



The Summit
Green Campus of Canton Baptist Temple

Resources for Your Life

The Books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians
16 Sessions

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Resource Guide

This resource was compiled from the personal Bible study and blog entries created by Tom Hogsed, pastor of the Summit in Green. You can find the original blog entries at www.tomhogsed.com.

The **introduction** to this book has been written so the reader has a better understanding of the Biblical author, his purpose in writing, and important points to understand before reading.

Following the introduction, each new page represents a **verse by verse overview** of the Scripture passage. The best way to study is to first read the Scripture verses from your Bible relying on the Holy Spirit to provide understanding and then to support your understanding with the commentary written below.

At the end of each Scripture commentary, there is a short **prayer** written so the reader can personally apply what has been discovered; however, it is suggested that you also pray from your heart in response to God's Word.

Feel free to make your own personal notes in your Bible, on this page, or even in a journal.

If this resource has helped you or you have further questions, please send an e-mail to tomhogsed@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS

Paul writes this letter to the church at Thessalonica somewhere around AD 51 from the city of Corinth. This church was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey which is recorded in Acts 16:1-18:22. Acts 17:1-4 reveals that as Paul entered the city of Thessalonica, he immediately went to the synagogue of the Jews and preached Jesus to them. Although some of the people were persuaded (some devout Greeks and leading women), the Jews became angry at Paul's message and forced him out of the city (Acts 17:5-10). After Paul's removal from Thessalonica, he fled to Berea where he also faced persecution and was eventually thrown out of the city (Acts 17:11-14). Leaving Timothy and Silas in Berea, Paul went to Athens and was rejoined by them at a later time (Acts 17:15-16). From Athens, Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:2) and Paul traveled to Corinth alone (Acts 18:1). Timothy and Silas eventually joined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5) and from the good report of Timothy about the church, Paul wrote this letter to the church at Thessalonica. Paul wrote as a proud father who rejoiced in the faithfulness of his children. Paul also knew they were experiencing persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ and for this reason he wrote to encourage them and remind them of their hope in Christ. Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica is one of encouragement and comfort as well as a reminder to be faithful to God. His words are just as relevant today as they were 2000 years ago as believers are tempted to lose heart in the midst of hardship. Paul challenges the follower of Christ to endure trials and look forward to the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

1 THESSALONIANS 1

Paul begins his letter to the church of Thessalonica giving thanks for the good report Timothy had given him about the congregation. He reminds the Thessalonians that he prays often for them and is thankful for their "work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." The church was fulfilling the work to which God had called them and Paul was very proud of their faithfulness. Paul had brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to them not just in words, "but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake." The faith of Paul was not just something he spoke, but something he lived. It is important to recognize the connection between what we believe and what we do. Since Paul genuinely believed the gospel, his life was forever changed...he could not stay the same. When a person truly understands the grace of God, he cannot stay the way he is, but rather repents and follows the ways of Jesus Christ. When the Thessalonians observed the faith and actions of Paul, they also "became followers...of the Lord." (1:6) The Thessalonians' acceptance of the gospel was not without opposition. When they decided to place their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, they turned their backs on idol worship and demonstrated repentance through a changed life (1:9). The church at Thessalonica had a major impact on others in Macedonia and Achaia because of their courageous faith (1:7-8). It has always amazed me how God can use a changed life to bring the attention of others to Himself. Matthew 5:16 commands us to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven." Take a careful look at your life - can others see how God has changed your life? Is the life that you are living distinct from the lost world around you? If not, commit to live every day for the glory of God and not yourself!

Dear God, help others to see that my life has been changed by You!

1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

1 Thessalonians 2 leads the reader to believe that false teachers had entered the church at Thessalonica to question the work Paul had accomplished. It was common for these teachers to attack Paul because he was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. Most of these teachers became angry at Paul's doctrine because it meant people would no longer follow them or give money to their ministry. In reality, many of these false teachers were only concerned about financial gain and did not care about the well-being of others. Paul's words become defensive because he does not want the Thessalonians to associate him with these teachers. For this reason, Paul reminds his readers that "our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi...we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict." (2:1-2) Paul, Silas, and Timothy really believed in the power of the gospel and were willing to suffer for it. If they did not believe in what they were teaching, they would have abandoned their preaching ministry because no one wants to suffer for a lie! In contrast to these false teachers, Paul never tried to impress them with his words nor did he use them for financial gain (2:5). Instead of seeking recognition or making unreasonable demands, Paul treated them as his own children (2:7-8) and sought to demonstrate a lifestyle of love, holiness, and purity (2:9-10). Throughout his ministry to the Thessalonians, Paul "exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you...that you would walk worthy of God." (2:11-12) Paul's ministry at Thessalonica was never about selfish gain or prestige, but rather he set out to share the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ and how they could be a part of God's kingdom. In our relationships with others, we should never use our talents or influence to make people think highly of us. Our goal for every relationship should be that the other person would have a fuller love and understanding of the gospel and its' power to change our life.

