1 THESSALONIANS

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Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO 1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS

On his second missionary journey, Paul with Silas and Timothy visited Thessalonica, a busy seaport and the capital of Macedonia (Acts 17). When Paul preached in the synagogue, proclaiming Jesus as Christ, a few Jews, many Greeks and some prominent women believed. The unbelieving Jews were jealous and they incited a mob to attack the home that had welcomed Paul. So the church of Thessalonica was born in the midst of violence. Paul had to leave town quickly, before grounding the new believers adequately in the word of God. He went to Berea, Athens and then to Corinth, where he was joined by Timothy and Silas. He wrote the two letters to the Thessalonians from Corinth in AD 51/52. Paul was concerned about the new believers in Thessalonica because they lived in a hostile environment, so when Timothy came bringing a good report he rejoiced and thanked God. He wrote these letters to encourage the believers to wait patiently on God and to put their hope in him. We don't sit down to wait on God; we must serve him with all our hearts and strength. In every chapter of 1 Thessalonians he spoke about Jesus' second coming. He encouraged the believers to live lives that please God. He wants them to be ready to welcome Jesus when he comes again.

FAITH, LOVE AND HOPE IN ACTION

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Key Verse: 1:3

1. Faith, hope and love (1-3)

The believers in Thessalonica lived in a dog-eat-dog world, but they were full of joy. God had chosen them to be his own people. They accepted the word of God, and the Holy Spirit worked in their hearts. Their faith produced work; their love was expressed in labor; and their hope in Jesus enabled them to endure trials.

2. A joyful model (4-10)

Paul and his co-workers had lived sacrificial lives among the Thessalonians, and they imitated the lives and faith of their shepherds; they imitated Jesus. In spite of suffering, they welcomed the word of God with the joy given by the Holy Spirit and they welcomed God's servants. So they became models of faith for other believers. Because of their changed lives and courage to witness to Jesus, the Lord's word rang out from them, to be heard throughout the world. They overcame everything to turn from idols and serve the living God. They put their hope in God and waited for Jesus to come again.

Prayer: Lord, help me to grow in faith, love and hope; fill me with your joy and let your message ring out from my changed life.

One Word: Faith, love, hope and joy

LIVE A LIFE WORTHY OF GOD

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Key Verse: 2:12

1. We tried to please God, not men (1-6a)

When Paul entered Europe on his second missionary journey, he preached first in Philippi. Many people believed in Jesus, but others had Paul put in jail because his preaching interfered with their business. He went on to Thessalonica and with the help of God, dared to tell thirsty people there the good news--in spite of opposition. He was not seeking personal gain; in fact, he lost a lot. He braved opposition because he sought to please God rather than men.

2. Like a mother; like a father (6b-12)

He did not want to burden the believers, so he worked to support himself. And he didn't exercise his authority as an apostle. He loved and cared for them gently, like a mother--giving not only the gospel but his heart as well. He encouraged and disciplined them like a father, urging them to live lives worthy of God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live a life worthy of God. As one entrusted with the gospel, help me to please God rather than men. Help me to speak your word boldly and care for your flock like a mother and a father.

One Word: Live a life worthy of God

RECEIVE GOD'S WORD AS GOD'S WORD

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

Key Verse: 2:13

1. God's word at work in believers (13)

The Bible is the word of God. When we accept it as the word of God, it works in us powerfully. God's word works in those who believe. To accept God's word as God's word means that we humbly obey God's commands; we persistently believe God's prom- ises and we accept the Biblical view of ourselves and the world. The Thessalonians could grow spiritually and boldly challenge their godless culture because they accepted God's word as God's word to them.

2. Suffering for the sake of world mission (14-16)

The believers in Thessalonica were persecuted by their own countrymen because their obedience to Christ challenged the culture in which they lived. History was repeating itself. Jesus was killed by his own people because he challenged them to be God's people; Paul was driven out by his own people because he was a missionary to the Gentiles. Those who seek to obey Jesus' world mission command may be persecuted, but God's wrath will fall on those who hinder world evangelization.

Prayer: Lord, give me an absolute attitude toward your word and use me in your work.

One Word: God's word is God's word

YOU ARE OUR GLORY AND JOY

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

Key Verse: 2:20

1. You are our joy (2:17-20)

The new believers in Thessalonica seemed to be too weak; they were almost like orphans, for their shepherd was torn from them when they were too young. Paul eagerly wanted to come and see about them, but he could not. When he thought about how God had worked in them, and how they had responded to the gospel, he rejoiced. He tasted the shepherd's greatest joy--the joy of seeing the fruit of his labor and prayer.

