



**1ST AND 2ND
THESSALONIANS**

January – March 2022



1ST & 2ND THESSALONIANS

Jan 2 nd	Lesson 1	Introduction
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INTRODUCTION

The letters of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians were written to new Christians who were very young in the faith. Because Paul had to leave so quickly due to the uprising of the Jews, he did not have the time to establish them firmly in the faith. This was a time of trials and tribulations for these saints because of their acceptance of the gospel. Paul writes to encourage them in their efforts and correct some misconceptions as to the 2nd coming of Christ.

Paul is the author of both letters although accompanied by Silas and Timothy. These are some of his earliest letters that he writes on his second missionary journey (A.D. 51) while in Corinth. It is unique in these letters that Paul does not defend his apostleship as he does in so many other letters. Acts 17:1-15 gives us the context and background as to how the gospel came to Thessalonica. Paul, Silas and Timothy were all in Thessalonica and successfully establish a largely Greek group of saints.

The City of Thessalonica

A. Origin

1. Founded about 325 B.C. by Cassandria, king of Macedonia, who named it after his wife Thessalonica, the daughter of Philip II and half-sister of Alexander the Great.
2. When the Romans divided Macedonia into four districts in 167 B.C., Thessalonica became the capital of the second district. When Macedonia was made a province in 146 B.C., Thessalonica became the seat of the provincial administration.

B. Political Situation

1. During the Roman Empire the city had a citizenship of nearly 200,000 people.
2. It was a free city and was governed by local officials called “politarchs”
 - a. A free city (like Syria Antioch, Tarsus and Athens) rather than a colony (like Philippi, Troas and Psidian Antioch).
 - b. It had the privilege of self-government within the territory assigned to it. The governor normally had no right to interfere in local affairs.
3. The city was a popular seaport on the Via Egnatia which was the main road back to Rome.
 - a. Thessalonica was approximately 100 miles from Philippi.
4. There was a sizable Jewish population in the city, but the gospel also appealed to many of the Gentiles (1 Thess 1:9)
5. Religiously, the city was committed to the Greco-Roman pantheon and the imperial cult.

The Culture of Thessalonica

A. Religious Decadence

The gods of Greece and Rome were unequal to the conditions which prevailed in the first century. In fact, for several previous centuries they had been declining in influence. Then as the effects of Greek culture increased its sway over the first century mind, the better intellects began to think and to question, and soon perceived the obvious fact that one who was really a god could not consistently be subject to local and racial limitations, or possess the character in which the gods were popularly conceived. Hence the more cultured minds lost faith in the gods which their fathers had worshipped. The old nations and local religions were threatened with dissolution, but for obvious political reasons the Roman officials wished to keep alive the gods of Rome. Therefore, the state sought to perpetuate the old forms of the Roman religions, even when it was currently admitted that they were but empty forms.

Many of the rites of pagan worship were extremely coarse and sensual, thereby lending to immorality the sanction of religion. In the worship of Aphrodite at Corinth a thousand priestesses devoted themselves to prostitution in the name of religion. There has been found in Antioch of Pisidia remains of a "holy bed" which was "used for the mystic marriage ceremony between the god and his goddess - in which service, according to immemorial traditions, Anatolian ladies, even of the highest rank, were expected to take part". A prominent feature of the worship of Artemis at Ephesus was the dedication to prostitution of a group of priestesses who came to the temple as chaste virgins. In Phrygia the worship of Cybele required women in general that they sacrifice their virtue to the goddess, and if a husband should protest against his wife performing this service it was regarded as a grave offense, meriting the wrath of the goddess. Sexual vice was the chief corruption of pagan worship, but not its only vice, for drunkenness and gluttony also abounded.

