

Adult BIBLE Class

For Adults Ages 26 & Up

Large-Print Edition

SPRING QUARTER
March, April, May 2019



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New Life in Christ

STEVEN D. PYLE

The Apostle Paul is a very important figure in the New Testament. He traveled from place to place telling Jews and Gentiles alike about the good news of Jesus Christ. Enraged enemies of the gospel would often cause Paul to flee a town before the new believers were grounded in the faith. God used that for the benefit of believers throughout the ages because Paul wrote to the new believers, and those letters are now found in Scripture. In fact, thirteen of the twenty-seven New Testament books are letters written by Paul.

While Jewish converts to Christianity would have the background of the Old Testament and Judaism, Gentiles would not have even that. They had turned from an immoral and idolatrous life, yet the society they lived in was still steeped in immorality and idolatry. It was Paul's goal to have converts live righteous lives in such a society. That is a reason why Paul's writings are so meaningful to believers, even in the twenty-first century. Immorality and idolatry surround us—sometimes in a spiritual guise.

While Paul's letters surely do not contain all his thinking, some things become clear. He was very pastoral toward his readers. His thoughts were Christ centered. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

In addition to his concentration on

Christ, or perhaps because of that concentration, Paul does instruct on the pervasiveness of sin. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). But Paul does not stop there. He declares that eternal life is a gift to those who have Jesus Christ as their Saviour (6:23).

The church consists of Christ and believers joined together. The church is Christ's body. The church is a mixed bag. Not everyone who is a member of the visible church on earth will be a member of God's eternal kingdom. God will sort out who is actually His child and who belongs to the enemy (cf. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50).

Paul talks about Christ's return, the resurrection of the dead, and the coming judgment. When Christ returns, the final judgment is only a matter of time. When Jesus comes, "he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. 19:15).

Paul recognized that he faced opposition, and he defended his ministry. He let his readers know that they too would be persecuted. The comparative peace that Christians in Western nations face is relatively rare. Brothers and sisters through the ages have faced persecution, and currently men, women, and children face persecution and even death because they belong to Christ.

In the midst of a hostile world, Paul urged his readers to live to please God. Christians will look to God for

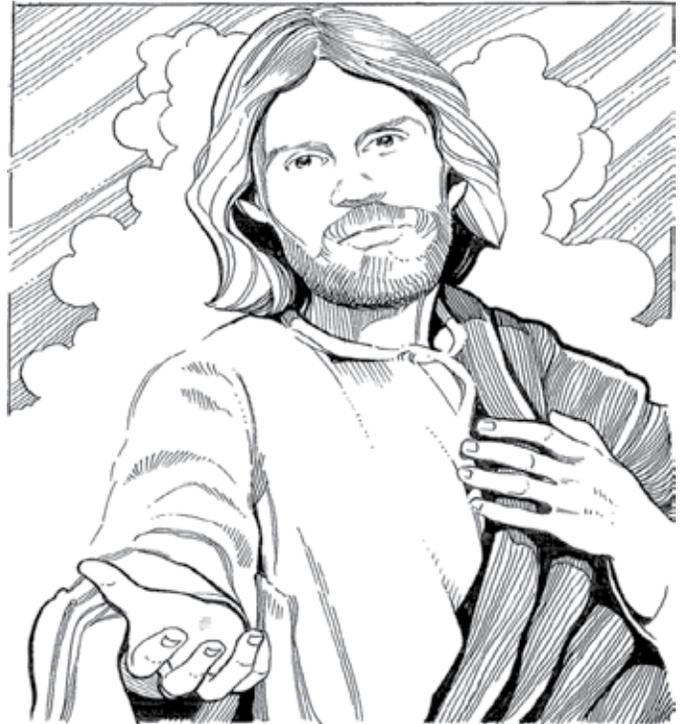
strength to live moral lives. They will control their lusts and not take advantage of their brother (I Thess. 4:6). We are to practice brotherly love “for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (vs. 9). Christians are to lead a quiet life and work so that they will not be dependent on handouts.

Christ’s return will be unexpected. “The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (I Thess. 5:2). Be prepared at all times. Live as “children of light” (vs. 5). Do not be caught unaware. Do not daydream. It is too easy to go on cruise control and not be ready for Christ’s coming.

However, we are not to be so caught up preparing for Christ’s return that we neglect to esteem those in leadership. I have heard professing Christians say that they can live as they wish. Yes, believers have freedom in Christ, but there is the need to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thess. 5:22). “Every appearance or visible form of evil is to be avoided by the Christian” (Ryrie, *First and Second Thessalonians*, Moody).

There are many voices out there purporting to speak the message of the Bible. I am sure we have all heard one of them at one time or another. Some of these messages are appealing (to the flesh, at least), but have no foundation in the gospel message. The gospel is about giving, not getting. God gave His Son to die an ignominious death on the cross. There is no new, previously unknown message. “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:9). There is one gospel message, and it has been boldly proclaimed in the writings of Paul.

Salvation is not something that can be earned. An individual becomes a child of God by repenting of sin and accepting by faith Jesus Christ as



Saviour. Quoting from Habakkuk 2:4, Paul wrote that “The just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11; cf. Rom. 1:17).

People tend to need a list of what to do and what not to do. The Old Testament can be used as an example of this. The one thing that law demonstrated was the utter impossibility of humans to be righteous before God based on works because the law cannot be kept in its entirety at all times. “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Gal. 3:22). The law is a “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (vss. 24-26).

God does not treat those who come to Him in Jesus Christ as underlings. New believers are not some sort of underclass. “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:7). Believers in Christ Jesus are children of God. Regardless of what transpires on this earth, when they come before God, they are His children.

Scripture Lesson Text

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 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 Exposition

GREETING THE THESSALONIANS—I Thess. 1:1-2

This important letter begins with a greeting that is familiar to readers of the New Testament. Paul identifies himself as the author and the Thessalonian church as the recipient. Silvanus, another name for Silas, and Timothy are also mentioned alongside Paul's name. Silas had been with Paul when the Thessalonian church was first established (Acts 17:4), and Timothy had recently visited the Thessalonians and reported back to Paul (I Thess. 3:1-2).

Paul was writing on behalf of these two men as well as himself. But Paul was the one who actually wrote the letter, as indicated by his use of “I” throughout (2:18; 3:5; 4:9, 13; 5:1, 27).

Thessalonica was in the Roman province of Macedonia, which covered much of northern Greece. The city was situated on a gulf off the Aegean Sea. A major Roman road passed through the city. Paul had brought the gospel to the city on his second missionary journey (Acts 17). Many Gentiles came to the Lord at

that time, but only a few Jews. In fact, the Jews were largely hostile toward Paul. They forced him to leave the city and even followed the apostle to Berea to disrupt his work there.

Still, the church in Thessalonica was founded during Paul's short stay there. It was well-grounded in the faith, as Paul's letter shows.

Paul's distinctive greeting was “Grace be unto you, and peace” (I Thess. 1:1). His desire was for his readers to experience fully God's unmerited favor (grace) and the peace with God that results from receiving His grace.

Paul and his companions expressed their thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonian believers. This they were doing by praying for them.

REMEMBERING THE THESSALONIANS' GODLY EXAMPLE—I Thess. 1:3-8

Examples in their character (I Thess. 1:3). Paul's thanks to God for the Thessalonians was not merely a formality. As he and the others prayed, they remembered “without ceasing”