

Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians

Background (Acts 17)

Theme

Hope in Christ's second coming should motivate a counter-cultural _____ way of life.

1 Thessalonians

- A. Chapters 1, 2, and 3: Celebration of Faithfulness** despite _____.
- a. 1:4-10 Thessalonian Conversion and THE GOSPEL CYCLE
 - i. Gospel came to you
 - ii. We modeled it
 - iii. Gospel received by you
 - iv. You modeled it
 - v. Gospel went out from you
 - b. 2:1-12 Paul's Mission in Thessalonica
 - i. Christian leadership is about relationships and loving service family imagery—children (v 7), mother (v 7), father (11)
 - ii. "We were happy to share not only the good news from God but our very selves because we came to dearly love you." (2:3)
 - c. 2:13-16 Their suffering is a way of participating in the _____ of _____.
 - d. 2:17-3:10 Paul's Anguish
 - i. He heard they were suffering and sent Timothy to check on them and encourage
 - ii. Timothy found they were flourishing and Paul was overjoyed:)
- B. Chapters 4-5: Challenge to Grow & Live to Please God**
- a. 4:1-8 Holiness & Sexual Purity
 - b. 4:9-12 Commitment to Love & Service
 - i. Working hard so that you can be _____ with others.
 - ii. Referenced again in 2 Thessalonians 3:11-13
 - c. 4:13-18 Future Hope of Jesus' Return
 - i. Confusion over their deceased loved ones' fates when Jesus returns
 - ii. Paul's response—those who have died in Christ will rise (4:16)
 - iii. "Caught up" (4:17)—Paul is comparing Caesar's arrival met by his delegates with Jesus' arrival met by His people
 - d. 5:1-16 The Day of the Lord should motivate faithfulness
 - i. There will be justice; it will bring sudden ruin to those persecuting them (5:2-3)
 - ii. Believers should live in the present as if that day is already here (5:4)
 - iii. "He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him." (5:10)
 - e. 5:23-28 Prayer of Hope: May God keep you holy as you await the arrival of Jesus
"The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it." (v.24)

2 Thessalonians

*Big Idea: What you hope for shapes what you _____.

*Problems Paul addressed in 1 Thessalonians had gotten worse

1. Persecution Had Intensified
2. More confusion about Jesus' return

A. Chapter 1: Hope Despite Persecution

- a. 1:1-3 Thanksgiving Prayer: Paul thanks God for their faith, love, and endurance despite intensified persecution
- b. 1:4-12 Suffering = Participation in God's Kingdom
 - i. Jesus' Return = Final Justice
1:9 "They will be banished away from the presence of the Lord & from the glory of His power."
 - ii. The ultimate tragedy is that people will be forever separated from the One who wants to give them life
 - iii. Paul prays that God would use their suffering to bring about _____ (1:11-12)

B. Chapter 2: The Day of the Lord

- a. Paul gives clarity regarding the Day of the Lord
 - i. Counterfeit reports from Paul were circulating that said the Day of the Lord is already upon us, and we missed it. God's final justice on evil had already happened (the persecution they were experiencing) and Jesus abandoned them. Jesus already came "like a thief in the night?" (1 Thessalonians 5:2)
 - ii. Paul responds to false reports and reminds them what he said.
 1. The world will keep producing rulers who rebel & exalt themselves above God, and this pattern will be repeated until Christ returns.
 2. Brief Summary of Second Coming
 - iii. Reassurance that the events leading to Jesus' return will be _____ and _____, so there's no need to be scared. Paul wants to comfort them.

C. Chapter 3: A Challenge to Grow

- a. Don't be _____.
- b. Idleness = _____ & _____ to work (not just "lazy")
- c. Live with the expectancy that Christ could return at any moment, while still engaging your culture and living normally.
- d. Let the expectancy of His return encourage us to live lives of _____ and _____ to the Lord because we want to be ready.
- e. Don't become enmeshed in the culture because you are tired of the wait and so live a disordered life, meddling in the business of others and making compromises.
- f. Paul's Example
 - i. Imitating Jesus' self-giving love
 - ii. Providing for himself so he could serve others free of charge
 - iii. Ideal: working hard so their lives can benefit others

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jot down in the space below anything that you notice the Lord highlighting as you listen to the teaching on Thessalonians.
*Share as you feel led.
2. The “gospel cycle” lived out in purity and holiness produces a harvest. The family imagery Paul uses is so fitting because just as a little one is shaped by parents and imitates them, so when we are born spiritually, we look to our spiritual “parents” (influences) and are shaped by them.
*Referring to the “gospel cycle” in the outline above, share your journey of coming to faith.
3. Paul makes it clear in Thessalonians that holiness matters. According to 1 Thessalonians 2:10, Paul behaved in a way that was “holy, righteous, and blameless” among them.
*Why is it so important to reflect Jesus well to others? Share an example of someone imaging Christ well and the impact it had on you.
4. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 to “make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, minding your own business...so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders.”
*What does it look like to lead a quiet life? What characterizes a quiet life in contrast to one that is not quiet? What problems can be caused by failing to mind one’s own business?
5. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul says it’s God’s will for us to “rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances.” Imagine how hard this would be for Thessalonians given their circumstances.
*Is there a situation in your life that makes it difficult for you to do this?