B. Morals

As a result of these various demoralizing tendencies the Greco-Roman world of the first century reeked with the most revolting forms of vice. In higher society, though morality was still nominally identified with respectability, yet there was a light-hearted spirit of tolerance toward vice, a willingness to condone human weakness and indulgence, based upon the prevalent conviction that such conduct is the inevitable result of normal human desires. Among the rabble, as in our "under-world," moral restraint was an unknown fact. The upper and nether strata of society being saturated with corruption, it was inevitable that much immorality should invade the middle classes as well. In the light of all the evidence we can but conclude that society of the first century was frightfully corrupt. Indulgence was taken for granted, license was condoned, and greed was the accepted rule of life. The birth-rate decreased, marriage became infrequent, and the home became the instrument of occasion of lust. Divorce was undoubtedly prevalent, for among the papyrus remains, one of the most abundant classes of documents is the divorce certificates, and their evidence is supported by literary sources.

Sexual corruption abounded in its most degraded forms. In the ruins of Pompeii are, on the walls of what were recognized as respectable homes in the first century, pictures which are painted "engaged in such evil actions, with such devilish ingenuity of imagination that ordinary visitors to the ruined city are not allowed to see them."

C. Idleness (see Acts 17:21)

Employment was scarce and slave labor plentiful, which meant long hours and small returns for the free workman. This offered scant inducement for aggressive effort, and fatally obstructed economic progress. Much idleness was forced upon the people, and, be it confessed, was not unwelcome, for the Greek or Roman, unlike the Jewish contemporary, placed no premium on honest toil. He regarded it as a thing to be avoided as far as possible. To do work of any kind placed one on a very low plane socially. Conversely, idleness was a badge of aristocracy. Many who had no wealth of their own contrived ways to secure the patronage and support of those who were possessed of large means. Luxury and idleness marked the pinnacle of social achievement: to toil for one's material support was regarded as a very unfortunate lot in life.

D. Attitude toward Death

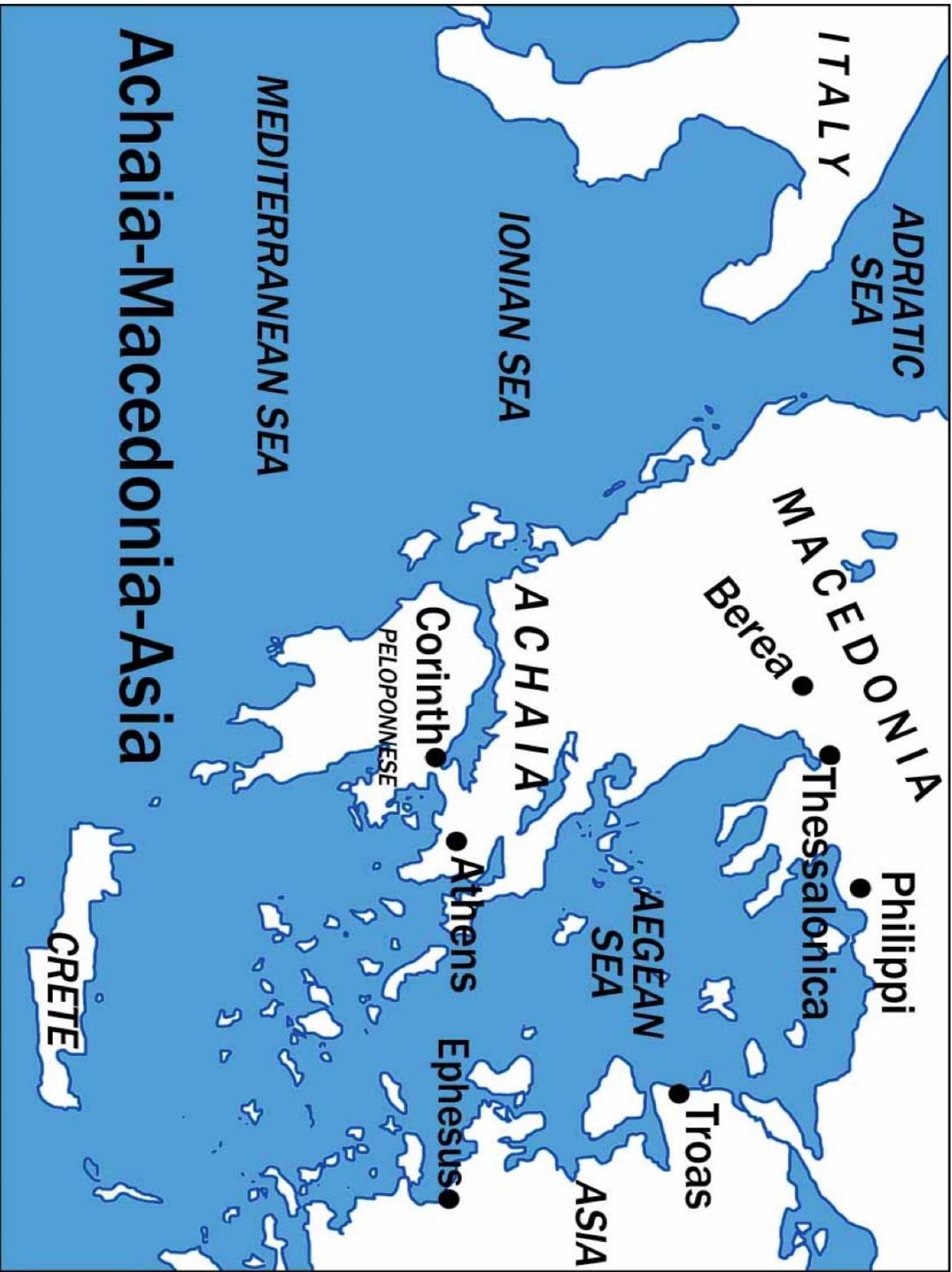
Before Christianity had come, to shed the glory of its redemptive interpretation about the grave, death was a dread ordeal, the expiration of all that was known value to man, the uncertain passing into an uncertain domain beyond the gates of the tomb.