Dear God, use my life to speak about salvation and may I always demonstrate a lifestyle which would be pleasing to You.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-20

Paul had already defended his reasons for coming to Thessalonica to spread the gospel - it was never about making a name for himself or financial gain; however, Paul wanted the Thessalonians to experience the grace of God through Jesus Christ (2:1-12). The false teachers did not like Paul spreading this "new gospel" because many people were abandoning these erroneous doctrines in order to embrace salvation in Jesus Christ. From the time Paul brought the truth about Jesus to Thessalonica, they "welcomed it not as the word of men, but...the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." The Thessalonians immediately viewed Paul's message as truth rather than man-made teaching (2:13) and their belief in Jesus Christ resulted in persecution (2:14). The Jews despised Paul's teachings because it completely crumbled the foundation of their so-called religious system. The Jews killed Jesus Christ and now they sought to destroy anyone who continued to spread His message (2:15). Paul, who was a former member in their religious system, proclaims that their ways "do not please God" and is a prejudice religion which desires only Jews to be saved (2:16). Paul is quick to say that God called him to spread salvation through Jesus Christ to even the "Gentiles that they may be saved." A stern warning is written to the Jews who felt that the Gentiles did not deserve salvation: "wrath has come upon them [Jews] to the uttermost." Since the Jewish system of tradition and rules could never bring salvation, eternal punishment awaited those who rejected salvation through Jesus Christ alone (2:16). Salvation is not found in some crafty creation of man, but only through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sin. Paul wanted the church at Thessalonica to understand that his message was directly from God. There are many religions which have developed a twist on scripture, but we must stand guard and defend the truth of God's word. We must never tolerate new revelation or the questioning of truth as revealed in the Bible. We must love God and His word with all our heart!

Dear God, guard my mind from becoming captured by doctrines and teachings of men. May I view Your word as divine and never look for man's opinions in regard to scripture.

1 THESSALONIANS 3

Paul greatly loved the church at Thessalonica and his separation from them caused him much anguish. He viewed them as his spiritual children and felt responsible for their well-being. Since Paul had been away from them for some time, he had a strong desire to know how they were doing so he sent Timothy to encourage them in their faith (3:2). Persecution is a natural part of choosing to follow Christ and Paul was concerned that pressure from so-called religious leaders would cause them to lose heart and maybe even abandon their faith. The apostle Paul warned them that they would suffer persecution as a result of their newfound faith, but he challenged them not to allow hardship to shake their faith (3:3-4) and realize Satan was behind these efforts to destroy their faith (3:5). But, now that Timothy had returned to Paul with a glowing report of the church at Thessalonica he was "comforted...by your faith." (3:6-8) Paul desired to see the Thessalonians soon and that he would find them becoming more mature in their faith (3:9-10). During their time of separation Paul prayed that the Lord would help them to "increase and abound in love to one another and to all...so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness." (3:12-13) 1 Thessalonians 3 is a challenge to all believers to be concerned for the spiritual well-being of others. When Christians are suffering or experiencing challenges in their faith, we should desperately pray for their strength and reach out to them in any way possible. God forbid that we become so consumed with ourselves that we forget about what many others are experiencing in their lives. Think beyond the United States to many other countries where believers are being persecuted and even killed for their faith. Every person in the faith is important and when one is hurting, the whole should hurt with them. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses the illustration of all the parts of the body to represent each member of God's family. As the body needs each part to function properly, the church needs each person to do their part in order to carry out the work of Jesus Christ. When a part of the body hurts, the rest of the body also hurts. This illustration led Paul to write in 1 Corinthians 12:26: "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it." As Paul was concerned about the spiritual vitality of the Thessalonians, we also should care about others.

