Thessalonica (2:13-20)**

**Reception of the gospel despite opposition (2:13-15a).** Like a father with his children (vv. 11-12), Paul and his companions were concerned about the spiritual wellbeing of the Thessalonians. They were constantly thankful for the way the Thessalonian Christians received the message they preached – receiving it as the word of God rather than a human message. This passage is further evidence that Paul's message was not his own. Rather, Paul was Divinely inspired in his teaching (1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Ephesians 3:3-6)! This word of God works powerfully in those who believe, both to save and to transform (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12).

The Thessalonian Christians had become imitators of God's churches in Christ Jesus that were in Judea in the sense they had experienced suffering at the hands of their fellow countrymen. The Jews had killed the Lord Jesus and the Jewish prophets, and had persecuted Jewish Christians. Similarly, the Thessalonians had persecuted those who had become Christians in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9). Therefore, the church in Thessalonica was an example of faithfulness by their endurance! In the same way, true followers of Jesus are not just willing to follow Jesus when it is convenient; but also when doing so results in persecution/rejection.

**Those in opposition to the gospel displease God (2:15b-16).** The Jews who killed Jesus and those in Thessalonica who rejected the gospel and brought suffering on those who accepted it accomplished two things. First, they displeased God through their own rejection of the gospel. Second, they demonstrated

hostility to everyone else by hindering the gospel from being spread (particularly to the Gentiles) so they could not be saved. And, anyone who stands opposed to the gospel accomplishes these same two things today.

Those who stand opposed to the gospel are constantly testing the limits of God's patience, pictured as constantly filling up their sins to the limit (like filling a cup to its brim). Although God is a patient God (2 Peter 3:9), God's patience only extends so far. Therefore, wrath is said to have overtaken (come on them) at last! Certainly, God will show His wrath on those who oppose and reject the gospel on the Judgment Day (1:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). However, there are also other ways God shows His wrath on people while they live on earth (Romans 1:18). While I do not know exactly how these experienced God's wrath (some have speculated it may refer to the impending destruction that would come on Jerusalem in A.D. 70), we know that sin often carries physical consequences and always carries spiritual consequences!

**Paul's desire to see the Christians in Thessalonica (2:17-20).** Paul wanted the Thessalonian Christians to recognize that it was deeply painful to leave them. And, he wanted them to know about their deep desire to return. He described their separation as a forced one (like a child torn away/orphaned from parents). Still, their hearts were with the Thessalonian church and demonstrated their desire to see them face-to-face by making every effort to return. In fact, he had wanted to come to them but had been hindered by Satan (like an obstruction blocking the road). This demonstrates Satan is active in the world, beyond just providing temptation (Job 1-2; 2 Corinthians 12:7). Evidently, Satan wanted to keep them separate. Likewise, Satan wants to hinder people today from accomplishing things that are profitable in the Lord's service. Yet, we must always find a way to accomplish God's will regardless of how Satan hinders (as Paul sent Timothy to them).

Although Paul knew the ultimate hope, joy, and crown of boasting for every Christian is Jesus Himself and His sacrifice, he also saw the Thessalonian Christians accomplishing these things for him and his companions, who had a part in leading them to Christ. They were proof Paul and his companions had been diligently laboring for the Lord and helping others have eternal life in Heaven (Philippians 2:14-16; Philippians 4:1). In the same way, there is nothing you can do in this life that can give you a greater sense of accomplishment besides helping others follow the Lord to be saved!



### **Concern About The Thessalonians (3:1-13)**

**Timothy sent to Thessalonica (3:1-5).** As Paul was continually thinking about these new Christians, it reached a point where Paul could not stand it any longer and was willing to be left alone in Athens. Perhaps they had joined him in Athens for a short time prior or perhaps he sent Timothy to Thessalonica from Berea (Acts 17:14-16). Regardless, Timothy (God's coworker, 1 Corinthians 3:9) was sent for the purpose of strengthening and encouraging the faith of the Thessalonians, as they needed to be further grounded and built up in the truth (2 Peter 1:3-11). This needed to happen so they would not be shaken (moved) by the afflictions they were experiencing so as to turn away from Christ.

In fact, Paul reminds them they and all Christians are appointed (destined) to experience such (Matthew 5:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:12). He had kept telling them there would be afflictions in following Jesus while they were together. Now, Paul was concerned about them and wanted to know how their faith was doing. That is why he had sent Timothy to them – as he could not stand the concern about them any longer. For, he was concerned the tempter (Satan) had tempted them. And, if they had given in to the temptations, their labor would have been for nothing as far as the salvation of the Thessalonians was concerned (though Paul would have still done his part, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

**Report from Timothy (3:6-10).** After explaining why he sent Timothy to them, he now explains what Timothy reported and how that impacted him. He said Timothy had come to them (meeting up with them in Corinth, Acts 18:5) and brought good news about the Thessalonians' faith and love, noticing they always had good memories of Paul and his companions and longed to see them.