Thus the Greek and Roman stumbled into the night at the end of life's brief journey where remained the unbroken shadow of darkness until the appearing of that One "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2Tim. 1:10).

E. Jewish Influence

The impression made on ancient writers is that Jews lived throughout the whole known world. Strabo the geographer wrote in the first century B.C. that it was not easy to find one place in the whole world where there were no Jews (see Josephus, Antiquities XIV, vii, 1165). With the additional information from Philo (Embassy 281 ff.) and others, it can be noted that the Jews had scattered primarily through eastern parts of the Roman world. They only came to the West that is Gaul, in the second century A.D. They also dared to go outside the boundaries of the Empire, as inscriptions on the northern edge of the Black Sea indicate.

Introduction notes taken from "The Thessalonian Epistles" by Sewell Hall



1ST THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

Paul begins this letter with words of praise and encouragement for these saints who are undergoing persecution for their decision to follow Christ.

1. Who are Silvanus and Timothy and why does Paul include them in his salutation to the Thessalonians? How might this set the tone of the letter?
2. The work of the Thessalonians was three-fold according to verse 3. What does work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope mean to you?
3. How did the good news come to Thessalonica? v.5 Does it come the same way to us today? Explain your answer.
4. How did the Thessalonians receive the word? v.6
5. The idea of modeling or imitating tends to make us feel uncomfortable. Who were the Thessalonians imitating? How had these saints become examples to believers in Macedonia and Achaia? v.6-8

6. Should we strive for others to imitate us today? Why or why not?

7. What are the right motivations for having someone model us? What aspects should we be modeling to others?

8. Describe the transformation in verses 8 and 9 that was brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit? Describe the extent or effect of the Thessalonians' transformation.

9. What does Paul tell us about the 2nd coming in verse 10?

10. Paul was writing to brand new saints who needed encouragement in their faith. Look back over chapter 1 and list the encouragements that would help these new saints.

1ST THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

Paul begins this section by defending his own character and ministry before the Thessalonians. Paul had many enemies in Thessalonica who discredited him in his absence, especially because of his hurried departure from Thessalonica. While Paul writes about himself, this is a matter of the gospel. If Paul was discredited, then the gospel message itself would be discredited.

