



Home Study

Large-Print Edition

SPRING QUARTER
March, April, May 2019

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Editor in Chief: Todd Williams
 Edited and published quarterly by
 THE INCORPORATED TRUSTEES OF THE
 GOSPEL WORKER SOCIETY
 UNION GOSPEL PRESS DIVISION
 Rev. W. B. Musselman, Founder
 Price: \$3.25 per quarter*
 \$13.00 per year*
 *shipping and handling extra
 ISBN 978-1-59843-914-4

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The Church Established

JACK R. RIGGS

Our lessons this quarter promise to be instructive and encouraging. The first two units of study cover much of I and II Thessalonians. We will see God at work in establishing and sustaining the church in Thessalonica through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. The final unit takes us into key texts in the book of Galatians. We will explore the theme of the gospel from passages in Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia.

In our first unit, we will meet the new church plant Paul established in Thessalonica. The Lord transformed those who came from idolatry to the true and Living God. Mutual love developed and persisted between Paul and the Thessalonians. Paul encouraged them to live holy lives even as they experienced severe persecution.

The second unit of study has new growth as its theme. He began his second letter to the Thessalonians expressing his thankfulness for their spiritual maturity and encouraging them with the promise of God's righteous retribution on those who do not know the Lord. In his letter, Paul had to address a false report over the coming of the Day of the Lord. His answers reassure us that we will not experience that period of God's judgment on the wicked.

The third unit focuses on the true gospel. The true gospel is based on the death and resurrection of Christ. The promise of a Saviour for mankind is ancient, first appearing in Scripture in Genesis 3:15. Paul received the gospel directly from Christ. The gospel

message is salvation by faith in Christ. It produces righteous living in those who embrace it.

Lesson 1 finds us reviewing Paul's ministry in Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. His ministry lasted there for just a few months until opposition from the Jews forced him to leave. The power of God to transform people from pagan worship to joyous believers serving and waiting for Christ's return is a theme evident in this passage of Scripture.

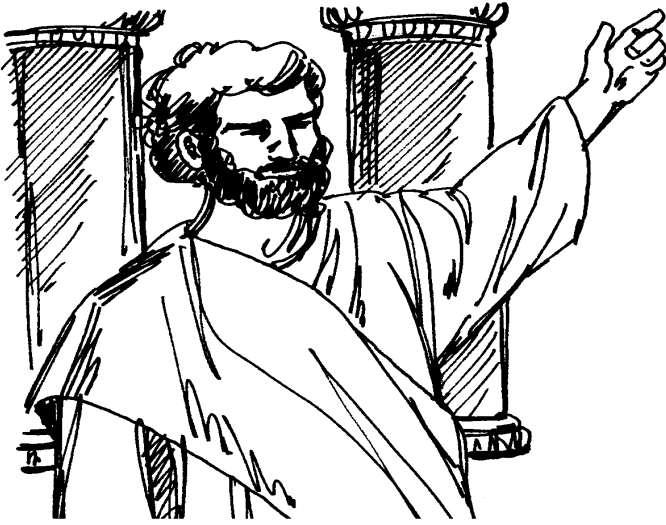
In lesson 2, we see Paul's encouragement over the Thessalonians' perseverance in their faith under severe persecution. Paul had sent his coworker Timothy back to Thessalonica to minister to the church and bring back a report on their spiritual well-being. Timothy's report on his return encouraged Paul. The Thessalonians were persisting in their faith, and their affection for Paul remained strong.

Lesson 3 covers Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians regarding living holy lives. God does not save us only to go to heaven, but to live lives pleasing to Him. Paul provided instruction on the specific matters of sexual purity and brotherly love.

In lesson 4, Paul deals with two concerns of the Thessalonian church regarding future events. They were living in the expectation of Christ's soon return, but some of the believers had died. Their concern was whether the deceased would participate in Christ's return. Paul affirmed that the dead in Christ would participate in this glorious event.

Their second concern was over

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the time of the Day of the Lord. Paul assured the Thessalonian believers that they would not experience that season of God's wrath. Paul gave instruction on how they should be living now for the Lord.