This news had a tremendously positive impact on Paul and his companions. First, they were encouraged and comforted to press on through the distress and affliction they had been experiencing. Second, they were given a boost of encouragement to keep pressing forward and really live and accomplish God's work with joy (3 John 1:3-4). Furthermore, because Paul saw the news of the Thessalonians' faithfulness as a true blessing from God, he desired to give thanks to God on their behalf and for the joy that he experienced. Their prayer of thanks would be offered alongside their earnest prayer that was made both night and day for the opportunity to see the Thessalonians again and continue the work of helping them progress in their faith. Namely, Paul recognized there were still some things that were lacking in their faith he desired an opportunity to help them complete (just as all Christians must continue to grow stronger in the faith God has revealed).

**Paul's prayer (3:11-13).** Paul closes this section of his letter (looking back at what had transpired with the Thessalonians) with a prayer concerning the

Thessalonians. Perhaps this is indicative of the prayers he would offer night and day for them (3:10). Namely, we notice three things he prayed for.

First, Paul prayed that God (the Father) and the Lord Jesus Christ would direct their way to visit the Thessalonians. He recognized there were factors larger than himself involved in visiting the Thessalonians (2:18) and trusted God was able to clear a way for them to visit the Thessalonians if it was God's will. Second, Paul prayed for the Lord to cause them to increase and overflow with love for one another. Since love is of God and we learn true love from God, God can cause us to increase in our love for others (i.e. through learning about and experiencing God's love for us, as well as learning how He wants us to love, 4:9). Third, Paul prayed that God would make their hearts blameless in holiness before God at Jesus's coming (when He comes with all His saints) so they would be saved on this great Day. Christians should all be anticipating this Day when Jesus Christ will return. Then, notice that Paul will address two of these items he has just prayed about in the remainder of his letter – by giving instructions concerning love and continued growth in connection with the coming of Jesus Christ.

### **Conclusion**

We have explored the opposition experienced by the gospel in Thessalonica and Paul's concern for the Thessalonian Christians. In the next lesson, we will study 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18.

## **Walk Worthy Of God**

### **Lesson 3: 1 Thessalonians 2:13-3:13**

Highlight some key points from lesson 2.

#### **1. Opposition To The Gospel In Thessalonica (2:13-20)**

2:13-15a – How had the Thessalonian Christians responded to God’s word? How were they similar to God’s churches in Judea?

2:15b-16 – What had those who opposed the gospel accomplished? What was going to happen to them?

2:17-20 – How does Paul describe the separation between him and Thessalonian Christians? Why had they been prevented from seeing them? How could they be Paul’s hope, joy, and crown of boasting?

## **2. Concern About The Thessalonians (3:1-13)**

3:1-5 – Why did Paul send Timothy to them? What are Christians appointed to experience?

3:6-10 – What did Timothy report to Paul about the Thessalonian Christians? How did this report impact Paul?

3:11-13 – What did Paul pray for concerning the Thessalonian Christians?

# Lesson 4: 1 Thessalonians

## 4:1-18

Paul thought about the Thessalonian Christians frequently and remembered them with great fondness. As he had been hastily separated from them, he was concerned about their spiritual wellbeing. Thankfully, when Timothy visited them, he could bring back a positive report to Paul concerning them.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some instructions about living to please God and the comfort Christians should find in Christ's coming in a study of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18.

### **Instructions About Pleasing God (4:1-12)**

**Encouragement to please God more (4:1-2).** Paul now moves into a section of this letter that looks forward and gives instructions about how Christians should live to please God. Just as they had received instructions from Paul in the past about how to live and please God, they should continue to do this even more! The message that Paul had preached while he was in Thessalonica and the message he continued to preach through his letters was not a message of human origin; but one from Jesus Christ (2:13; 1 Corinthians 14:37). And, God expects Christians to live and grow daily in His service (more and more).

**About sanctification (4:3-8).** Living to please God involves being sanctified. Although we are sanctified (made holy, separated from sin) whenever we become Christians (i.e. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Acts 22:16), there is also a sense in which sanctification is ongoing so we are made more and more in the likeness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Particularly, God's will for their sanctification involved that they (and us) keep away from sexual immorality. This term refers to all illicit sexual acts (i.e. fornication, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.). Marriage is the only God-approved relationship in which fulfill sexual desires (Hebrews 13:4). So, God's desire is for every Christian to know how to control their own bodies (vessels) in holiness and honor toward God rather than in a way that serves lustful passions. For, living according to lust-filled passions is the way of the Gentiles who do not know God. Yet, something very different is expected of those who follow Christ (Romans 6:12-13). However, such control over our bodies does not happen

accidentally. Rather, it is the product of diligent control that is focused on obeying the will of God!

If Christians do not take the proper control of their own bodies so as to be holy and honor God, there are multiple consequences. First, the result may be transgressing (overstepping your boundary) against and wronging (defrauding, taking advantage of) a brother or sister in Christ. Such a thing could happen if the sexual relationship was with another Christian or with another Christian's spouse. Second, the result will be experiencing the Lord's vengeance (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9), as He is the avenger of all these offenses (as the Thessalonians had previously been warned). For, God has called those who are Christians to live holy lives through the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14), not to continue in impurity. And, third, the result is that you will have rejected God – not a mere man. As the Holy Spirit has been given to those who are Christians today (through the word the Holy Spirit has revealed), living an unholy life is a clear rejection of God's Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

**About brotherly love (4:9-12).** If the Thessalonian Christians were going to live to please God, it would be necessary for them to practice brotherly love. Concerning brotherly love (from "philadelphia" in the Greek), they were not in need of Paul's instructions because they had already been taught by God to love (from "agape" in the Greek) one another. Certainly, all Christians have been taught of God's love for them. Then, we must all be taught of the need to demonstrate this same love toward others. This love, though, is never to be a mere expression of words, but rather acts of selfless service (1 John 3:16-18)!