1. Name at least three shameful things that happened to Paul in Philippi just before he came to Thessalonica? (See Acts 16:11-40)
2. After his poor treatment in Philippi, how did Paul preach the gospel in Thessalonica? v.2
What is the purpose of difficulties and afflictions in the life of a Christian?
3. What three things does Paul deny were part of his exhortation to them (v.3)? Why was this important to explain to these saints?
4. Rather than pleasing men Paul sought to please God, who examines our hearts. v.4
What does it mean that God examines our hearts?
5. What did Paul not use in his proclamation of the gospel at Thessalonica (vs.5-6)? What's the difference between leading by example and leading by authority?
6. What do we learn from Paul, Silas and Timothy about how to treat others? v.7

7. What did Paul impart (share) to those in Thessalonica? v.8 Do we do this at Concord? If so, how do we do this?

8. Describe Paul's manner of life while at Thessalonica. Why did he do this? v.9

9. What three things did Paul and his companions do in a fatherly way towards the Thessalonians? v.11 Explain what is involved in each of the three. How does the image in verse 11 differ from the one in verse 7?

10. What does it mean to walk worthy of God? v.12

1ST THESSALONIANS 3:1-13

This letter becomes very personal as Paul recounts his restlessness and uncertainty of how the Thessalonians were doing following his abrupt departure.

1. Who did Paul send from Athens and why was he chosen? v.1 What are the advantages of working as a team as opposed to working just as an individual?
2. What was this messenger of Paul to do at Thessalonica? v.2
3. Paul speaks of suffering as a matter of fact. v.3-4 Should we tell the difficulties associated with being a Christian to others when we share the gospel, even though this may discourage them from believing? Why or why not?
4. What was Paul's fear in verse 5? What does this show about our responsibility towards new converts?
5. What did Timothy report back to Paul? In what way were the Thessalonians modeling Paul's example? v.6
6. What was necessary for Paul to feel that he was "really living"? v.8 What kinds of things make you feel that you are really living? What does this tell us about the priorities of life?

7. What was the focus of Paul's prayer of thanksgiving to God in verses 9-10? Does this mindset characterize your prayer life?

8. The faith of the Thessalonians was widely recognized, yet Paul desired to see them so as to perfect what was lacking. What does this show us about improving a strong faith? v.10

9. In Paul's prayer in verses 11-13 what does Paul ask of God for the Thessalonians?

10. What do we learn about the 2nd coming from verse 13?

1ST THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

Paul now turns to practical applications of the gospel that they received when Paul was with them. He reminds them of their sanctification and how they are to walk in regard to their sexual conduct. To see why this instruction was needed read again the introductory material about the lifestyles of people in Thessalonica.

1. What 2 methods of teaching does Paul utilize to convey God's will to the Thessalonians in verses 1 and 2?
2. How is our walk with God connected to pleasing God? v.1
3. The Thessalonians received instruction from Paul on how to walk and please God. They were walking in this manner. Why does Paul urge them to "*excel still more*" in this instruction? v.1
4. What is sanctification? Who sanctifies us and what must we do? (As you spend time considering this, study these verses: 1 Cor. 6:11; 1Pet.1:2; Heb. 10:10,14, 12:14, 13:12; Rom. 6:19-22)
5. Why is abstaining from sexual immorality connected to our sanctification? v.3
6. In what way does a passion for lust (giving into lust) show that one does not know God? v.5
7. How could one "take advantage of and defraud his brother"? v.6

8. Who is the “avenger”? What does this mean? v.6

9. We are called to live a standard of sanctification and not impurity (sexual impurity in this passage). Who is rejected when we reject this calling/teaching? Explain your answer. v.8

10. How can a single person apply this passage? Someone who is dating? Someone who is married?

Lesson 7

1ST THESSALONIANS 4:9-18

In 2nd century, the scoffing writer, Lucian, in speaking about Christians, declared, “It is incredible to see the ardor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are all brethren.” The Thessalonians were concerned about their brethren both in this life and the one to come. Paul addresses what they must continue doing for brethren in this life and their concerns for those who have already died.