Dear God, make me aware of what others are going through and help me to reach out to them in love, encouraging them to keep the faith.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

Leaving some final advice to the Thessalonians, Paul addresses an issue which is extremely relevant to their sanctification. Sanctification is the process of abandoning sin in order to follow purity or holiness. Those who have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ are now commanded to live a life which reflects the character of Christ. To continue a lifestyle of sin and at the same time claim a relationship with God does not make sense. Jesus' death on the cross brought deliverance over the power of sin and provided freedom to live in righteousness and holiness; therefore, Paul challenges his readers to follow the will of God by abstaining from "sexual immorality." (4:3) Sexual immorality is a general term which refers to premarital sex, adultery, sexual lust, homosexuality as well as other things. The goal for a believer's sexuality is purity and any thought or action which compromises this purity is sin. Sexual sin is not limited to just actions, but also lustful thoughts. The Pharisees believed they were pure because they had never committed adultery, but Jesus said "whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28) God's standard for sexuality is very high and His desire is that sex be between a man and a woman who have been joined together in a marriage relationship. Any sexual activity, whether through action or mind, outside a marriage relationship is sin. Instead of living in sexual immorality, Paul urges his readers that they "should know how to possess his own vessel [body] in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God." (4:4-5) The sexuality of a believer should be distinct from those who do not know God. Anyone who chooses to disobey God's standard of sexual purity will face consequences (4:6) because He called His followers to holiness, not uncleanness (4:7). I realize God's standard of purity seems very high, but He knows that relationships work best whenever a committed man and woman choose to spend the rest of their life together. When commitment, trust, and acceptance is a part of a marriage relationship we experience sex the way God meant it to be. God is not against sex...He created it, but He wants His followers to obey His will in our sexuality.

Dear God, help me to live a life of purity and abstain from sexual immorality.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-12

In his final words to the Thessalonians, Paul had already challenged the church to be pure in their sexuality realizing God had called them to the highest possible standard...they were to live distinct from the lost world around them (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8). In verse 9, Paul writes them "concerning brotherly love" and reminds his readers that he shouldn't have to write to them about this subject because "you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." The Thessalonians were not failing in the area of loving others, but Paul's desire was for them to "increase more and more" in their love for others. When a person loves God with all their heart, they will have no problem loving others. Along with loving others, Paul mentions several other things which should characterize the life of a believer. First, he encouraged them to "aspire to lead a quiet life." We live in a day when people thrive on "drama" or seek to cause conflict. This type of lifestyle should never describe that of a believer. Take a moment to examine yourself - do you constantly have controversy in the midst of your life? Do you seem to have issues with many of your friends and family or even fellow Christians? If so, maybe you need to heed Paul's warning to the Thessalonians and attempt to live a "quiet life." The next challenge goes hand in hand with the first - "mind your own business." If a situation does not involve you, do not get in the middle of it. Again, take a careful inventory of your heart and confess those areas where you have become involved in a situation which did not involve you. A Christian should not be known as one who is involved in the latest disagreement or controversy, but rather should do his or her best to live a life which brings attention to God, not to self. Paul also writes that they would "work with your own hands." Simply put, Paul challenges them to work hard and not fear "getting their hands dirty." Before Paul moves on to comfort the Thessalonians in their trials, he commands them to "walk properly toward those who are outside." Some Christians believe they only have an obligation to treat fellow believers with respect, but Paul wants them to also respect the lost. The Christian world must do a better job at loving others instead of always judging them. I agree...we should never tolerate sin, but we should always be guilty of going the extra mile in expressing our love for others. This love cannot be a fake love with strings attached, but must be a genuine love which has resulted out of a proper understanding of God's love for us. I am reminded of what Paul wrote in Romans: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Dear God, help my love for You to naturally lead to a passionate love for others.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