The Thessalonian Christians were practicing this love toward all the brothers and sisters throughout the region of Macedonia. Then, Paul gives four additional related instructions to this love. First, they were to practice brotherly love even more, as there is always room to grow in our love and become more like our Father in this way. Second, they were to seek to lead a quiet life, as Christians are not to be troublemakers and agitators (particularly among the brothers and sisters). Third, they were to mind their own business, as Christians must not be busybodies in the affairs of others (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Fourth, they were to work with their own hands, as doing so would help them not be a burden on other Christians and even be able to help those who are in need (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12). Then, not only would all these things have a positive impact on their love toward other Christians, but it would also demonstrate proper Christian behavior in the sight of outsiders (unbelievers) and they would not be dependent on anyone for assistance when it was not necessary.

### **Christian Comfort In Christ's Coming (4:13-18)**

**No need to grieve for the dead in Christ (4:13).** Something had caused some misunderstanding among the Thessalonians concerning the coming of Christ. Perhaps there had been some false teaching about what would happen to Christians who died prior to Jesus's coming. Perhaps they believed those who had died will miss out in some way when Jesus comes. Regardless of the precise issue, Paul wanted them to be properly informed about Christ's coming and how it involves those who have already died (those "asleep"). If they were not properly informed, the result would be grieving like the rest of the world over death, who have no hope beyond death. So, while Christians can grieve over the loss of a loved one (Philippians 1:27), we must not grieve like those who have no true hope beyond this life! For, as Paul will demonstrate, there is a great hope awaiting Christians that provides great comfort!

**Both the living and dead will share in Christ's return (4:14-15).** The hope that Christians have over death is rooted in the firm belief that Jesus died and rose again – thereby providing victory over sin and death (compare with 1 Corinthians 15:1-28)! So, if we truly believe in this (as all Christians must), we must also then believe that in the same way God will bring with Him those who have died (fallen asleep) through Jesus. How this happens is explained in the following verses. They are *not* brought with Jesus from Heaven because they had been raptured in a previously coming of Christ (as some falsely claim). Rather, the text will speak of their resurrection from the dead and meeting the Lord in the air!

The Thessalonian Christians could be comforted by the guarantee from the Lord that those who have died will not miss out when the Lord comes. In fact, Paul demonstrates that those who are alive on earth when the Lord comes will not go before those who have died! And, since no person could know such information on their own, it is important that Paul clearly stated this is known by a word from the Lord!

**What will happen when Jesus comes (4:16-18).** Paul now explains his previous statement (v. 15) with additional details about what will happen when the Lord comes. First, he says that the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven. So, it will be Jesus Himself who will come in the clouds (Acts 1:9-11), and He will have His angels with Him (Matthew 25:31). Second, several sounds will be heard. Jesus is said to descend from Heaven with a shout (or loud command that requires obedience, perhaps calling the dead to rise, John 5:28-29), the archangel's (Michael is the only archangel identified in the Bible, Jude 1:9) voice will be heard (perhaps commanding the rest of the angels to gather the wicked and the righteous, Matthew 13:41), and the trumpet of God will sound and announce the Day of the Lord and the presence of God (Exodus 19:16-19; called the last trumpet

in 1 Corinthians 15:52). Third, the dead in Christ will rise first (before the living are called to meet Christ in the air). These will *not* miss out on the events that surround Jesus's coming. Fourth, those who are still alive and remain on this earth will be caught up together with the resurrected saints and Jesus in the clouds. Thus, Jesus is not pictured as setting foot on the earth again and His people (living and dead) will always be with Him for eternity from this point forward! These things should be comforting to Christians!

Some have drawn false conclusions from this passage that there will be a secret rapture of the church prior to the end of the world (wherein Jesus will come get His church and leave behind those who are not saved) and that Jesus will then come again to reign on earth for 1,000 years and set up His kingdom. However, this passage teaches neither of these. Rather, this passage just focuses on Christians because Paul is offering comfort to Christians concerning how dead saints will also take part in Christ's return. So, he simply is not focused on what will happen to unbelievers in this text. Other Scriptures show that all people will take part in Jesus's coming (both the righteous and wicked, Matthew 13:41; John 5:28-29).

### **Conclusion**

We have considered instructions about how Christians can live to please God more and more. Then, we have considered the comfort Christians can find in the coming of Christ, even concerning those who have already died. In the next lesson, we will study 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28.



## **Walk Worthy Of God**

### **Lesson 4: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18**

Highlight some key points from lesson 3.

#### **1. Instructions About Pleasing God (4:1-12)**

4:1-2 – What transition in the letter happens at the beginning of chapter 4? What should be done with the instructions from Jesus?

4:3-8 – What is the importance of sanctification in the lives of Christians? What does keeping away from sexual immorality have to do with sanctification? What are some consequences of failing to properly control one's body?

4:9-12 – What does practicing brotherly love have to do with pleasing God? List some things connected with showing brotherly love in these verses.