1. In view of verse 9 consider what Jesus said in John 13:34-35. What is to distinguish us? How do we practice this at Concord?
2. How far had the love of the Thessalonians already extended? (v.10) What did Paul encourage them to do? What does II Corinthians 8:1-5 indicate regarding their love beyond Macedonia?
3. What should we aspire to? v.11 How is this different from the ambitions/aspirations of those in the world? What does “attend to your own business” practically look like in our lives?
4. What two reasons are given for seeking to lead a quiet life? v.12

The first 3 chapters all end with telling us something about the second coming. Chapter 4 is the culmination of Paul’s words about the second coming. As Timothy reported back to Paul about the good things the Thessalonians were doing, he must also have reported an excessive grief among them in the death of their brethren in Christ. They apparently felt that those who died would miss out on some of the benefits which the living would enjoy at Christ’s second coming. Paul’s writing is to comfort them.

5. Who are those who have “fallen asleep”? (See also Acts 2:29, 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:16-20) What does it mean to “fall asleep in Jesus”?

6. How are we to sorrow? How is this different from Non-Christians? v.13

7. On what fact does Paul base his teaching of future resurrection? Why is this significant? v.14

8. Give the chronology of events listed in 1 Thess. 4:15-17.

9. What is the significance that Jesus is coming to get us rather than God sending an angel to bring us to Him? How does all of this become a comfort to us?

10. From this knowledge how should we as Christians view death? What obstacles can keep us from having this view?

1ST THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

Continuing with thoughts of the second coming Paul speaks of the unknown time of the Christ's coming and how saints can prepare for that great and final day.

1. What are the “times and seasons (epochs)” referred to in verse 1?
2. What is “the day of the Lord”? (see also Isa. 13:9-11, Jer. 46:10, Ob. 1:15)
3. What features of His coming are suggested in verse 2-3? Why has God planned it this way instead of a known, set time?
4. What are the characteristics of those who are of the night? v.4-8
5. What characterizes the one who is of the day? v.4-8
6. Contrast the idea of sleep in 4:13-15 with that in 5:6-7. What is Paul conveying about the one who sleeps in 5:6-7?

7. Paul used the image of a soldier to convey the idea of watchfulness. How do faith, love and hope help us to be alert and sober? v.8

8. In verse 9 Paul places two words side by side in regards to salvation. The word “destined or appointed” speaks of God’s sovereignty while the word “obtain” emphasizes human effort. In what way do these words speak to our salvation?

9. Is the thought expressed in verses 9 and 10 speaking of a fulfillment of our salvation that is yet to be or something that we experience right now? Explain your answer.

10. How can we comfort one another? Who should do this encouragement and building up? When?

1ST THESSALONIANS 5:12-28

While we wait for the coming of our Lord Paul stresses that there are things we must be doing now. Paul emphasizes the type of conduct we are to have as saints as we show our love to each other and as we improve our relationship with God.

1. Who are “those who diligently labor among you”? What three functions do they perform according to verse 12?
2. What responsibilities do saints have towards them? v.12-13 How have you fulfilled these responsibilities at Concord?
3. How can we “be at peace among ourselves”? v.13
4. What four actions are given in 1 Thess. 5:14? Who is to perform these actions?
5. Suggest some ways in which we may be tempted to repay evil for evil, especially within the family of God? What can keep us from this type of behavior? v.15
6. What three things are God’s will for us in verse 16-18? How will these bring us to be more spiritually minded?

7. How could one “quench the Spirit”? v.19 (See also Eph. 5:15-21)

8. If we hold to that which is good what does this naturally require us to do? v.21-22 (See Rom. 12:9)

9. Review the idea of sanctification from our discussion in chapter 4. What aspect of sanctification does Paul have in view (5:23)? Who accomplishes this?

10. What descriptions of God are listed in verses 23-28? How do these descriptions offer us hope and assurance as we face our journey?

2ND THESSALONIANS 1:1-12

Paul writes this 2nd letter to the Thessalonians shortly after he had written the first letter. He continues to praise and build them up as they continue to endure persecution for their faith. The second coming of Jesus dominates 2 Thessalonians just as it dominated 1 Thessalonians. Paul shows that other things will occur before Christ's coming so the saints must not be idle in their efforts.

