



2nd Lesson—Letters to the Church in Thessalonica

The letters to the Thessalonian Church helps us to Gain a proper perspective of God, ourselves, and the world in which we live.

“Perspective” — a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view; a measured or objective assessment of a situation.

When we gain a proper perspective of God, ourselves, and the world in which we live...that is to serve our God with greater enthusiasm and growing freedom...we then realize that there is no limit to what can happen as God works in us and through us to impact our world.

How is your perspective as to how God sees us?

Before we go any further, how does God see us as to Who He approves entrance into the (His) Kingdom of heaven?

Answer: God’s question: Do you love my Son?

I have found that there are a lot of people who say they love God’s Son (Jesus)...but, they don’t necessary like what he says!!

For instance, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”— Luke 14:26

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. — Luke 9:23

NOTE: All of us know that if it weren’t for the blood of Jesus covering our sin, then we would not make it to heaven.

Overview of 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Historical Background

History is just that...His story!

- God’s story expressed and lived through His Son provides a way for you and me into the presence of the King of Glory and the Father who is Most High and Lifted Up above all others (past, present, and future).

- Paul, in his letters to many churches in which he helped to establish and grow, effectively communicated God's timeless message to His loved ones, His church of believers.

To help us understand the reason for sending the two (2) letters to the church at Thessalonica, one must understand the people who make up that community. People are usually comfortable in their own setting.

Thessalonians were no different. If the culture was to enjoy life to the fullest without restraint, most people follow suit. Unless there was a person of great influence who went against particular cultural restraints, or of an influencing person with authority, the church was in a "hold" state. "Hold" meaning...staying in the same rut or same pattern they have been used to. What most stagnant people or churches don't understand is that when you "hold" to stagnated or corrupt living, instead of just "holding" to habitual and stagnating principles, they start "folding" into the societal ills of that culture.

And...that was what was happening in the church of Thessalonica!

On his second missionary journey, Paul took his message to Thessalonica. For at least three Sabbath days Paul reasoned in the synagogue with those present, and many believed the gospel message.

Those who responded to the message of Christ's sufferings and resurrection were:

1. Jews,
2. God-fearing Greeks,
3. Some prominent women of the city, and
4. Many idol-worshipping pagans.

This angered a group of unbelieving Jews who then stirred up a gang of roughnecks to attack Paul and his followers. Convinced of the danger for Paul, the Christians sent Paul and Silas away from the city by night to nearby Berea.

Purpose for the Letters

Timothy's report of conditions in the Thessalonian church led Paul to write the first letter shortly after he arrived in Corinth about A.D. 51.

Why?

- Some of the Thessalonians apparently believed that Jesus Christ was about to return momentarily and had consequently given up their jobs and had become disorderly.

- Some worried about what had happened to their loved ones who had died before the Lord had returned.
- Persecution from the Gentiles as well as the Jews still oppressed the believers who were nevertheless holding fast to the truth and eager to see Paul again. Some outside the church remained hostile to Paul.
- Some within the church had returned to their former habits involving sexual impurity.

Paul had at least three (3) purposes in mind when he wrote 1 Thessalonians.

1. He wanted to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica who were making good progress in their new faith.
2. He desired to correct misinformation about himself and his fellow missionaries that some of his critics in Thessalonica were circulating.
3. He wrote to give additional instruction that would contribute to the Thessalonians' spiritual growth.

To get down to the nitty-gritty of Spiritual politics, Paul really dwelt on the following as he wrote to the church at Thessalonica with his second letter (he was very blunt in some of his statements as he was responding to the news reported by Timothy and others):

Upon receiving back news (good and bad) about the Thessalonian church, Paul wrote the second letter perhaps within a few months of the first one.

Good News: The majority of the Thessalonians were continuing to grow and to remain faithful to Christ in spite of persecution.

Bad News: False teaching concerning the day of the Lord had entered the church and was causing confusion and leading some of the Christians to quit their jobs in expectation of the Lord's imminent return. "When the cat's away, the rats will play." Undisciplined Christians yield to their fleshly desires.

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to:

1. ***Commend his children in the faith for their growth and faithfulness,***
2. ***Correct the doctrinal error about the day of the Lord, and***
3. ***Warn the idle to get back to work.***

God loves to brag on his children...God can't stand a person who drags others to ruin...God will not tolerate a nagger and lagger.

Lagger - someone who lags behind. dawdler, laggard, do-nothing, idler, layabout, loafer, bum - person who does not work; "a lazy bum"

"For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

Laziness, lack of discipline in the church, unrest and idle chatter (slanderers) were making their way into the church.

Praise God for those who trust in the Lord and yield to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23, (ESV)

Both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians were addressed to the one church in Thessalonica and were meant to point out the problems associated with that particular group of church members.

Note: It is quite unlikely that Paul anticipated any further use to be made of his letters.

You probably think that your statements and your letters to family members will not go further than just those addressed...but...they will.

Your writings and testimony are so important! They will last longer than you will!

God's letter to us (His Word) is a precious treasure we have from Him!