## **2. Christian Comfort In Christ's Coming (4:13-18)**

4:13 – What had some of the Christians in Thessalonica believed about Christ's coming? What was the result of such a belief?

4:14-15 – What is the connection between Christ's coming and the Christian's hope? Will Christians who have died miss out on Christ's coming?

4:16-18 – What are some things identified in this passage that will happen when Christ comes? How should these truths impact Christians? Does this passage teach a secret rapture of the church or a millennial reign of Christ on the earth?

# Lesson 5: 1 Thessalonians

## 5:1-28

Paul desired for the Thessalonians Christians to walk worthy of God. This includes living to please God more and more. Then, Paul also wanted them to have the proper hope and encouragement concerning those Christians who had died prior to Jesus's return. Now, Paul would continue teaching them about Jesus's coming and encouraging them to live for the Lord.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some instructions about being ready for Jesus's coming and encouragement in living a life that pleases God in a study of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28.

### **The Day Of The Lord (5:1-11)**

**Like a thief in the night (5:1-3).** Paul now turns his attention to when Jesus would come and urging Christians to be ready. In this way, he addresses the times and seasons as to when Jesus would come. However, this was not an issue the Thessalonians needed to be corrected about. For, they already had the accurate understanding that Jesus's coming will be like a thief in the night (Matthew 24:36, 42-44) and that no one knows when His coming will be. As a result, this great day will catch many people unprepared (Matthew 24:37-39; Matthew 25:1-13). Many will be claiming peace and security and be totally overwhelmed with destruction suddenly and will not escape (eternal punishment in Hell), like a labor pain comes on a pregnant woman (as a pregnant woman does not know the day her sudden labor will hit).

Note that the phrase, "the Day of the Lord" is one that is used multiple times in the Scriptures and references different events in the various passages (Isaiah 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 13:5; Ezekiel 30:3; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 1:15-18). These various days of the Lord reference times when God would execute vengeance on His enemies and deliver His people. Yet, the passage in 1 Thessalonians 5 refers to the Day of the Lord that still looms in the future that will mark the final judgment God will bring on every person!

**Not like a thief in the night (5:4-7).** Although Christians do not know when Jesus will return, they will not be caught by surprise when He comes as a thief. This is because Christians are not living in the darkness of sin any longer. Rather,

they are children of the light and children of the day, having been rescued from darkness (Colossians 1:13). In fact, notice the two contrasts that are given. First, Christians stay awake because they are in the light – watching, working, and preparing for Christ’s return rather than those who in the darkness who are sleeping. Second, Christians are living in a self-controlled (sober) way so as to keep control of their senses rather than those in the darkness who get drunk and lose this control.

**How to live with Christ (5:8-11).** There are some actions Christians must take so as to live with Christ when He comes. First, Christians must be self-controlled. It is crucial for Christians to maintain full control of their senses so as to have a clear mind (free from anything to impair judgment) and be calm and collected in spirit. Second, the Christian must put on characteristics that are fundamental to living in the way that pleases God (compared with pieces of armor used in battle). These characteristics are: Faith, love, and hope (Ephesians 6:10-18). For those who are Christians, God did not appoint us to experience His wrath on this day (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). Rather, God intends for it to be the day in which we obtain salvation through Jesus Christ! After all, Jesus Christ has died for us so that we may live together with Him eternally in Heaven at this time, whether we are awake (alive) or asleep (dead) when He comes. Certainly, this is a great comfort that Christians should use to encourage and build one another up in the faith (as the Thessalonians were doing), anticipating what awaits us.

### **Final Exhortations (5:12-28)**

**Conduct toward leaders and others (5:12-15).** As Paul shifts his message to a multitude of closing exhortations to the Thessalonian church, he first asks (pleads) with his brothers and sisters concerning their conduct toward the leaders of the church. Elders (shepherds, overseers) best fit the way these leaders are described. They were to give recognition (respect, appreciation) to these leaders in view of the way they work for the Lord (by His authority) and for the benefit of the congregation (leading them in the Lord’s ways). Notice their work is described as involving labor (not just making decisions), leadership (as the idea of being a shepherd also implies), and admonishing (warning, correcting) those who are in error. These leaders are to be regarded (esteemed, thought of) very highly in love. So, there should be a great sense of respect and appreciation for these men and for the service and leadership they provide in the Lord. Furthermore, the congregation was also to be at peace among themselves rather than causing unnecessary problems the leaders would need to address.

Then, Paul now exhorts (urges) the congregation in connection with four different groups. First, they were to warn those who were unruly (disorderly, not

submitting themselves to Christ; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15) so they would not continue in their insubordinate ways. Second, they were to encourage (comfort) those who were discouraged so they would not give up their service to Christ. Third, they were to help (support) the weak so they would not be abandoned in their time of need (whether physically or spiritually) and could grow stronger. Fourth, they were to be patient (suffer long) with everyone so that each person has the proper opportunities and support to grow and mature in Christ. In fact, this patience even extends so far as to not repay (give back) evil whenever evil is done to anyone. Rather, Christians must always pursue what is good in the sight of God and is in the best interest for other people spiritually, both for Christians and everyone (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:17-21)!

