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A Study of 1 Thessalonians

Grace Group Study

LEADERS GUIDE

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1 Thessalonians

The Book

AUTHOR:

The apostle Paul, joined in his salutation by Silvanus and Timothy (1:1), and with specific mention of his name again later in the epistle (2:18). Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Paul include: Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), and Irenaeus (200 A.D.).

THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA:

The establishment of the church is recorded in Ac 17:1-9. On his second missionary journey, Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) had just left Philippi and passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia to arrive at Thessalonica. As was his custom, Paul immediately located the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews for three Sabbaths concerning Jesus Christ. While some of them were persuaded, including a great number of devout Greeks and leading women, the unbelieving Jews became jealous and created an uproar in the city. Therefore it became necessary to send Paul and Silas away secretly by night to Berea.

Despite such ominous beginnings, a strong church was established in Thessalonica (cf. 1:2-10). Mostly Gentile (cf. 1:9), its members included Jason (Ac 17:9), Aristarchus, and Secundus (Ac 20:4).

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING:

First Thessalonians is considered one of Paul's earliest epistles, if not the first. From the letter itself (3:1-6), and the record of Paul's travels in Acts (Ac 17:10-18:11), it appears that Paul wrote this letter soon after arriving in Corinth on his second journey. This would put it somewhere around 52 A.D.

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE:

The abrupt departure from Thessalonica so soon after the beginning of the church naturally left Paul anxious about the condition of the brethren. When Timothy joined Paul at Athens (cf. Ac 17:14-16), his concern prompted Paul to send Timothy at once back to Thessalonica to encourage and ground the new disciples in the faith, and to learn how they were enduring persecution (cf. 3:1-5).

When Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth (cf. Ac 18:5), the news was mostly encouraging (cf. 3:6-7). Despite persecution they had remained strong (2:13-16), and even proved themselves to be an example to others (1:6-8). Yet, as with any young church, they needed further instruction concerning holy living (cf. 4:1-12). They also needed to be reassured that their loved ones who died in Christ would not miss out on the blessings involving the coming of our Lord (cf. 4:13-18).

Therefore we can summarize by saying that Paul's purpose in writing was:

- * To praise them for their steadfastness under persecution
- * To instruct them concerning holy living
- * To correct any misunderstanding, especially about the second coming of Christ

THEME OF THE EPISTLE:

This book is unique in that every chapter ends with a reference to the second coming of Christ (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23). With his emphasis on steadfastness and holy living, an appropriate theme might be: "**HOLINESS IN VIEW OF THE COMING OF CHRIST**"

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1 Thessalonians 1:

Did I Start Right?

1:1-10

OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand HOW the virtues of faith, hope, and love should express themselves.
2. To notice the potential a new congregation has for spreading the gospel of Christ and being a positive example to ALL believers.

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

#1. Paul's prayers are filled with praise for the believers

#2. The items of that praise are "...**your work of faith**," "...**your labour of love**," "...**and your perseverance of hope**."

#3. The response of the Thessalonians to the gospel was evidence of their 'election.'

#4. An effective presentation of the gospel involves four things: (1) the preaching of the Word; (2) the power of the Holy Spirit; (3) the conviction of the hearer; and (4) the impact of a life that has been changed.

#5. The "joy of the Holy Spirit" is not affected by affliction.

#6. That the gospel message is "sounded forth" from us once we have received it.

#7. In turning from idols to the living God, serve God with out of love; looking to a future hope, waiting for Jesus' return from heaven.

#8. The certainty of God's wrath.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 2:

Am I a Fake?

2:1-12

OBJECTIVES:

1. To glean from Paul's example how preachers should conduct themselves among brethren with whom they labor
2. To appreciate how the thought of seeing each other at the coming of Jesus should affect our attitude towards one another

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. Fruit is borne and lives are changed because the ministers' lives have been changed.
- #2. Perseverance in ministry, even though there are consequences to suffer.
- #3. Being sustained and strengthened through suffering is possible.
- #4. The message was genuine, Paul's motives were pure, and his methods sincere.
- #5. Paul did not go to Thessalonica to get but to give... give the Gospel and to give of himself.
- #6. Paul's life could bear close inspection.
- #7. A father's (spiritual leader's) function is three-fold: 1) **exhortation**; 2) **encouragement**; and 3) an **example**
- #8. The goal of ministry is that they should walk: **"...in a manner worthy of a God who is calling them into His own kingdom and glory."**

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 2:

Am I a Hindered?