1. In verse 3 Paul insists that it is “right” to verbalize gratitude to God for the Thessalonians. Why do you think he uses this word? What impact does this have on our prayers?
2. What two qualities of the Thessalonians had Paul been concerned about in his prayers for them according to I Thessalonians 3:10-12? How were his prayers answered according to 2 Thess. 1:3?
3. What does Paul tell other groups of saints about the Thessalonians? v.4 What can we learn from Paul about how to speak to our brothers and sisters in Christ?
4. What is the “manifest evidence (plain indication) of the righteous judgment of God”? v.5
5. Explain how God's love and justice are shown in His repayment of affliction to those who afflicted others. v.6-7

6. From verses 7 and 8 what additional information do we learn about the 2nd coming of Christ?
7. Paul says two groups will receive retribution. How are these groups defined and what is the importance of defining these 2 groups? v.8
8. What is the characteristic of hell that should truly terrify all of us? (vs.9) How should this impact our spiritual lives?
9. We often look at the 2nd coming from our perspective, what we long to receive and what we don't want to receive. What does verse 10 show us about God's perspective of Jesus 2nd coming?
10. What 5 things did Paul pray for in verses 11 and 12? What is the relationship between God's work and our work?

2ND THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

Paul continues to address the Thessalonians' misconceptions about the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ. He reminds them of his previous teaching, that certain things must precede Christ's coming which have not yet occurred. In all this teaching Paul is seeking to strength the foundation of these saints.

1. What request does Paul make of the Thessalonians? (vs.1-2) What fear do some of the Christians seem to have?
2. What were the possible sources of the misconception? v.2
3. What two things were to happen before the "day of Christ"? v.3 Was this new information for the Thessalonians? v.5
4. List the actions that the man of lawlessness would take in relation to God. v.3-4
5. What was the status of the mystery of lawlessness when Paul wrote this letter? v.7
6. How long was this wicked lawless one to continue to influence men? v.8

7. Who is the source of power for the lawless one? v.9-10 Why is it important for us to be reminded of this?

8. Despite the power of such deception by the lawless one, what does this say about God's sovereignty and power? How would this be a comfort to these saints and us today?

9. What did God promise to send to some people? v.11 Why?

10. Do verses 11-12 indicate that some people don't have any chance to enjoy the salvation from sin? Explain your answer.

2ND THESSALONIANS 2:13-3:5

In contrast to what the man of lawlessness will do, Paul shows these saints what God has already done for them. He reminds them of God's love and His faithfulness so that they will have the confidence to continue in their efforts for the Lord.

1. Why did Paul give thanks to God? v.13 How does this combat the fears that some Christians had about the Day of the Lord?
2. In contrast to Satan's plans, what was God's plan for the Thessalonians? v.13
3. Who is involved in our sanctification? v.13 (see also Phil. 2:12-13)
4. What do we gain according to verse 14? How do we gain it?
5. How does God comfort and strengthen our hearts? v.16
6. Why are prayers needed for the word of God to spread rapidly and be glorified? v.3:1

7. What characterizes the wicked and evil men that Paul desires to be rescued from? v.2 In contrast what is the Lord 'faithful' in? v.3

8. How does Christ strengthen and guard us from the evil one? v.3 (see Jude 24, 1Pet. 1:5, 2Pet. 2:9)

9. How does the Lord 'direct our hearts? v.5

2ND THESSALONIANS 3:6-18

Idleness and gossip were common features of Greek and Roman society. The expectation of Christ's immediate coming may have been the influence which perpetuated this weakness among the Christians in Thessalonica. Before Paul closes this letter he addresses what is to be done with those who lead unruly lives.

1. From verse 11 what two problems are occurring in Thessalonica?
2. How is this conduct described in verse 6 and what were the saints to do?
3. What example/model had Paul and his companions given them? v.7-9
4. What command had Paul given even when he was with them? v.10
5. What two commands does Paul give in verse 12?
6. Paul's language changes from words like "request" (2:1) to "command/order" (3:6,10,12). What does this indicate about this issue at Thessalonica?

7. How could one “grow weary in doing good”? v.13 What steps should we take to avoid this weariness?

8. What action does Paul require against those who will not heed his instruction in this epistle? v.14

9. What does the word “admonish” mean and how are they to regard those who do not obey Paul’s command? v.15 What is the difference between a brother and an enemy?

10. What is the significance of the phrase, “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter;”? v.17