

Intermediate Bible Teacher

For Teachers of Teens Ages 12 Through 14

SPRING QUARTER
March, April, May 2019



CHRISTIAN LIFE SERIES™
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UNION GOSPEL PRESS

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WRITER'S FORECAST

In this quarter, we will examine what are believed to be three of the earliest books of the New Testament: I and II Thessalonians and Galatians. We will study some of the major issues facing the early church.

Our quarter is appropriately titled "New Teaching." In the first four-week unit, we will study "New Life in Christ," as it is explored in I Thessalonians.

In lesson 1, "A New Loyalty," we will see the dynamic impact of the gospel in the lives of the believers in Thessalonica. Paul prayed for them frequently and was appreciative of their faith, love, and hopefulness. They had become an example for all believers in that region.

Lesson 2, "A New Affection," looks at Paul's joyful response to good news from Timothy after his visit to Thessalonica. Their spiritual growth relieved Paul's concern for their welfare.

In "A New Way of Life," lesson 3, we will study Paul's exhortation about the need for believers to live holy and pure lives.

The final lesson of the unit, "A New Understanding," looks at Paul's compassionate explanation as to how the death of a Christian should be understood in light of Christ's return.

The second unit, titled "New Growth," is a three-week study of the book of II Thessalonians.

Lesson 5 is titled "A Growing Confidence." We will see how in the midst of persecution and trouble the Thessalonians grew in their confidence in the Lord and in their love for one another.

Paul's careful correction of the Thessalonians' misunderstanding of the

tribulation will be studied in lesson 6. Paul explained many things that would come to pass before the beginning of this troubling time.

Lesson 7, "A Growing Resolve," will look at how our relationship with the Lord and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives make us responsible for being faithful to God's Word and His work in an evil world.

The third unit, titled "The True Gospel," explores the book of Galatians. Lesson 8 covers Paul's scolding of the Galatians for adding legalism to the gospel of grace, which is based on the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

In lesson 9, "The Source of Paul's Gospel," we will look at Paul's defense and explanation of how he had received his message by revelation from Christ.

Lesson 10 is a study of justification by faith versus the law as foreseen and demonstrated in Abraham's example. Paul explained how Abraham was justified by faith due to his trust and belief in the promises of God. We are justified by personal faith in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

Titled "The Gospel: Faith in Christ," lesson 11 explores how Jesus is the Seed of Abraham through whom the spiritual blessings of Abraham were fulfilled.

In lesson 12, we will see how all believers in Christ are children of God and heirs according to God's promise. Believers are indwelt by the Spirit so that they can have a personal relationship with their Heavenly Father.

The final lesson is "The Gospel in Action." In this lesson, we will study the responsibility of the Christian for helping the weaker Christian and supporting that particular biblical teaching in the church.

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).

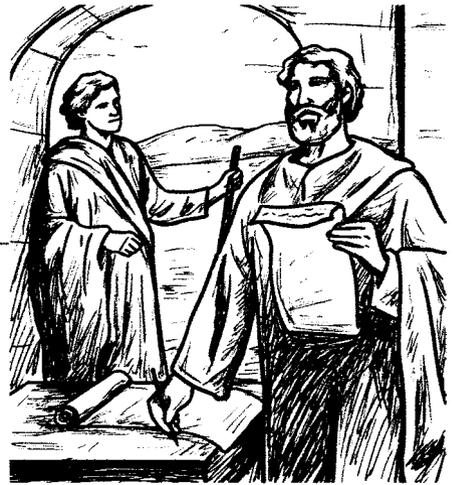
Some Things Never Change

Two thousand years of history has not drastically changed the nature of the challenges facing the body of Christ. Human nature is still the same, and believers still struggle with a dual nature that wrestles with basic temptations and weaknesses. Believers still need correcting, and love of the brethren can still be found. In addition, we are still awaiting Jesus' return, but we know His coming is closer than ever. We can tell by the way the world is preparing for the antichrist.

One difference that may change the equation is that society in the twenty-first century is more educated, and communication is more rapid and accessible. While technology has enhanced our ability and opportunities to communicate the gospel more effectively to a wider audience, we also face an onslaught of amateur theologians of every stripe. Anyone with an Internet connection, a web camera, and a strong opinion seems to be an expert, and the information and opinions they present are immediately available.

However, truth and falsehood are still opposed to each other. Many of the "experts" are not really experts at all. Falsehood and bad theology, even heresy, are becoming more and more easily embraced because of the way they are packaged and the shallow grasp of correct biblical theology that seems too common, even in the modern church.

It is fascinating as we study the Bible to see the same or similar theological challenges today as those faced by the first-century church as the New Testament was being written. However, Paul gives us insight into why this is the case. As Paul



wrote to the Thessalonians, the same spirit or "mystery of iniquity" (II Thess. 2:7) that will characterize the coming of the antichrist was active in the first century (see lesson 6). Satan does not need to change his tactics or message because they have worked well in every generation. That is why he still repeats to people today the question he asked Eve in the Garden of Eden, "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). He has been able to cast doubt on God's Word from the beginning, and people still listen to him. However, God's Word can still be seen, heard, and read. It is God's infallible and unchanging Word that draws us to church and Sunday school where we enjoy fellowship with other like-minded believers.