**Conduct toward God (5:16-18).** Although the circumstances of life can often be challenging, Christians should respond to God in these challenges in a different way than the world responds – as well as maintaining these things in the good times. First, Christians should rejoice always due to our relationship with and salvation in Jesus Christ with a joy that is not dependent on our earthly circumstances. Second, Christians should maintain a constant prayerful attitude that is quick to go to God in prayer in any and every circumstance. Third, Christians must give thanks to God in everything regardless of circumstances, as such is the will of God for us in Christ Jesus.

**Conduct toward the Holy Spirit (5:19-22).** During the first century, the Holy Spirit was given in miraculous ways to some believers (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Acts 8:14-20; Acts 19:6). These miraculous gifts were used to demonstrate a person was truly speaking God's words and would be useful in teaching. Christians, then, were not to stifle (suppress) what the Holy Spirit was trying to accomplish through these gifts and the teaching. Then, Christians were not to despise prophecies by dismissing them as if they were nothing significant. Yet, it should also be clear that Christians were not just to blindly accept anyone and any message that claims to be from the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). Instead, they were to put all things to the test, holding on (clinging) to what is good and staying away (abstaining) from everything that is evil (1 John 4:1; Matthew 7:15-20). Although these miraculous gifts and revelations from the Holy Spirit have ceased today (1 Corinthians 13), Christians should still be careful not to suppress any message that is taught from God's word and evaluate everything that is taught and done by God's word, holding to the good and staying away from everything evil.

**Prayer for the Thessalonians (5:23-24).** At the conclusion of Paul's instructions, he now offers a prayer concerning them. He prays that the God of peace (who gives peace through Jesus Christ) would continue the work of

sanctifying the Thessalonians. Although they were sanctified when they became Christians in the sense they were set apart from their sins and devoted to living for God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), they were still working on purging evil from their lives and living as God would have them live (4:3-5). Paul's prayer is that God would continue this work throughout their lives (as God continues to work through the gospel that transforms us). In doing so, Paul's prayer is that they would be blameless in their entire being when Jesus comes. Note that the Greeks thought of a person as being divided into three parts: spirit, soul, and body. Paul simply used this common idea to emphasize the complete person being blameless. Certainly, if they were faithful to the God who had called them through the gospel, God is faithful in keeping them and will sanctify them so they would be saved!

**Closing remarks (5:25-28).** Not only did Paul pray for the Thessalonians, but he also wanted them to pray for him and his companions. Then, he wanted them to greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. Note that the kiss was a typical greeting in the culture and Paul's emphasis was on the fact that greetings between Christians ought to be special (holy, Romans 16:16). In addition to the greeting, Paul charged them to read this letter to all the brothers and sisters. And, he closed with the prayer that the grace (favor) of the Lord Jesus Christ be with them.

### **Conclusion**

We have considered the Day of the Lord and how Christians ought to live anticipating and preparing for this Day. Then, we have considered the final exhortations Paul gave to the Thessalonians in this first letter. In the next lesson, we will begin Paul's second letter to them (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12).

## **Walk Worthy Of God**

### **Lesson 5: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28**

Highlight some key points from lesson 4.

#### **1. The Day Of The Lord (5:1-11)**

5:1-3 – Why did Paul not need to address the times and seasons of when Jesus would come? How will Jesus's coming be like a thief in the night? How is the phrase "the Day of the Lord" used in Scripture?

5:4-7 – How will Jesus's coming not be like a thief in the night to Christians? What two contrasts are given in the text?

5:8-11 – What actions must Christians take so as to live with Christ when He comes? What does God intend for the coming Day of the Lord to be for those who are Christians?

## **2. Final Exhortations (5:12-28)**

5:12-15 – What is the responsibility of Christians toward leaders of the church?  
What is the responsibility of Christians toward others?

5:16-18 – What is the Christian's responsibility toward God?

5:19-22 – What is the Christian's responsibility toward the Holy Spirit?

5:23-24 – What did Paul pray about regarding the Thessalonians?

5:25-28 – What closing remarks did Paul make to the Thessalonians?



# Lesson 6: 2 Thessalonians

## 1:1-2:12

The first letter to the Thessalonians expressed Paul's deep concern for the Thessalonians and urged them to continue serving the Lord faithfully. Now, the second letter written to this congregation urges them to stand firm in what they had been taught, as there were apparently some troubles that had developed among the congregation. This letter is commonly believed to have been written not long after the first (perhaps within a year), while Paul, Silas, and Timothy were together in Corinth (1:1; Acts 18:5).

The purpose of this lesson is to learn from Paul's introduction, the encouragement for Christians through persecutions and afflictions, and the man of lawlessness who would be revealed in a study of 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12.

### Paul's Introduction (1:1-2)

**Author (1:1a).** Like the first letter, this letter is clearly written from Paul's perspective, with Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy with him at the time (Acts 18:5). And, remember that these words are ultimately words from God (1 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 3:3-5).

**Recipients (1:1b).** This letter is also addressed to a local church composed of Thessalonians who had come into a right relationship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and were now continuing to live for Him.

**Greeting (1:2).** Similar to his first letter (as well as other letters), Paul extends the greeting of grace and peace from God (our Father) and Jesus Christ (the Lord).