Paul identifies with the church at Thessalonica so much because he completely understood the hardships they faced every day. Throughout the first couple chapters Paul had attempted to bring comfort to them as well as challenge them to be faithful to Jesus Christ even when times are tough. It is easy to lose heart when everything seems to be against you, but Paul promised that their faith in Jesus Christ would sustain them. It appears that one of the major issues with which the church was struggling was the death of friends and family. Paul writes "I do not want you to be ignorant [uninformed], brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep [died], lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." Paul knew the death of a loved one was a regrettable circumstance, but he wanted to put everything into perspective for them. During Paul's ministry he taught that Jesus' return could come at any time and many of his listeners thought that meant He would come back during their lifetime. So, as they watched friends and family die they began to become concerned about what happened to those who passed away before Jesus' return. Paul spends the next few verses giving them hope. Paul writes about the condition for having hope: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep [are dead] in Jesus." Simply put, Paul was saying those who die believing in Jesus Christ for salvation will one day rise again for an eternity in heaven with God (4:14). The Thessalonians knew that Jesus would set up His kingdom on earth, but they were not fully aware of the rapture (event of Christ appearing in the clouds to take believers with Him before the 7 year tribulation period). Paul explains the events which will take place: "we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven...and the dead in Christ will rise first." Jesus had promised His followers that He was leaving them "to prepare a place...and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself" (John 14:1-3). Paul was revealing that those who died believing in Christ would be the first ones resurrected when He returns in the clouds and forever spend eternity with Him. Their spirit is already with the Lord and now their bodies will be resurrected to be united with their spirit. Those who are alive at the time of Christ's return will be caught up (raptured) with the dead and will meet the Lord in the air (4:17). From this time forward, all believers (dead or alive) have the assurance of eternal life after death and will spend eternity with the Lord in the place which He has been preparing (4:17b). Paul commands that the Thessalonians "comfort one another with these words" (4:18). Paul did not want the church at Thessalonica to be discouraged in their hardships, but rather be comforted knowing that there is hope of resurrection for both the dead and the living!

Dear God, comfort me in knowing that eternal life awaits those who believe in Jesus Christ!

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

Paul continues his theme of the end times (4:13-18) but switches his focus to begin talking about the judgment of unbelievers. He writes "for you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." So, what is the "day of the Lord?" Paul is specifically pointing to the end of the 7 year tribulation period where God pours out His wrath upon those who have rejected Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:11-21). This time will conclude with the Battle of Armageddon where God will slaughter those who have rebelled against Him once and for all. Isaiah, Joel, Ezekiel, Jesus, and Paul prophesied about this future event. This day is said to come as a "thief in the night" meaning God will act without warning and "sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." Paul did not want the church at Thessalonica to fear this judgment on unbelievers so he reminded them "that this Day should [not] overtake you as a thief." Since the church will be raptured before the 7 year tribulation period, they will not experience God's wrath (5:4-5). So why does Paul mention the day of the Lord when writing to the Thessalonians? He wants to remind them that they are not supposed to live in darkness as those who rebel against God, but "watch and be sober...putting on the breastplate of faith and love, as a helmet the hope of salvation." (5:6-8) Speaking in military terms, Paul wants them to prepare for spiritual battle. A soldier needs to be "sober" meaning that he should be alert to what is happening around him. The Christian soldier should be alert to the temptations which come from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Having faith and love for God will protect the Christian from giving up and provide strength to withstand the battle between good and evil. Paul gently reminds them that "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake [are alive] or sleep [are dead], we should live together with Him." Although times seemed tough for the Thessalonians, Paul wanted them to keep in mind the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ and "comfort each other and edify one another" with these words. Christians need not fear the wrath of God during His judgment on those who have rejected Him, but should live with vigilance and seek to please Him in all our ways.

Dear God, thank You for the promise of eternal life with You and help me to live in light of Your soon return.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-28

In his final words to the church at Thessalonica, Paul writes some of the best advice in Scripture pertaining to the operational system of the church. He begins by instructing the people on how they should treat their spiritual leaders. Paul writes "recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." In a subtle way, Paul teaches about the responsibilities of the pastor to the church - laboring (working hard), overseeing (guiding in righteousness), and admonishing (teaching God's word). As the pastor is fulfilling his responsibilities to the church, the people are to respond to him with respect and love which ultimately leads to peace within the church (5:13). Turning his attention to the conduct within the church, Paul reminds them to "warn those who are unruly" (those who cause division), "comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all." When these characteristics are practiced, the church functions as a unit and can properly carry out the will of God. Next, Paul makes "bullet" statements to challenge believers to have the right type of character:

Rejoice always (5:16)

Pray without ceasing (5:17) - remain in an attitude of prayer

In everything give thanks (5:18) - through good times and bad times

Do not quench the Spirit (5:19) - be controlled by the Holy Spirit

Do not despise prophecies (5:20) - value and obey God's word

Test all things; hold fast what is good (5:21) - carefully examine things labeled as truth

Abstain from every form of evil (5:22) - stay away from sin

The end goal for every believer is that our "whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (5:23) Having already addressed the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), Paul wanted Christians to be found spiritually mature when Christ returns to take those who are His to heaven. God has asked all of us to follow His commands and be effective in ministry for Him. Trials, difficulties, and temptations will come, but a follower of Christ must be faithful to Him.