Paul advised the Thessalonians to "stand fast, and hold the traditions" (II Thess. 2:15) that they had been given, a reference to the Word of the Lord (lesson 7). Scripture is the foundation of the church's doctrine and the source of our understanding and guidance.

Today we take for granted the completed New Testament and its full authority, including the thirteen books written by Paul. Yet in the first century Paul had to defend his apostleship and explain the source of his gospel (see lesson 9). While the goal of Bible teaching is to enable every believer to intelligently explain the gospel and defend the faith, we should not assume the “experts” are reliable since we face so many false teachings today. We should demand more credibility and even credentials from many so-called experts who propound their extravagant ideas.

Besides studying the contents of I and II Thessalonians and Galatians, it is fascinating to realize that we are watching the New Testament take form as it was being written by Paul. It is also interesting and helpful to realize that the problems, both theological and practical, faced by the early church are still being faced today in similar or even identical ways.

The most important issue faced by the early church was the nature and content of the gospel. Paul was forced to be blunt with the Galatians over their acceptance of a different gospel that added obedience to the Law of Moses to salvation (see lesson 8). Grace cannot be perverted by adding works. On a practical level, that is the same problem we face today. We do not have the threat of Judaizers trying to impose circumcision as a necessity, but in the minds of many, human achievement is an accepted and necessary part of the gospel. Everyone wants to do his part in getting to heaven. Christians need to be as decisive and forceful as Paul in correcting such errors.

The sanctification of every believer is still God’s will; yet, as was the case of the Thessalonian believers, we still have the same temptations and are faced with a society bathed in sexual

immorality (see lesson 3).

Paul addressed the concerns of the Thessalonians over the death of fellow believers and how this related to the rapture (lesson 4). His explanation provided details that enable us to know the order of events of the rapture. When we look at church history, we find that it was not until recently that eschatology, the study of last things, was seriously addressed.

Paul dealt with both the rapture and the visible and dramatic second coming of Christ with His saints (lesson 5). We are still debating the timing of the rapture.

Paul found it necessary to correct the bad information that the Thessalonians had received about the tribulation. He explained how the tribulation will begin, the role of the restrainer, and the rise and destruction of the antichrist, the man of sin (lesson 6).

Then, as now, God wants us to know the way the world will be at the time Jesus returns. Yet we do not look for the events; we look for Jesus.

From an overall perspective, the responsibilities of believers are the same as they were in Paul’s day. Christians struggle with sin. Mature believers are called to help them (see lesson 13). Christians are called to stand fast in the Word. And we are to be ready for the day and the hour when the Lord Jesus Christ returns for us.

Our Lord reminded us that we cannot know the precise time of His return: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt. 24:42). Rather than look to specific events or signs, we should instead keep our eyes focused on the One who made all things and live our daily lives so that we will, as the Apostle Paul urged us, “labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him” (II Cor. 5:9).

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).

Lesson and Its Truth

After Paul, Sylvanus (Silas), and Timotheus (Timothy) spent three weeks preaching the gospel in Thessalonica, both Jews and Gentiles responded in faith to the gospel. It is possible the missionaries were in Thessalonica for more than three weeks. The fact that they also worked at some types of jobs may indicate a longer stay (cf. I Thess. 2:7-11). The Philippians sent assistance twice while they were there (cf. Phil. 4:16), which also points to a longer stay. The missionaries were forced to leave when the unbelieving Jews of the city urged the Greeks to drive them out (cf. Acts 17:5-10).

Paul then went to Athens, followed by his visit to Corinth. From Corinth, probably shortly after arriving there, Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians. It may be that this was the second letter Paul wrote, after penning Galatians.

PAUL'S GREETING—I Thess. 1:1-2

Most of the books of the New Testament were letters written to believers. As letters, they followed the normal pattern of writing in the first century in

which the letter began with the names of the author and the person or people to whom the letter was being written.

The letter was written by Paul, Silas, and Timothy. It was written to the church in Thessalonica, made up mostly, if not totally, of Gentile believers. Paul pointed out that the church existed in both God and Jesus, the First and Second Persons of the Trinity.

New Testament letters also began with a greeting that reflected serious theological truth. Paul began by wishing his readers grace, the unmerited favor of God. This was an appropriate greeting because the Thessalonians had been saved by the grace of God. Salvation is God's gift to every believer (cf. Eph. 2:8). Next Paul wished them peace, which refers to the peace that now exists between God and believers as the result of God's grace and forgiveness. This was Paul's customary greeting in all his letters. Peter (I Pet. 1:2; II Pet. 1:2), John (II John 1:3; Rev. 1:4), and Jude (Jude 1:2) also included this greeting or a variation of it in their letters.