



I THESSALONIANS

“STAND FIRM IN THE LORD”

LESSON #2 – I THESSALONIANS 2:1-20

REVIEW

Recall the difficult circumstances surrounding the founding of the Thessalonian congregation. In this context relate what made the Thessalonian church a model congregation.

INTRODUCTION

Boys Town adopted a logo of a boy carrying a younger brother on his back captioned, “He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother.” They felt it epitomized the importance of residents caring for each other and having someone care about them. Assess how well that fits with the mentality of Christians toward fellow Christians.

I THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

Use the first 9 verses of this chapter to come up with 4 or more key characteristics of a faithful Gospel servant:

-
-
-
-

Compare and contrast the Gospel approach of this mission team among the Thessalonians with that of a pushy salesperson.

Propose 2 to 3 reasons why each of us requires a spiritual “father.”

Paul says the approach of his mission team is like a nursing mother (v.7) and as a father with his children (v.11). Analyze the overall sense of concern you get from these two word pictures. Describe the ways Paul allows this approach to dominate his interaction with these new Christians.

Think of someone you know who needs the Law/correction from a spiritual mother or father. Clarify the way this kind of relationship will help you deal with him or her.

I THESSALONIANS 2:13-20

Break down the differences between a human word and the Word of God.

What evidence did Paul provide of the power of God's Word at work in the lives of the Thessalonians?

Explain the seriousness of the hostilities the Thessalonians faced.

Offer an example from your life of the irrationality of unbelief directed against you.

Find clues that reveal Paul's raw emotions for his fellow believers.

Report the way Paul dealt with his inability to be physically present with them.

Recall a time when Satan put up a roadblock to hinder you from doing something important for the Lord.

The thought of seeing fellow believers in heaven brought special joy to Paul. Explain how that puts our present interactions with fellow Christians into perspective.

CONCLUSION

One of the purposes of the local congregation is to encourage and support one another in loving service to one another. If you were to offer some words of encouragement to your own congregation, what would you say?

I THESSALONIANS 2

You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. **2** We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. **3** For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. **4** On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. **5** You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. **6** We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. **7** Instead, we were like young children among you.

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, **8** so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. **9** Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. **10** You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. **11** For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, **12** encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. **14** For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews **15** who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone **16** in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

17 But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. **18** For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. **19** For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? **20** Indeed, you are our glory and joy.



A Second Chance?

© 2008 by Seraphy Creative, Inc.

We all like a second chance—especially when we're losing. "Make it two out of three," we say, or maybe, "three out of five," or "four out of seven," or . . . Nobody wants to end up a loser.

Sometimes life gives us a second chance—but not always. You may have had the experience of going back to buy something on sale but discovering it was gone. Or you may have wrestled with a decision only to find out you took too much time making up your mind. We live life in the "here and now," so there's no guarantee of a second chance.

That same thing is true of our relationship with God. In the words of St. Paul, "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2, emphasis added). We can't wait for a second chance.

Time Flies

God, of course, is gracious and does give us plenty of opportunity for repentance and faith. After all, Jesus promised that the end of time would not arrive until the "gospel of the kingdom" had been "proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Matthew 24:14). For God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). This is why our Lord gave the Church its "marching orders" just shortly before His ascension: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

But even as He said these words and promised "I am with you always," He pointed to "the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). At the ascension itself, the angels reminded the disciples, "This Jesus . . . will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10). And when He returns, it will be to "judge the living and the dead" (1 Timothy 4:1)!

So time is running out for us both as individuals and for humanity as a whole. Although we don't like thinking about it, all of us know that death is coming to everyone. And that means a final reckoning with our Creator, as the Bible says, "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). As we age, we experience "signs" of our coming end—everything from thinning hair and liver spots to chronic pain and life-threatening diseases. But even when such signs are lacking, daily experience shows us the contingency of our lives. Obituary columns routinely record the deaths of teens and infants as well as the elderly. For each one of us, the end is coming.

But the end is also coming for humanity as a whole. The world is heading toward its end, and God has given us "signs" of this as well—signs that are just as clear as the aches and pains of our bodies, if we are only willing to see them. On the one hand, the Bible tells us that no one knows the exact day and hour of our Lord's return. As St. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (5:2). On the other hand, Jesus Himself has given precise indicators of the approaching end. There is no reason for surprise.

A good place to look for a description of the "signs of the times" is Matthew 24, which along with chapter 25, makes up our Lord's discourse on the last times and His return. The disciples themselves ask the question "What will be the sign of Your coming and of the close of the age?" (v. 3), and Jesus tells them what to look for. On the one hand, He points to calamities that are routine in nature and human history, such as famines and earthquakes, "wars and rumors of wars" (v. 6), but then on the other hand, He points to afflictions of the Church, false christs, persecution, and apostasy ("the love of many will grow cold", v. 12).

Whether natural or man-made disasters, or troubles for the Church, such "signs" tell us that our Lord will certainly return. His love for His people is such that He will not permit evil to dominate His world or His Church forever. When God first created the world, it was all "very good" (Genesis 1:31); but sin entered the world and wrecked everything. Not only do human beings suffer its consequences—"dead in trespasses and sins . . . by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:1, 3)—but even nature itself "was subjected to futility" (Romans 8:20) when God cursed the ground after Adam's sin (Genesis 3:17-19). But the apparent triumph of evil in all its forms is only temporary for God will liberate His



creation from the ravages of sin. Death, wickedness, and suffering in all its forms will be gone for good.

Jesus Himself tells us that all “will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:30–31). That’s our Lord’s promise, and it is full of comfort if we take the opportunity now to repent and believe in preparation for His coming in triumph.

Unfortunately, however, not everybody makes use of the signa. Lots of people think that’s just the way life is—earthquakes, wars, and all—and so get used to it! But what a hopeless existence! No wonder then that our world is filled with unspeakable moral aberrations, pointless cruelties, and invincible indifference. If there is no end, there is also no final judgment and reckoning, no real law and order—or purpose—in the universe.

Others console themselves with the idea of a “second chance”—that somehow God doesn’t mean it when He promises the end and a final judgment. But Jesus said, “And these will go away into *eternal* punishment, but the righteous into *eternal* life” (Matthew 25:46, *emphasis added*). So the end is really the end, and we need to prepare.

Final Preparation for Final Judgment

Whenever Christians read about, see, or experience for themselves the “signs of the times” described in Matthew or elsewhere in the Scriptures, they should take comfort in knowing that the end is near. Although this means a final judgment, those who are in Christ look forward to it as God’s final rescue from sin and evil.

There are no second chances beyond God’s final judgment, but today God’s grace is still calling. Our Lord Jesus Christ has done all that we will ever need for salvation. Through faith in Him, we are ready.

©IGodphets.com