In lesson 5, we learn that Paul received a good report. The Thessalonian church continued to grow in faith in Christ and in love for one another, despite persecution. Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians to express his thanksgiving over this news. He exhorted the Thessalonians to be encouraged and know that the Lord will righteously judge those who have persecuted His people when He returns.

In lesson 6, we are reminded again that believers will not be judged in the Day of the Lord. This will follow the period of the Great Tribulation, when the Lord will pour out His wrath on the wicked. In response to the false report circulating in the Thessalonian church that the Day of the Lord had already arrived, Paul pointed out two distinguishing features of that day that had not yet occurred.

Lesson 7 closely follows in theme lesson 6. While we will not experience the judgments of the Day of the Lord, how should we live in the light of future events that God has revealed? Paul instructs us to remember that God has called us

through the gospel for His special purposes. We must hold firm to the truths we have been taught from God's Word and live in faithful obedience to them.

In lesson 8, the Easter Sunday lesson, Paul reminds us that he was committed to preach the true gospel, that of faith in the saving power of Christ's death and resurrection. Paul condemned those who would diminish God's grace ("let him be accursed" [Gal. 1:8]) by teaching a gospel of salvation by the works of the law. The true gospel has its foundation in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lesson 9 covers Paul's defense against the charge that the gospel he preached originated with man. His gospel was authentic, for he had received it directly from the Lord.

Lesson 10 tells us how we can be just before God. The Galatian believers needed to be convinced that God's righteousness was not obtained through the law. Paul gives reasons why justification is by faith alone, including the prediction made to Abraham that the heathen would be justified through faith.

Lesson 11 assures us that God's covenant with Abraham of future descendants who would be saved by faith was in force after the Mosaic Law was given. Paul points out the purpose that the law has in God's plan. The Mosaic Law has shown all of us to be guilty of sin and in need of salvation. In this way, the law prepared the way for the fulfillment of the promise through Christ's redemptive death and resurrection.

In lesson 12, we see that we are sons of God through faith in Christ. We are also heirs of God, for God has adopted us as His sons with all the rights and privileges of sonship.

In the final lesson, we receive Paul's instruction on the practicality of the gospel. The gospel in action means we care about a fallen brother or sister, share the burdens of other believers, support those who teach God's Word, and tend to the needs of all people.

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

Paul arrived at Thessalonica on his second missionary journey probably in A.D. 49, with his associates, Silas and Timothy. He preached the gospel in the local synagogue for three Sabbaths (Acts 17:1-4). Some of the Jews believed along with many Gentiles. His ministry must have lasted longer than two or three weeks, for a church was established, and Paul no doubt spent time helping to ground the new believers in their new faith.

Paul was compelled to leave the city due to a riot instigated by the Jewish community (Acts 17:5-10). After he went south to Athens, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to report on how the young church was progressing amidst persecution (I Thess. 3:1-2). Timothy later joined Paul in Corinth and gave him an encouraging update on the Thessalonians (Acts 18:5; I Thess. 3:6). The report prompted Paul to write to them. First Thessalonians was written probably sometime in A.D. 51. The Thessalonian believers had turned to God from idols, including the cult worship of Caesar (Acts 17:7). Their new loyalty to another King, Jesus, was a major reason for their persecution.

In our first lesson, Paul reminded the Thessalonians of their response to the gospel message and the tremendous transformation that occurred in their lives.

SALUTATION OF PAUL— I Thess. 1:1

Paul's salutation to the Thessalonians was typical of the style of letters in his day. A salutation contained three elements: the author, the recipient, and the greeting.

Paul acknowledged himself as the author (I Thess. 1:1; 5:1). His life had demonstrated God's amazing ability to redeem and transform (I Tim. 1:12-16). He had actively sought to destroy the message of salvation in Christ by persecuting the church (Acts 9:1-2). God apprehended Paul and utterly turned his life around, saving him and calling him to be an apostle (Acts 9:3-6; Rom. 1:1). Paul became a proclaimer of the gospel, which he once sought to eradicate. The Lord used Paul's assets as a Pharisee, with his knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition, his education in Greek and Roman culture, and his tremendous zeal to spread the gospel.