2:13-20

OBJECTIVES:

1. To glean from Paul's example how preachers should conduct themselves among brethren with whom they labor
2. To appreciate how the thought of seeing each other at the coming of Jesus should affect our attitude towards one another

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. Our response to the Word of God is to welcome it and allow it to work in our lives.
- #2. Exposure to the Word of God purifies and prioritizes our lives.
- #3. When we come to know Christ, we begin to take on a family likeness.
- #4. Suffering is part of the divine curriculum for Christlikeness.
- #5. There comes a time when the cup of iniquity is full and the wrath of God is poured out.
- #6. Paul's deep compassion and involvement in the lives of the Thessalonians are seen here in the deep grief he experiences through being separated from them.
- #7. Satan is in the business of hindering us in the pursuit of the will of God for our lives.
- #8. Satan is always trying to hinder, to hurt, and to hurry us.
- #9. Will there be any persons in heaven because you had the privilege of sharing Jesus Christ with them here on earth?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 3:

Am I a Discouraged?

3:1-5

OBJECTIVES:

1. To see the very real danger of being tempted, and the need to stand fast in the Lord
2. To appreciate how our own steadfastness can be a source of joy and strength to those who taught us in the faith
3. To understand the need to increase and abound in love, in order to establish our hearts blameless before God when Christ returns

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. Satan might have hindered but it was the Father's plan to send Timothy to Thessalonica.
- #2. Paul was willing to forego the pleasure of Timothy's presence so that the Thessalonians might be strengthened and encouraged.
- #3. Do I have that same deep love that the apostle Paul displays here for the Thessalonians?
- #4. Timothy was willing to go anywhere at any cost to do anything for the glory of God.
- #5. Has Satan been successful in deceiving me in the midst of my afflictions?
- #6. Don't ever lose my confidence in the purpose and plan of our sovereign God when I am going through difficulties.
- #7. Trials are the Christian's appointment and destiny.
- #8. Christ-like character comes from the crucible.
- #9. Temptation and deception are primary in Satan's battle plan.
- #10. Satan uses discouragement, depression, disobedience, and defeat to accomplish his purposes.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 3:

Am I an Encouragement?

3:6-10

OBJECTIVES:

1. To see the very real danger of being tempted, and the need to stand fast in the Lord
2. To appreciate how our own steadfastness can be a source of joy and strength to those who taught us in the faith
3. To understand the need to increase and abound in love, in order to establish our hearts blameless before God when Christ returns

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. Love and involvement in the lives of young converts can be a real inspiration.
- #2. Our faithful walk with the Lord can be a real encouragement to other believers.
- #3. We can use our life and our lips to be an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.
- #4. Calamities and afflictions are part and parcel of the Christian experience.
- #5. Paul was so intimately involved with his young converts in Thessalonica that their “standing firm” granted him joy.
- #6. Joy is the result in the lives of leaders who have seen God bear fruit through them.
- #7. Paul prays earnestly when he prays.
- #8. Many times our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways are not His ways.
- #9. Paul’s desire to return to Thessalonica was to outfit them for their conflict in the rest of the journey.
- #10. It was rooting and fruiting that was lacking in their faith.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 3:

Am I Praying?

3:11-13

OBJECTIVES:

1. To see the very real danger of being tempted, and the need to stand fast in the Lord
2. To appreciate how our own steadfastness can be a source of joy and strength to those who taught us in the faith
3. To understand the need to increase and abound in love, in order to establish our hearts blameless before God when Christ returns

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. When I come to God in prayer, I must recognize His sovereignty.
- #2. The Father's purpose, plan and program for me might be quite different than I think, and therefore it is my place to submit and to surrender.
- #3. The Lord has promised to direct my steps in the path of His choosing. His path is revealed in prayer.
- #4. Growing and increasing in my capacity for love is a lifetime experience with my Lord.
- #5. It is the Lord who produces His love in me.
- #6. I am to love those who are in the family and those who are out of the family.
- #7. It is the Lord who will strengthen and establish me.
- #8. I will stand spotless before His throne because of His work in my life.
- #9. Am I going to be there "**when the saints go marching in**"?
- #10. How is my prayer life?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 4:

Am I Pure?

