

Paul Greet and Commends the Thessalonian Believers 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The proof of conversion is faith, love, and hope.
2. The proof of the gospel is power and changed lives.

Practical Application

1. Do your friends imitate Christ when they imitate you?

Questions

1. What is another name for Silvanus?
2. Are Paul's letters to the churches in the New Testament in chronological order?
3. When did Paul write his first letter to the Thessalonians?
4. How does Acts 17:1-9 relate to this letter?
5. How many Sabbaths did Paul preach to the Jews at the synagogue in Thessalonica?
6. What was the response to Paul's message?
7. Who said, "These men have turned the world upside down"?
8. Why did Paul and his team move on to Berea?
9. Why did Paul write this letter?

Answers

1. Silas.
2. No.
3. Between 50-51 A.D. It was one of his first letters, maybe even the first.
4. It gives the background of the church at Thessalonica, which was founded during Paul's second missionary journey.
5. Three.
6. It was mixed. Some Jews and Greeks were persuaded, but some Jews became envious. They took evil men from the market place, gathered a mob, and set the city in an uproar.
7. The envious Jews.
8. Because of the persecution in Thessalonica.
9. To commend the Thessalonian believers for their steadfast faith in the midst of trial, and also to give further teaching and instruction concerning godly living.

Discuss / Consider

1. The marks of a Christian's proof of conversion are faith, love, and hope. Do you display these marks? Concerning faith, refer to John 6:28-29, Ephesians 2:8-9, and 1 Thessalonians 1:8-9. Regarding a labor of love, see 1 Thessalonians 1:7 2 Corinthians 8:1-2. Concerning patience of hope, the sure hope of their eternal future resulted in the endurance and steadfastness of the Thessalonian believers. What an example! Do you know individuals who demonstrate this kind of faith, love, and hope today?

2. When the Apostle Paul preached the gospel in Thessalonica, it was more than just a new philosophy or new world view. The gospel came with power of the Holy Spirit. Do you know Christians today who exhibit this dramatic change in their lives? Are you proof of the power of the gospel to change a life?

Challenge

1. Paul, Silas, and Timothy had been such good models to the Thessalonian believers that by imitating them in their lifestyle, they were imitating Christ. Could this be said of you?

Paul Commends the Thessalonian Believers
1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The phrase, “to wait for His Son from heaven”, implies the imminent return for His church.

2. The phrase, “who delivers us from the wrath to come”, implies the Lord's safe removal of His church.

Practical Application

1. Do we evangelize or just witness?

Questions

1. What was the ethnic make-up of the church at Thessalonica?
2. Paul preached in the synagogue for three weeks. Is this the only preaching he did in Thessalonica?
3. Are there still prophecies that need to be fulfilled before the Lord returns for His church?
4. What event does Matthew 24:21-23 refer to?
5. Do believers need to fear God's wrath?

Answers

1. The church was composed of both Jews and Gentiles.
2. No, Paul stayed for perhaps three months, preaching in the market place.
3. No. Jesus could return for His church today.
4. God's outpouring of wrath on this world, know as the Great Tribulation, which follows the Rapture– when the Lord returns for His church to take believers out of the world.
5. No. Read Thessalonians 1:9-10. All wrath of God in the future is in view here– the Final Judgment and the Tribulation. If you are a believer, you have already been delivered from the judgment of sin when you trusted Christ. You have no reason to fear God's wrath.

Discuss / Consider

1. The fact that the Lord has not yet returned for His church after 2,000 years does not detract in any way from Paul's exhortation to wait expectantly and patiently. The Lord's return for His church is still imminent, and nearer now than ever before. Are you waiting expectantly for the Lord's return?

2. In the world, there has always been tribulation, and believers throughout history have going through it. But The Tribulation Period is a time when God will pour out His wrath as never before. See Matthew 24:21-22 and Jeremiah 30:7 (Jacob's trouble). The church will be safely removed from this. See 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. How do these truths affect you? Are you concerned for the unsaved around you? Are you secure in God's promise of deliverance?

Challenge

1. We can witness by living a good life, but to evangelize we must communicate the gospel. Do you evangelize or just witness?

Paul Describes How the Gospel Was Brought to Thessalonica
1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Christian leaders should be like nursing mothers.**

- 2. Christian leaders should be like devoted fathers.**

Practical Application

- 1. Never preach for money or popularity.**

Questions

1. When was the church in Thessalonica founded?

2. When did the gospel first come to Europe?

3. How did people respond when Paul and Silas preached the gospel in Philippi?

4. Who accused Paul in Philippi? What did they accuse him of?

5. How did Paul respond?

6. What Old Testament character responded similarly to false accusations?

Answers

1. On Paul's second missionary journey, about 50–51 A.D.
2. During Paul's second missionary journey when he received the Macedonian vision, crossed over the Aegean Sea, and came to Philippi.
3. Because of the message, Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison.
4. Paul was accused by his opponents of lying and using underhanded methods.
5. He refuted their attack on his message, motivation, and method. He did not defend himself, but refuted false charges, set the record straight, and edified the saints.
6. Nehemiah. See Nehemiah Chapter 6.

Discuss / Consider

1. Christian leaders should be like nursing mothers who give TLC (tender loving care). Recall the Lord's gentle and loving care as described in Isaiah 42:3. Can you identify? Do you know elders who give TLC to the church? Encourage them!