### Encouragement In Persecutions And Afflictions (1:3-12)

**Perseverance and faith through trials (1:3-4).** Like the 1 Thessalonians letter (1:2), Paul expresses his thanks to God concerning the Thessalonian Christians (and rightly so) because their faith was flourishing (continually growing) and their love for each other was increasing. Certainly, Paul could see evidence that they were growing in maturity and he was extremely thankful for this and

boasted about them among God's churches in other places (not in an arrogant way, but by offering them as an encouraging example to others). However, it was not just that they were growing and maturing in Christ. Instead, they were even doing so through the challenging circumstances of persecution and affliction that they were experiencing!

**God's righteous judgment (1:5-10).** The Thessalonian Christians were suffering on this earth for the sake of God's kingdom due to persecutions. This is clear evidence of God's righteous judgment. For, these who were living faithfully through the persecutions would be counted worthy of God's kingdom so that they inherit (share in) the eternal kingdom in Heaven. So, their suffering would just be for a short time while they were on this earth (Matthew 5:10-12; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Then, God's righteous judgment will also be seen in that it is just (fair, right) for God to repay those who were harming the Thessalonian Christians, while giving relief to the Thessalonians (and others, like Paul and his companions). Therefore, even though the sufferings of this earth may not seem fair for those who are Christians, God promises He will settle it all in a righteous (fair) way (Romans 2:5-11; Romans 12:17-21)!

This righteous judgment of God will happen when Jesus Christ (who is now concealed in Heaven) is revealed at His coming (1 Thessalonians 4-5). When He is revealed from Heaven, His powerful angels will be with Him and vengeance will be taken on some with flaming fire. Namely, this vengeance (just punishment) will be taken on all those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, as they have rejected God and His authority. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction (ruination, not annihilation) away from the Lord's presence and His glorious strength, separated eternally from God in the fires of Hell (the second death, Revelation 21:8; Matthew 25:41, 46)! Yet, while this day will be terrible for these, those who are Christians (i.e. Thessalonian Christians) will glorify and marvel at Jesus on this day.

**Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians (1:11-12).** In view of the truths he had just taught, Paul always prayed for the Thessalonian Christians. Particularly, he prayed that God would make them worthy of His calling so they would live pleasing and acceptable to God (as is fitting with the gospel's call). Furthermore, Paul prayed that God would (by His power) help the Thessalonians accomplish every good work they desired to do and produce work through their faith. That is, Paul prayed that God would continue to work powerfully in their lives through the gospel to live in the way that pleases God so the name of Jesus will be glorified by the Thessalonians when He comes (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12) – and that they would be glorified by Jesus, according to the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ!

## **The Man Of Lawlessness (2:1-12)**

**False claim concerning Christ's coming (2:1-2).** There was evidently some teaching among the Thessalonians that said Jesus's coming had already taken place (some translations indicate the idea that the Lord's coming was near instead). The teaching that Jesus's coming (and, therefore, the resurrection) had already happened was false and would ruin the faith of those who would believe such (2 Timothy 2:16-18). Paul urged the Christians not to be easily upset or troubled by such a teaching regardless of whether it came by a claim of prophecy or by a message or letter that would allegedly come from the apostles (implying forged messages were circulated). For, this was clearly a false claim.

**Jesus's coming would not happen before the apostasy (2:3-4).** Paul demonstrates that the Thessalonians could certainly reject this teaching because he assured them that Jesus would not come before the apostasy took place and the man of lawlessness (sin) was revealed. The word "apostasy" simply refers to a falling away from the faith that God had revealed (Jude 1:3). This apostasy was foretold in many New Testament Scriptures (Matthew 24:24; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9, 13; 4:1-4; 1 John 2:18-19; Jude 1:4, 17-19).

Paul describes this man of lawlessness as one who puts himself in the seat of God (pictured as opposing and exalting himself above every god or object of worship, sitting in God's temple, and proclaiming that he himself is God). So, he has exalted himself to a position of authority. Many have speculated about his precise identification (i.e. Roman Catholicism/popes, Roman empire/emperors, Islam/Mohammed, a future person, etc.). In truth, many have demonstrated this spirit of lawlessness over time (compare with how the word "antichrist" is sometimes used in the singular and plural, 1 John 2:18). These would set aside God's order and rule to establish their own – and may not refer to a single person in history. Note the rise of Roman Catholicism and the establishment of the papacy also fit these remarks well historically (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

**Restraint will be taken away (2:5-8).** Paul had already warned the Thessalonian Christians about these things while he was with them. But, there was something at work that was now restraining this lawless one. Although there were certainly sects that had emerged during New Testament times that had to been fought against (i.e. Judaizers, Nicolaitans, Gnostics, etc.), there was not yet an apostasy on a large scale. However, it would come (i.e. the apostasy that led to the Catholic Church). Therefore, although the mystery of lawlessness was already at work, it was being restrained (perhaps by the authority of the apostles, perhaps by the Roman Empire's opposition to Christianity, perhaps by something else). Yet, what then restrained this full-blown apostasy would be taken away at some point. But, Jesus will destroy all that would contribute to such an apostasy and everyone

who puts themselves in God's place when He comes – and bring such a one to nothing, with the breath of His mouth (His word, John 12:48; Hebrews 4:12-13; Revelation 1:16; 2 Peter 2:1-3)!