Dear God, thank you for Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Help me to listen to and heed its' words. May You be reflected in my life as I am filled with the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS

2 Thessalonians is the second writing of Paul to the church at Thessalonica and only followed the first letter by a few months (AD51-52). Paul again writes from Corinth along with Silas and Timothy who were fellow laborers in planting the church at Thessalonica. Since Paul loved the Thessalonians and desired to see the church mature, he kept up to date about their spiritual health. It is possible that the person who delivered the first letter brought back news about the Thessalonians and their growing faith as well as their great love toward others (2 Thessalonians 1:3). However, Paul seemed to be concerned about three issues surrounding the church: persecution (1:3-12), false teaching (2:1-15), and disorderly conduct in the church (3:6-15). His goal in writing this second letter to the Thessalonians was to comfort the persecuted, instruct in truth, and warn the unruly.

Dear God, provide insight into the letter to the Thessalonians and may I change as a result of reading Your revealed truth.

2 THESSALONIANS 1

Opening his letter with a standard greeting to the church at Thessalonica (1:1-2), Paul really gets right in the reason for his writing this second letter. First, he commends them because their "faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other." (1:3) Even throughout the first letter to the Thessalonians it is very clear that they had been experiencing many "persecutions and tribulations" but had responded in a manner which brought maturity. In fact, Paul writes "that we ourselves boast of you among churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure." (1:4) Paul, Silas, and Timothy were very proud of the Thessalonians' response to hardship. Instead of viewing their persecution as God's judgment on them, Paul wanted them to understand that trials often bring maturity in the life of a believer (1:5). Besides, God will surely judge those who are troubling the Thessalonians and one day take revenge "on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1:6-10) Although they were experiencing trials, Paul assured them he would be praying for them...that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him." (1:11-12) Every believer, like the Thessalonians, experiences trials and persecutions in life. Resolve to rely on God's strength to make it through and seek to bring glory to Him.

Dear God, take the trials I am experiencing and receive the glory from my reaction to them.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-7

Paul moves on to another reason for writing the second letter to the Thessalonians - to correct wrong thinking about future things (end times). He writes "now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter...as though the day of Christ had come." (2:1-2) Even in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica, it seems as if the believers were struggling with the timing of future events regarding Christ's return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Paul had instructed them that the Lord would return before God's wrath was poured out on those who did not believe in Him; however, the Thessalonians feared they had missed the Lord's return because they were now experiencing persecution. False teachers were also playing a part in the church doubting the timing of Christ's return and someone may have even been forging letters from Paul with improper doctrine (see the phrase "as if from us"). For this reason Paul writes "let no one deceive you...for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition." (2:3) The "falling away" refers to the midway point of the tribulation period (7 years following the rapture of the church) when the anti-christ openly exposes his hatred for God and Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 tells us that the anti-christ "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2:4) During the first three and a half years of the tribulation the anti-christ will appear to love God, but then he will reveal who he really is and demand the world to worship him. It is during these last three and a half years that God pours His wrath out upon the earth. The Thessalonians were worried that they were now in this time, but Paul assured them that the anti-christ had not been revealed and Christ had not returned. In verses 6-7 Paul reminds his readers that the supernatural power of God is restraining the anti-christ and when the time is right He will remove that restraint. God is in control of things which are clearly seen and those things which are not seen!

