



I & II THESSALONIANS

Introduction

Thessalonica was a good-sized city of approximately 200,000 people. It was primarily a commercial city, its location being its greatest asset. Thessalonica was on the northwest shore of the Aegean Sea and just east of the Auxius River. It was also located on the famous Egnatian Way - the main road From Rome to the East. Being a port city on the Egnatian Way made Thessalonica an ideal city for merchants to sell and For the general population to easily reach. Thessalonica was also the capital city of the province of Macedonia. Since 146 B.C., it had been the seat of Roman government for Macedonia.

The church in Thessalonica was founded on Paul's second missionary journey (Read Acts 17:1-9 For the background to this event.) Later, Paul could write to them, saying; *"And we also thank god continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe."* (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

As a result, in receiving the word of God as it actually is "the Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia - your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead - Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath." [1 Thessalonians 1:8-10)

Both 1st and 2nd Thessalonians have much to say about the end times. This is called eschatology. Concerning eschatology, the New Bible Dictionary states, *"Biblical eschatology is concerned not only with the destiny of the individual but also with history. This is due to the particular character of biblical revelation. God does not only reveal Himself by means of inspired men, but also in and through*

the events of redemptive history, the most important of which are the advent and life of His Son, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the content of this revelation is not limited to truths about the character and purposes of God, but includes also His redemptive acts in history, and the inspired Word of God which interprets the meaning of these acts. Since God is the Lord of history, the consummation of God's redemptive work will include the redemption of history itself."

Timothy, having been sent by Paul to Thessalonica, returns to him in Corinth with a report regarding "*the situation at Thessalonica.*" Paul writes to them in about the spring of 50 A.D., and he addresses them about:

- 1) The healthy spiritual condition of the church [1:1-10).
- 2) False rumours to discredit his ministry and message (2:1-16).
- 3) His longing to see them again (2:17-3:13).
- 4) Living to please God (4:1-12).
- 5) The coming of the Lord (4:13-5:11).
- 6) Some Further instructions (5:12-28).

As you study these letters and put into practise their instruction, you will contribute to our assembly's reputation as a church where people live *lives "worthy of God, who calls us into His kingdom."*

Bible Study Format

I . UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

This study is similar, and yet different than many of the home bible study's that we have conducted over the past several years. You will perhaps notice this difference from the Study and Response format developed over the years. The similarity is that, as you go through the study, you will still work to know the meaning of the text as well as responding to it in a practical way. The difference is that each of you who participate in the Bible Study will be called upon to consider practising the truths of each question as you work at understanding its meaning. Thus, a link is formed in each question between understanding and applying Bible truths.

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

In this section the Bible Study groups will be called upon to deal with a specific truth or practise in each study of the book under consideration. In working with these Bible truths, all members of each Study are encouraged and will be called upon to share their answers as well as discuss the topic.

The objectives of this group discussion are:

- a) To spend more time on an area of Christian growth and practise than is usually afforded in a Bible study.
- b) To move beyond the "pat answers" to areas of concern (i.e. doubts, misconceptions, etc.) held by Christians.
- c) To deal adequately and satisfactorily in these areas of concern with the view to

putting into practise what you learn.

In regard to how much time should be spent in group discussion, twenty minutes is recommended for effective involvement by all members of the Bible Study groups.

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #1 The Healthy Spiritual Condition of the Church

READ: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) How are Paul, Silas and Timothy now involved in ministering to the Thessalonian church? [verses 1,2)

1b) What will be involved in your relationship at Bethel if you are to effectively minister to others?

2a) Describe the interworking (verse 3) between:

work and faith

labour and love

endurance and hope

2b) Choose one pair from the above groups and describe how it is evident at your assembly.

3a) What was involved in Paul's preaching the gospel and the Thessalonians receiving the gospel? (verses 4-6)

3b) How should you live amongst those with whom you want to share the gospel?

4a) How had the church at Thessalonica become a model to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia (all of Greece)? (verses 7-9a)

4b) If our assembly is, or is to become, a model church, how will this be accomplished?

5a) Describe the Thessalonians' faith in turning from idols (verses 9b-10)

5b) What are some real idols in our community in this day and age?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

In this section (1:1-10) we have seen that the Thessalonians were a model church; their faith became widely known while facing severe suffering (1:6) and their having been idol worshippers (1:9). Paul, Silas and Timothy were continually praying for this church, which indicates that they believed prayer to be effective.

What do you think of prayer?

a) Does it really affect circumstances and people?

b) Do people grow in their faith as a result of intercessory prayer?

c) Don't things just carry on without prayer?

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #2 False Rumours

READ: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) What improper motivations does Paul state that he and Silas are free of in the preaching of the gospel? (verses 1-6)

1b) Why is your motivation and behaviour so important when you participate in witnessing for Christ?