**Man of lawlessness is based on Satan's working (2:9-12).** This man of lawlessness would be a product of Satan's working and be involved in great deception (John 8:44). These deceptions would even include claims of miracles (power), signs, and wonders that would all serve the lie (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Those who are perishing (lost in their sins) would be deceived by such and would perish eternally because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved. They value other things more than an honest pursuit of the truth that leads to salvation. This same thing continues today, as many continue following Satan's work of deception through those willing to uphold his deceptions. So, God sends these a strong delusion for them to believe the lie in the sense that God does not stop and allows such deception to take place (Romans 1:28; 11:7-8). Although God Himself cannot be the originator of such lies, He does allow others to lie and expose those who are not honestly seeking the truth so they will all be condemned! Rather than delighting in the truth that submits to Jesus's authority, these delight in unrighteousness that rebels against Jesus's authority.

### **Conclusion**

We have considered Paul's introduction to this second letter and the encouragement Paul gave them to persevere through persecutions and afflictions. And, we have considered the fact that they should not be discouraged by false teaching about Jesus's coming being in the past. In the next lesson, we will study 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:18.

## **Walk Worthy Of God**

### **Lesson 6: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12**

Highlight some key points from lesson 5.

#### **1. Paul's Introduction (1:1-2)**

1:1a – Who is the author of this letter? Who was with him? What are special about his words?

1:1b – Who are the recipients of this letter? How are they described?

1:2 – What greeting is extended?

#### **2. Encouragement In Persecutions And Afflictions (1:3-12)**

1:3-4 – Why did Paul pray about the Thessalonians? Why did Paul boast about them among God's churches?

1:5-10 – Why were the Thessalonians experiencing afflictions? What will God do for the Thessalonians? What will happen to those who afflicted them?

1:11-12 – How often did Paul pray for the Thessalonians? What did he pray about this time?

## **2. The Man Of Lawlessness (2:1-12)**

2:1-2 – What was being taught about Jesus's coming? Why was this teaching dangerous?

2:3-4 – What evidence did Paul give to prove this teaching was false? Who is the man of lawlessness?

2:5-8 – Was Paul's warning new? Why had this lawless one not yet come? What will happen to this one?

2:9-12 – Whose work was behind this lawless one? Why would some perish? What is the strong delusion God would send?

# Lesson 7: 2 Thessalonians

## 2:13-3:18

The second letter Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians provided them with encouragement as they faced afflictions and persecutions. Then, it also provided them with teaching that would help them not be upset or troubled by those who were teaching that Jesus had already come.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn to stand firm and not to be unruly in a study of 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:18.

### **Stand Firm In The Truth (2:13-3:5)**

**Called by the gospel (2:13-15).** This section follows Paul's teaching concerning those who would perish because they did not accept the love of the truth, would not believe the truth, and would delight in unrighteousness (2:9-12). But, the Thessalonian Christians had proven themselves to be different than this. So, it was proper for Paul to thank God always for them (who were loved by the Lord) because God had chosen them for salvation from the beginning of His plan of redemption. Their salvation was through the sanctification by the Spirit (as they were set apart from their sins through their response to the message revealed by the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and their belief in the truth (which requires obedience, James 2:14-26). God had called them to this salvation through the gospel Paul and his companions preached, just as He does today (Romans 1:16). He does this so that people might share in the glory of Jesus Christ when He comes (Romans 8:16-18).

While some believe that God chooses particular individuals for salvation (thereby not choosing others), this conclusion is entirely out of harmony with the character of God, the nature of Jesus's sacrifice, the purpose of the gospel, and the rest of Scripture. God simply chose that those who are obedient to the gospel will be saved in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4-6, notice the concept of being in Christ). Then, He calls all people to have this opportunity through the gospel, leaving the choice up to each individual whether to accept or reject Jesus.

Now, Paul now urged them to stand firm in what they had been taught. This would be essential so they would not be troubled through other messages and be like those who would perish. The truth they had been taught by Paul (called “traditions”) was authoritative, whether they had been taught by word or by letter. Therefore, these messages delivered through God-inspired men in the New Testament should also be viewed as authoritative traditions for us to follow today (not like human-made traditions, i.e. Matthew 15:1-9).

**Prayer for encouragement (2:16-17).** Having seen the threats faced by the Thessalonian Christians and urging them to stand firm in the truth, Paul offers a prayer on their behalf to the Lord Jesus Christ and God, the Father. After all, this is the God who had already demonstrated His great love for them and given them eternal encouragement and a good hope by the grace He has provided. So, it was fitting for God to be asked to further encourage their hearts (inner person) and strengthen them in every good work and word they should do and say!

**Petition for prayers (3:1-2).** The Thessalonians were not the only ones who needed prayers. The apostle Paul and his companions also faced numerous obstacles as they tried to serve the Lord. So, Paul petitioned the Thessalonians for their prayers. Specifically, Paul asked for prayers that the word of God would spread rapidly and be honored among others just as it was among the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:13). And, that God would deliver them from wicked and evil people who were opposing them (as such stood in the way of the gospel’s progress). For, not all people had faith whenever they heard the message.

**Strength in the Lord (3:3-5).** Although not all people have faith, God is always faithful. As a result, the Lord would strengthen and guard the Thessalonian Christians (as well as others) so they would overcome the evil one (devil) if they did their parts to stand firm (1 Corinthians 10:13). And, Paul was confident in the Lord concerning the Thessalonians’ obedience (both now and in the future). Notice the change here from his uncertainty about their continued faithfulness expressed in 1 Thessalonians 3:5. Then, he prays that the Lord would direct their hearts (make the path straight) to the love of God and Christ’s endurance, that recognizing and reflecting on these would result in their love for God and their own endurance.