Dear God, I look forward to Your return for those who love You and until that time help me to remember that You are in control.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:8-12

Paul continues to instruct his readers with the proper perspective of the end times. He spent the first couple verses of chapter 2 assuring them that Christ had not already returned, as some false teachers had been teaching. One of the key things concerning the end times was the rapture of the church and the revealing of the anti-christ; since neither one of these events had taken place, they could be confident of Christ's return in the future. Paul spent several verses explaining the reality of the anti-christ during the 7-year tribulation period and that he would set himself up as God; however, midway through the seven years, his evil identity would finally be exposed. At this time, those who reject God will experience the full force of His fury as He pours out His wrath upon the earth for three and a half years. While God is sending judgment on the unsaved, Satan will be doing his best to deceive them into believing that the anti-christ is God. The coming of the anti-christ will be "according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception." (2:9-10) Satan will be using the anti-christ as a pawn to carry out his evil, yet miraculous, deeds and deceive men into believing a lie. Ultimately, Satan's goal is to cause people to accept the power and witness of the anti-christ as truth while ignoring salvation through Jesus Christ, which is the true gospel. Concerning this deceit Paul writes, "they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2:10) Because many will believe this lie, "God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2:11-12) Instead of rejecting their sin and receiving God's forgiveness, many people will ignore God's promise of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, and revel in their lifestyle of unrighteousness. This yet future time will be chaotic and cause much confusion on those who are living through this "hell on earth." Again, Paul wanted to assure the Thessalonians that they were not nor would not experience this time of wrath. Those who have been gloriously saved through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross as well as His resurrection have no need to fear this judgment. Along with the Thessalonians, we also can rejoice in God's grace and mercy on sinners who willingly humble themselves before God.

Dear God, thank You for the assurance that I do not have to experience this coming judgment. Thank You for providing salvation through Your only Son, Jesus Christ, that I might be saved from the wrath to come.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17

Paul had done his best to explain future events to the Thessalonians so they would not be discouraged or lose heart about their current circumstances. The Thessalonians had witnessed many of their friends and family pass from this life and at the same time they were experiencing persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. On top of all this, false teachers were forging letters supposedly from Paul which were causing confusion in the foundational beliefs of the church. Circumstances of life had become so overwhelming for the church at Thessalonica and at times it seemed like too much to handle. Paul detected that they may feel like this so he writes the next few words to remind them of God's special love for them: "we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation...." (2:13) Even though times were hard, God still loved them greatly and desired that they "stand fast and hold the traditions which you [they] were taught, whether by word or by epistle." (2:15) Paul is specifically referring to the truths about the end times (2:1-12) and asks them not to be distracted by other teachings. The truth taught by Paul should have brought them hope in the midst of trials instead of sorrow. Sure, hardship and persecution may still come but believers had the assurance of Jesus' soon return and eternal deliverance from suffering. Paul continues to write: "may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work." (2:16-17) Like the Thessalonians, we may experience trials, temptations, and sorrow but God has provided hope in the future. Maybe you are despondent or suffering...remember there is hope!

Dear God, help me to remember that there is hope through You.

2 THESSALONIANS 3

In his final words to the church at Thessalonica, Paul asks them to pray for him, Silas, and Timothy to be able to continue to quickly spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and that they would be "delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." (3:1-2) Paul was writing from Corinth and experienced much opposition in his work to spread the gospel and he knew he would receive the needed strength through the prayers of God's people. He reminded his readers (and himself) that God "is faithful" to protect from the onslaughts of Satan who desires to destroy the lives of people and prevent the spread of the gospel (3:4).

In the last few verses of 2 Thessalonians Paul writes about one more concern he has about the church - laziness. It seems as if some of the Thessalonians were failing to work and instead had become "busybodies" (people who get involved in the affairs of others). Paul challenged those people to "work in quietness and eat their own bread." (3:12) If anyone continued to be lazy, Paul commanded that the mature Christians "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly" meaning that they should not fellowship with them (3:6). "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." (3:11) A believer in Jesus Christ was to be characterized as a hard worker and one who provided for the needs of his own family. There is no excuse for being lazy! The mature Christians had become very frustrated because they were having to support those who would not work and may have been threatening to stop helping anyone who was in need. For this reason Paul writes "do not grow weary in doing good." (3:13) He did not want the Thessalonians to stop helping everyone in need just because a few were being lazy; instead, he urged them to keep giving.

In reference to all that he has written in this letter Paul writes "if anyone does not obey our word...note that person and do not keep company with him....Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (3:14-15) Paul had addressed persecution, false teaching, and disorderly conduct and he expected the people to obey what he had written. Anyone who failed to do so should be disciplined with the purpose of repentance and restoration (3:15). Paul ends his letter asking that "the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all." (3:16)

Dear God, may I always obey Your word. Help me to change areas where I am disobeying so I might be effective in my witness to others.