2a) In preaching the gospel to the Thessalonians, how did Paul and Silas keep from being a burden to them? (verses 7-9)

2b) Can we consider preaching the gospel to people in our city and surrounding communities without following Paul's example of love?

3a) After they had believed, how do Paul and Silas deal with the Thessalonian Christians? (verses 10-12)

3b) What is involved in encouraging, comforting, and urging new believers to "*live lives worthy of God*"?

4a) What experiences did the Thessalonian Christians now have in common with others who had received the word of God? (verses 13-16)

4b) Do you suffer today because of your walk with God, and what is your attitude in it?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

In this section under consideration, we clearly see the lifestyle of Paul and Silas in the preaching of the gospel to the Thessalonians (i.e. verses 8, 3, 11). They worked night and day and demonstrated their love for those in the City of Thessalonica.

Come prepared to discuss:

a) What effect their lifestyle would have had on the Thessalonians prior to their salvation.

b) What do you learn from their behaviour about the grace and love of God that He has and shows to this world?

c) How could you expand your own witness of the gospel to more effectively reach your neighbours for Jesus Christ?

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #3 Paul's Longing to see the Thessalonians

READ: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) Why did Paul make every effort to be reunited with the Thessalonians? (verses 17-20)

1b) How can you show your concern today with believers whom you long to see?

2a) Paul and Silas sent Timothy, a brother and God's fellow worker, to the Thessalonians. Why did they send him? (3:1-5)

2b) How are you helped in your trials?

How do you help others in their trials?

3a) What did Timothy report to Paul and Silas about the church in Thessalonica? (verses 6-10)

3b) What is involved in standing firm in the Lord?

4a) What does Paul request from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ? (verses 11-13)

4b) What steps are you taking to insure that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

In this study, Paul reveals his deep and practical concern For the Thessalonian believers. Today in the church, we see concern expressed in either prayer alone or in what some would term as interference:

a) Why could Paul not just "*trust God*" for the welfare of these believers?

b) What harm could these trials have had on their faith, since they were new believers?

c) How important is your faith in God and your input into building up the faith of other believers?

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #4 Living to Please God

READ: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) If the Thessalonians are already living by Paul's instructions, how can they "*do this more and more*"? (verses 1 & 2)

1b) What attitude must you have in order that you might also do this more and more?

2a) What instructions does Paul give the Thessalonian believers to counter sexual immorality? (verses 3-8)

2b) What problems do you encounter as you attempt to live a sanctified sexual life in today's world?

3a) What is involved in brotherly love? (verses 9-10)

3b) Again Paul instructs them to "*do this more and more.*" How do you fulfil this responsibility at your assembly?

4a) Paul is fairly concise in verses 11 & 12. What are the benefits of giving concise instructions?

4b) What perceptions about Christianity do you prove false when you follow these instructions?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

God's will as mentioned in 4:3 is a general statement: "*It is God's will that you should be holy.*" Many Christians today are not sure of God's will for their lives.

How do you determine God's will for your life.

a) In general

b) In specific situations

c) Other areas which concern you

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #5 The Coming of the Lord

READ: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) What information are the Thessalonians given in regard to the Lord's return that changes their attitude toward death? (verses 13-18)

1b) How can you effectively "*encourage others with these words*"?

2a) Why does Paul not write to them "*about times and dates*"? (5:1-3)

2b) What do you think would happen in the church and in the world if God had made known the time and date (i.e. day and hour) of the Lord's return?

3a) How does Paul differentiate the Thessalonian Christians from the others? (verses 4-8)

3b) How do you, as a "*son of light*", show/demonstrate that you are "*alert and self controlled*" so that the day will not surprise you?

4a) What did the Lord Jesus Christ do and what are its results in the lives of those who believe? (verses 9-11)

4b) What do the words "*wrath*" and "*salvation*" Further teach you about the day of the Lord?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

For about the last decade, the doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ has not been discussed as in previous decades, although the reasons for this are many. The information given in Scripture must be thought about and allowed to influence our decisions.

Come prepared to discuss:

a) The facts related to His coming.

b) Some practical responses to the fact that He will return.

c) Attitudes you can develop as you consider His return and things which you can do to demonstrate that you expect Him to return.

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #6

Final Instructions

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) What are the responsibilities of those "*who are over you in the Lord*", and what attitudes are the members of the church to show toward their leaders? (verses 12 & 13)

1b) How do you demonstrate that you take these instructions seriously?

2a) What do the instructions in verses 14 & 15 reveal to us about the kind of relationships that Paul expected the Christians in the City of Thessalonica to have with each other?

2b) Describe the ways in which these instructions are being carried out at your local church.

3a) If these instructions are "*God's will for us in Christ Jesus*", what purpose do they meet? (verses 16-18)

3b) Can these all-encompassing instructions (i.e. "*always*" "*continually*", "*in all circumstances*") really be practised or are they just a goal for you to aim at?