4:1-8

OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand how the Christian should increase more and more in such matters as obedience, holiness, love, and diligence.
2. To appreciate the precious hope and comfort we have for those who have died in Christ.

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. Exhortation in this passage is to sexual holiness.
- #2. The key to effective Christian living is to conduct ourselves in such a way as to please God.
- #3. The Christian life was never meant to be a standstill, or arrived experience.
- #4. There is no finality in our Christian lives—we are either going up or down.
- #5. The will of God is for us to continue to become more holy as time goes by.
- #6. The ways to get snagged into irresponsible sexual behavior are: wrong thinking, poor judgment, compromise, and selfishness.
- #7. It is the Spirit of God who produces the fruit of self-control in the life of the believer.
- #8. There is the potential for victory in every area of our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- #9. The Lord deals severely with sexual disobedience.
- #10. Learn to just say no.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 5:

Is the Future Clear?

5:1-11

OBJECTIVES:

1. To note the unexpected nature of the coming of the Lord, and how we should prepare for that event
2. To see what our responsibilities are toward those who are over us in the Lord, and what responsibilities we have to one another
3. To appreciate what the will of God is for us as it relates to joy, thanksgiving, and prayer

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. **“The day of the Lord”** described here in this passage follows the rapture of the church.
- #2. **“The day of the Lord”** involves both judgment and blessing.
- #3. **“The day of the Lord”** involves the tribulation period as well as the millennial kingdom.
- #4. It is possible to be asleep spiritually and miss so much of what God has for us.
- #5. To be “self-controlled” is to live in light of our future.
- #6. We are commanded not to go on sleeping but to be awake and self-controlled.
- #7. We are to put on the “breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”
- #8. God did not appoint us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- #9. Jesus died for us on the cross of Calvary.
- #10. We are to be encouraging and edifying one another.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 5:

Is your Future Clear?

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ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 5:

Am I Stepping Up?

5:12-22

OBJECTIVES:

1. To note the unexpected nature of the coming of the Lord, and how we should prepare for that event
2. To see what our responsibilities are toward those who are over us in the Lord, and what responsibilities we have to one another
3. To appreciate what the will of God is for us as it relates to joy, thanksgiving, and prayer

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. We are commanded to recognize and respect the leadership over us in the body of Christ.
- #2. We are to be busy about the Lord's work.
- #3. We are to be encouraging the discouraged.
- #4. We are to be patient with everyone.
- #5. The Christian is to be joyful no matter what the circumstances may be.
- #6. We are commanded to maintain constant communion with our Savior.
- #7. We can be giving thanks in all things because His sovereignty has allowed it.
- #8. We can be guilty of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit.
- #9. We must accept and obey the teaching of Scripture.
- #10. We are to steer clear of all evil.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1 Thessalonians 5:

Am I Plugged In?

5:23-28

OBJECTIVES:

1. To note the unexpected nature of the coming of the Lord, and how we should prepare for that event
2. To see what our responsibilities are toward those who are over us in the Lord, and what responsibilities we have to one another
3. To appreciate what the will of God is for us as it relates to joy, thanksgiving, and prayer

LESSONS to LEARN:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular chapter?

- #1. Have you experienced the peace that “the God of peace” wants to give you?
- #2. Salvation, sanctification, and glorification are all God’s responsibility.
- #3. Surrender, submission, and obedience allow God to work unhindered in producing holiness in our lives.
- #4. We are going to be presented without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- #5. God is faithful and will fulfill His promises.
- #6. You can depend upon God.
- #7. He is calling you to relationship, to suffer, to sacrifice, to serve, to sanctification, and ultimate glorification.
- #8. When He comes into our lives He washes out our record, sets us free, gives us strength for victory, lives in us, sustains us in suffering, and makes us more like Christ.
- #9. Paul recognized the power and potential of prayer in God’s program.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
