



Bible, Expositor, and Illuminator

SPRING QUARTER

March, April, May 2019

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LOOKING AHEAD

This quarter begins with seven lessons from Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians. These letters touch on a number of important issues.

Lesson 1 reminds us of the importance of godly character and actions as it points to the impact the Thessalonians' faith, hope, and love had on the lives of others. The second lesson reveals the deep affection Paul had for this church, as exhibited by his concern for them and prayers on their behalf.

Lesson 3 urges us to excel in all aspects of our Christian lives. We should not be content with less than our best when it comes to obeying God, loving others, and working.

Lesson 4 introduces the great hope of our Lord's return in I Thessalonians 4 and 5. Paul explains key details of Christ's return and how we should live in light of it.

Lesson 5 takes us to II Thessalonians 1, where Paul encouraged this persecuted church with the certainty of divine justice. Our sixth lesson covers Paul's correction of a misunderstanding regarding the end times. He urges them to cling to God's written revelation. The final lesson in the Thessalonian epistles reminds us of our responsibility to exhort, encourage, and pray for one another.

The final six lessons, primarily from the book of Galatians, focus on the doctrine of salvation and how it relates to works. Lesson 8 introduces the problem presented by false teachers. They taught salvation by works rather than the true gospel, which is clearly based in Christ's resurrection, a truth we will explore in Matthew 28.

Lesson 9 records Paul's defense of his teaching against charges leveled against him. He defended the gospel of grace he preached and his authority to preach it.

Salvation by grace alone is the consistent teaching of the Bible. The Apostle Paul set forth the scriptural argument very clearly, as lesson 10 demonstrates.

To this day there is much confusion about the Mosaic Law and how it relates to Christians. Lessons 11 and 12 tackle this subject and explain how the law served as a tool to bring us to Christ.

Our final lesson reminds us that the gospel of grace we embrace is not merely a confession but a reality that is lived out.

—*Jarl K. Waggoner.*

PLEASE NOTE: Fundamental, sound doctrine is the objective of the Incorporated Trustees of the Gospel Worker Society, Union Gospel Press Division. The writers are prayerfully selected for their Bible knowledge and yieldedness to the Spirit of Truth, each writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Witnessing Then And Now

WAYNE J. VASILENKO

Many people at times feel as though their life experiences are unique. I remember that many years ago I was on a cross-country hike with a friend. We were off the trail, using map and compass, hiking to a fire tower some three miles distant. We stopped for a break on the top of a ridge, taking in the view.

I remarked to my friend, "We could be the first people ever that have enjoyed this view."

At first my friend agreed, but then he started to laugh as he pointed to the ground at my feet. There we were in this "virgin land," thinking that we were possibly the first humans in history to be there as my friend pointed to a cigarette butt just inches from my foot! Neither one of us smoked. So much for us being the first to hike that ridge! As Christians, many of us feel as though we are trailblazing, facing unique issues or challenges, especially when witnessing to people or engaging in the discipleship of a new convert to Christianity. Interestingly, it seems at times we are fighting against more religious groups than non-Christian groups.

Why do you suppose that is so? Perhaps we can learn by exploring what it was like for the early Christians when they witnessed to the people back in their day.

When Jesus walked the earth, He mainly dealt with legalistic Judaism and the pagan gods of the Gentiles. Since that time, many different religions or denominations have sprung up claiming Christian roots; so surely it must be easier for Christians to evangelize than it was back then. After all, there are radical differences between the law of the Jewish faith, the pagan gods, and the message of grace preached by Jesus and His followers! So what, if anything,

is different now as we engage in evangelism in modern times?

The Bible tells us that history has a habit of repeating itself: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us" (Eccles. 1:9-10).

The fact remains that most things have been done or experienced before; this not only applies to everyday life but to religious teachings and practices as well. During Old Testament times, it was all about the law. It all started out with a short and simple law given to Adam and Eve. However, as even the casual student of the Bible knows, that one law became hundreds of laws over time, and they were subject to many differing interpretations. Exodus 25 through 29 gives the details of the priesthood and God's expectations pertaining to worship as it relates to the law, and it is indeed a long and detailed list.

This system of laws and worship lasted thousands of years, and in the process the priesthood became a very powerful influence over the common people. The priests were the teachers, the keepers, and the enforcers of the law, thus giving them lots of power over the people.

History teaches us that powerful people usually end up craving more power, and we can see this clearly continuing in the modern church. We can also see it in modern civil government.

What evolved in Old Testament times was a very structured system of worship overseen by a very powerful elite group. This was reinforced

(Editorials continued on page 186)

Scripture Lesson Text

1 THESS. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

NOTES

A New Loyalty

Lesson Text: I Thessalonians 1:1-10

Related Scriptures: Acts 17:1-4; Romans 6:17-23;
I Corinthians 2:1-5; Ephesians 2:1-13

TIME: A.D. 51

PLACE: from Corinth

GOLDEN TEXT—"They themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (I Thessalonians 1:9).

Introduction

Some people are remembered for their words. Will Rogers, Mark Twain, Benjamin Franklin, and, of course, King Solomon readily come to mind as men known for their wit and wisdom. However, such people are exceptions to the general rule, undoubtedly because their writings have been preserved through the years.

The people most of us remember are those whose lives have had a profound impact on us. And we remember their character and their deeds long after their words have faded from our memories. There might be a few wise words we remember from parents and grandparents, but for the most part, we remember such things as their faithfulness, kindness, love, diligence, attitudes, and particular things they did that exhibited their honorable qualities.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his first

letter to the Christians in the city of Thessalonica, he had things he wanted to teach them and remind them of. The first chapter, however, is devoted primarily to remembering the godly character and actions of the Thessalonian believers. Such reminders of their godly example would encourage them to continue faithfully following Christ and challenge others, including us, to set a Christlike example for others to follow.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. GREETING THE THESSALONIANS—I Thess. 1:1-2
- II. REMEMBERING THE THESSALONIANS' GODLY EXAMPLE—I Thess. 1:3-8
- III. AFFIRMING THE THESSALONIANS—I Thess. 1:9-10

Exposition: Verse by Verse

GREETING THE THESSALONIANS

I THESS. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church

of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and