4a) What is the Spirit's fire? (verses 19-22)

4b) How is that fire put out?

5a) What are the attitudes and activities that God is involved in with believers? (verses 23-28)

5b) Can you identify in your daily life the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

There are many final instructions given at the end of 1 Thessalonians. This amount of instruction may cause some to reconsider the life of a Christian. As a result, there may be a stronger commitment to Jesus Christ by some, with others throwing their hands in the air wondering how to handle everything that comes their way.

It will, therefore, be beneficial to come prepared to discuss :

a) What the Christian life is to be like?

b) What happens to grace when there are commands?

c) What do you think is the purpose of all these instructions?

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #7 Faith in Persecution

READ: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) What does Paul mean when he states that "the church of the Thessalonians" is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ? (verses 1 & 2)

1b) What evidence is in your life that shows you are in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ?

2a) Describe the characteristics of the church in Thessalonica.(verses 3-4)

2b) Describe the faith, love and perseverance as demonstrated at Bethel.

3a) How does Paul encourage the Thessalonians in regard to the future? (verse 5)

3b) How does the future affect you?

4a) How will God further demonstrate His justice and to whom? (verses 6-10)

4b) What encouragement does this give you?

5a) How is the name of the Lord Jesus glorified in believers? (verses 11 & 12)

5b) What acts are "*prompted by your faith*"?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

In this study, we have read some very clear verses about the judgment of God. It will be profitable to deal with His judgment as we consider why it will occur and how it affects us.

Come prepared to discuss:

a) The basis for the judgment of God.

b) How does the knowledge of God's judgment of everlasting destruction affect your relationship with Him, your trust in Him, and your response to His instructions?

c) What attitudes and actions we need to demonstrate now to unbelievers.

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #8 The Man of Lawlessness

READ: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) How were the Thessalonians becoming alarmed about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? (verses 1 & 2)

1b) What is your best defence against speculative prophecy?

2a) Describe the man of lawlessness who will precede "that day." (verses 3 & 4)

2b) Do you believe the world is presently ready for him? Explain.

3a) Why is the lawless one not yet revealed? (verses 5-8)

3b) What evidence do you see that indicates that the secret power of lawlessness is already at work?

4a) What powers are "*those who are perishing*" subjected to? [verses 9-12)

4b) What power are you subject to?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

The activity of the Lord Jesus is different in the section we are now studying. The difference is in the present role He now fulfils.

Come prepared to discuss the activity of the Lord Jesus:

a) As we presently remember Him in our worship service.

b) Which He presently fulfils at God's right hand.

c) Which the world will witness in the future.

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #9 Standing Firm

READ: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) After just speaking of the man of lawlessness and those who are perishing, what could Paul always be thankful for? (verses 13-15)

1b) What will take place in your life if you are to "*share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*"?

2a) How does the grace of God give eternal encouragement and good hope? (verses 16-17)

2b) What must you be doing to receive His encouragement and strength?

3a) Paul, who constantly prays for the Thessalonians, now requests them to pray for him. What are his requests?

3b) Do you ask for prayer from those you pray for?

Do you find this difficult to do?

4a) In what ways will God deal with the Thessalonians as they "*do the things*" commanded them? (verses 3-5)

4b) Choose one of these ways and describe how it is being developed in your life.

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

In 2:15, Paul instructed the Thessalonians to hold to the teachings that he and his fellow workers had passed on to them. These days we have a tendency to pick and choose whom we listen to and what teaching we hold to.

Be prepared to discuss:

a) Why this takes place.

b) Whom should you learn from.

c) What must be done with what you learn.

The Thessalonian Epistles Study #10 Warnings Against Idleness

READ: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

I. UNDERSTANDING WITH APPLICATION

1a) Describe Paul's example of living that the Thessalonians were to follow. (verses 6-10)

1b) How do you respond to Paul's statements to keep away from the idle brother (v.6) and "*if a man will not work, he shall not eat*"?

2a) What is the difference between being busy and being a busybody? (verses 11-13)

2b) In what ways do your family, social and business activities confirm or undermine the witness you make for the Lord on Sunday?

3a) What attitudes are the Thessalonians to have toward the one who is not obedient? (verses 14 & 15)

3b) How does the local church suffer with idle members?

4a) Describe the characteristics of the Lord which Paul closes this letter with. (verses 16-18)

4b) Do you desire and experience the peace of the Lord "*at all times and in every way*"?

II. GROUP DISCUSSION

Paul, in this study, deals with the relationship that exists between Christians. For instance, he instructs them to follow the example he set for them, as well as to take note of certain people and not to associate with them.

Come prepared to discuss:

a) Whether or not we would associate with idle believers.

b) How far our relationship of accountability with other Christians should go.

c) The benefits of being a member in God's family.