### **Warning Against Being Unruly (3:6-15)**

**When church discipline is necessary (3:6).** While Paul had confidence in them, this section now demonstrates what they were to do with those who did not obey (3:11). Notice the command is given in the name (authority) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Particularly, they were commanded to keep away (withdraw from



fellowship and avoid social interaction) from every brother or sister in Christ who is unruly (disorderly, like a soldier who steps out of ranks). These were the ones who would not live according to the God-given tradition that had been delivered by them (2:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). Specifically, the context demonstrates the problem in Thessalonica concerned people being idle (perhaps due to the teaching that was being spread about Jesus's coming, 2:1-2). The action to be taken is explained further in vv. 14-15.

**Paul's personal example (3:7-9).** The Thessalonians should have known that the tradition Paul delivered to them did not include idleness. Although Paul and his companions had the right to abstain from secular work and expect to receive financial support from the Christians there (1 Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 6:5; 1 Timothy 5:17-18), they chose to set an example of working hard to provide for themselves and not become a burden to them. And, this certainly required them to spend night and day laboring, toiling, and working. So, this was a great sacrifice on their part. Now, the Thessalonians should have been imitating their example of hard work (as all Christians should today).

**Work required (3:10-13).** Not only did Paul give the Thessalonians an example of working hard to provide for themselves, but he also gave them a command, saying that if anyone did not work, then he should not eat. So, any expectation of getting a free ride at someone else's expense was viewed as being entirely inappropriate (for any who were able to work). However, Paul had been told that there were some among the Thessalonians (perhaps the ones spreading the false message in 2:1-2 or some who had been influenced by this teaching) who were unruly in that they were not busy working. Rather, they were being busybodies in other people's business (a common byproduct of not staying busy in your own work). Now, Paul used his authority to command and warn such people by the authority of Jesus Christ to work quietly and eat their own food (i.e. provide for themselves rather than relying on others; 1 Timothy 5:8). Then, the rest of the brothers and sisters were not to grow weary (become discouraged) in doing good (i.e. by becoming unsettled, 2:1-2).

**What to do with the disobedient (3:14-15).** Regardless of Paul's instructions, some may still choose not to obey. If this was the case, Paul said the Christians were to take note of that person (i.e. to mark him/her) and then not associate with him/her (compare with 1 Corinthians 5:9-13). This severance of social interaction was done to show disapproval for the sin, as well as to not give such a one an opportunity to negatively influence those living right. The hope was that such a one would be ashamed of his/her wicked conduct and be brought to repentance. Therefore, it is an act of love. For, the one being treated in this way was not an enemy, but an erring brother (or sister) who needed to be warned so

he/she would be saved! This continues to be the responsibility of Christians toward erring brothers and sisters today.

### **Closing Remarks (3:16-18)**

**Prayer (3:16).** Paul prays that the Lord of peace (Jesus) would give them peace always in every way and be with them all. Certainly, what Paul has described in both letters to the Thessalonians demonstrates many things that could be unsettling (i.e. persecution, false teaching). However, Paul desired for the Christians to experience the peace that Jesus Christ makes available to those who follow Him (Philippians 4:6-7). And, no matter what troubles are experienced, He has promised to always be with us (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6).

**Authentication of the letter and conclusion (3:17-18).** The preceding parts of this letter had evidently been dictated by Paul to another who actually wrote the words. However, Paul was now authenticating the letter by the use of his own handwriting (1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18). This should have helped them distinguish this genuine letter from the ones that were only alleged to have come from him (2:2). Finally, Paul closed with the prayer that the grace (favor) of their Lord Jesus Christ be with them all.

### **Conclusion**

We have considered the need for the Thessalonian Christians to stand firm in the truth. Then, we have also considered the disciplinary actions the church should take toward Christians who did not follow this way. Finally, we have considered Paul's closing remarks to this letter. With this, we have reached the end of these two letters Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, urging them to walk worthy of God.

## **Walk Worthy Of God**

### **Lesson 7: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:18**

Highlight some key points from lesson 6.

#### **1. Stand Firm In The Truth (2:13-3:5)**

2:13-15 – Why did Paul give thanks for the Thessalonian Christians? How does God choose people for salvation? How does God call people?

2:16-17 – What did Paul pray for concerning the Thessalonians?

3:1-2 – Why was Paul seeking the prayers of the Thessalonians?

3:3-5 – How would the Thessalonians find strength to overcome the evil one? What was Paul's confidence and prayer concerning them?

#### **2. Warning Against Being Unruly (3:6-15)**

3:6 – When is church discipline necessary? What does it require?

3:7-9 – What example did Paul leave for the Thessalonians when he was with them? Did Paul have to do this?

3:10-13 – What does God require of Christians concerning work? What happens when Christians do not work? Why did the Thessalonians need to not grow weary in doing good?

3:14-15 – What were they to do with the disobedient? Why was this important?

### **3. Closing Remarks (3:16-18)**

3:16 – What was Paul's closing prayer for the Thessalonians?

3:17 – What was significant about the writing in verse 17? How does the letter conclude?