2. To encourage your faith (3:1-5)

Paul was afraid that these new believers would be discouraged and full of all kinds of human thinking because of the persecution that he was receiving. He reminded them that he had expected persecution--it actually confirmed God's word. In addition, Paul also feared that some false teachers had led them astray. When he couldn't stand it any longer, he sent Timothy to find out about their faith and to encourage them.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the shepherd heart of Paul. Help me to see your work in others and rejoice.

One Word: Rejoice in God's work

AN ENCOURAGING REPORT

1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Key Verse: 3:8

1. Since you are standing firm (6-10)

Paul and his co-workers were facing a time of persecution and distress. He was more concerned about the faith of the new believers in Thessalonica than about himself. When he received a good report about their faith and love, he said, "Now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord." He did not pray that they would be spared suffering and hardship; he prayed that they might stand firm in their faith and love one another. He prayed for them night and day and longed to visit them. He shows us how to help sheep--and our adult children.

2. A prayer for God's flock (11-13)

Paul prayed that God would enable him to visit them; he prayed that their love for one another and for everyone else might increase. When faith doesn't grow, love becomes cold. He prayed that God might strengthen their hearts so that they might live before God until Jesus comes again.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love others in such a way that their faith is built up and their hearts are strengthened.

One Word: Stand firm in faith and love

LIVE TO PLEASE GOD

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Key Verse: 4:1

1. Live a holy life (1-8)

Sexual immorality was so widespread that it seemed unreasonable to expect anyone to live a pure life. But Paul didn't think so. God's people must live to please God; they don't have to follow the pattern of the world. No one who indulges in sexual immorality can please God. No one should allow himself or herself to be controlled by lust or passion--even in the marriage relationship. No one should allow his physical desire to destroy his relations with another believer. Controlling one's own body includes proper diet and exercise. God called us to live pure lives.

2. Brotherly love (9-12)

Genuine love is different from the lustful feelings that godless people call love. Real love is practical. It means being concerned about the needs of another. Real love builds up. In a godless, hostile environment, we must live quietly and work hard so that our daily lives may win the respect even of unbelievers; we should not be dependent on others for our material necessities.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live a life that pleases you.

One Word: Live to please God, not myself

THE COMING OF THE LORD

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Key Verse: 4:16

1. Our sure hope (13-15)

Our final enemy is death. Worldly people can only grieve in the face of death. But God's people have a great and glorious hope. Just as sure as Jesus died and rose again, so will he come, bringing with him those who have fallen asleep in him. Death is not the end. It is a short nap before awaking to be with Jesus forever.

2. The Lord himself will come (16-18)

Jesus will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel and with a trumpet blast. The dead in Christ will rise first; then those who are still alive at the time of his coming will be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air; so we will all be with him forever. In the light of this glorious and sure hope, we should encourage each other.

Prayer: Lord, you came to be my Savior and died and rose to forgive my sins. I am awaiting your return, for you will surely come as you promised. Help me to hold this glorious hope in my heart.

One Word: Come quickly, Lord Jesus

SONS OF THE LIGHT

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Key Verse: 5:8

1. Like a thief in the night (1-3)

No one knows when Jesus will come again. He told us that only the Father knows. We should not try to calculate about the time of his coming. Two things are sure: He will come as surely as birth pains come to a pregnant woman; he will come when we do not expect him--like a thief in the night. How, then, can we be ready?

2. Be sons of light (4-11)

Those who have no inner spiritual resources live according to their feelings. They sleep when they feel like it and get drunk when they want to. They live in darkness and they will be terrified when Jesus comes. But we who belong to Jesus are sons of light. We must be self-controlled, spiritual soldiers. We must put on faith and love as a breastplate over our hearts; we must wear

the hope of salvation as helmets to protect our minds. We do not need to fear death because whether we live or die, we live with Jesus; we await his coming.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live in the light; help me to

live with you every day.

One Word: Live as children of light

FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL FOR YOU

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

Key Verses: 5:16-18 (Memorize) Thanksgiving Day

1. Love and respect one another (12-15)

These are Paul's concluding instructions to the believers. He tells them and us how we should relate to one another and what our inner lives should be like. It is not fitting for Christians to despise one another. We must love and respect our shepherds, our co-workers and our sheep. In our relations with others, we should not be superficial or indifferent. We should know the strengths and weaknesses of our brothers and sisters so that we can encourage and exhort them in kindness and love.

2. Give thanks in all circumstances (16-28)

It is not easy to be joyful always or to give thanks in all circumstances. But if we pray without ceasing and yield to the Spirit of God, struggling to hold to the good and avoid evil, and holding on to God's word, God himself will work in us to make us holy through and through. He who called us is faithful.

Prayer: Lord, you are faithful; help me to pray without ceasing and rejoice always and love and respect your people.

One Word: This is God's will for me