2. Christian leaders should be like devoted fathers instructing their children, training, correcting, disciplining, comforting, encouraging, and challenging them. Do you know elders who are like devoted church fathers? Encourage them!

Challenge

1. Paul didn't preach to please men or use flattering words to manipulate them. He labored night and day to be an example for all. Do you know preachers like this? Encourage them!

Paul Describes How the Thessalonians Received the Gospel
1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The word of God is effective in the lives of believers.**
- 2. The work of God is hindered by the world, the flesh, and the Devil.**
- 3. The reward of God is determined by our service to people.**

Practical Application

- 1. You can take it with you.**

Questions

1. When did the Apostle Paul write this letter?
2. Why did Paul leave Thessalonica so suddenly?
3. What kind of a report did Timothy bring to Paul when he returned from Thessalonica?
4. Why did Paul write this letter?
5. What could be considered the theme of 1 Thessalonians?
6. How often is the Lord's return mentioned in 1 Thessalonians?
7. What is the three-fold enemy of the Christian?

Answers

1. About 50-51 A.D., soon after he had visited Thessalonica and the church was founded.
2. Because of persecution. See Acts 17.
3. A good report, that encouraged Paul.
4. To commend the Thessalonian believers on their steadfast faith in spite of persecution, to give them further instructions about godly living, and to answer some questions they had regarding the return of the Lord.
5. The return of the Lord for His church.
6. In every chapter of 1 Thessalonians.
7. The world, the flesh, and the Devil.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Thessalonian believers received the word of God as the word of God, which effectively works in the lives of believers. See Matthew 4:4, 1 Peter 1:23, and Hebrews 4:12. What is your definition of the Bible? Is it the word of man about God, or is it the word of God to man? The word of God can bring conviction, comfort, and challenge in the life of a believer. Have you found this to be true?

2. Review the tape concerning definitions of the world, the flesh, and the Devil— enemies of the Christian and hindrances to the work of God. Remember that God can overrule and overcome the hindrances. See Romans 8:28.

Challenge

1. You can take it with you, if your money and material possessions are used now to help people hear the gospel. People are the only thing redeemed out of this world. Are you laying up treasures in heaven? See Matthew 6:19-21. Loosen up control on your purse strings and you can take it with you.

Standing Firm in the Midst of Affliction
1 Thessalonians 3

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Believers are destined for afflictions in this life.**

- 2. Believers are destined for glory in the next life.**

Practical Application

- 1. How would the Apostle Paul refer to you?**

Questions

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1. What could Paul no longer endure?
2. How did Paul find out how the Thessalonian believers were doing?
3. What was the report brought back to Paul?
4. Why did Paul want to return to Thessalonica?
5. What are “afflictions”?
6. Why does God allow afflictions?

Answers

1. Paul could not endure not knowing how the believers were responding to persecution.
2. He sent Timothy back to check on them, and to establish and encourage them in their faith.
3. That the believers were standing firm in their faith.
4. To see the believers and perfect (or complete) what was lacking in their faith. They were young in their faith and needed to know more about the content of their faith so they could grow and mature as believers.
5. Affliction are any suffering due to circumstances or antagonism by people.
6. Many reasons, including to prove the reality of the faith of the believer and to comfort others going through similar trials.

Discuss / Consider

1. Believers are destined for afflictions in this life. Was this only true of the Thessalonian believers? See Acts 14:22 2 Timothy 3:12. If we are trying to live a godly life, we will experience opposition. Discuss the reasons why God allows these afflictions (see question #6). Have you found this to be true in your life?

2. Believers are destined for glory in the next life. We will be with Christ when He returns to earth to set up His glorious kingdom. We are going to share His glory then. See Colossians 3:4. The glory we will share then far outweighs the suffering we endure now. See Romans 8:17-18. Are you suffering now?

Challenge

1. Paul refers to Timothy as "our brother and minister of God and our fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ." How would the Apostle Paul refer to you?

Practicing Godliness
1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Sanctified believers practice sexual purity.**

- 2. Sanctified believers practice brotherly love.**

- 3. Sanctified believers practice lifestyle discipline.**

Practical Application

- 1. Remember, there's always room for improvement.**

Questions

1. Define the word "sanctified."
2. What does the word "vessel" mean?
3. Explain the word "defraud" in 1 Thessalonians 4:6.
4. God has called us to purity in the midst of temptations. How should purity be practiced in the life of a believer?
5. In God's court, believers are declared sanctified, but how do we overcome sin in everyday life?

Answers

1. It comes from the word “holy”, and it means to be set apart for use by God Himself.
2. It can mean your body or a man’s wife. The Greek word is used for both elsewhere in the New Testament. See 1 Peter 3:7 2 Corinthians 4:7. Either way, this passage teaches sexual purity.
3. It is not just the final act of adultery, but all the steps leading up to it.
4. Purity should be practiced in attitude, actions, and thought life.
5. By looking to God; by practicing sexual purity, brotherly love, and lifestyle discipline.

Discuss / Consider

1. The early church in Thessalonica was experiencing persecution and testing. Paul exhorted them to practice godliness in the face of these trials. In particular, he wrote to the to practice purity in attitude, actions, and thought life. Are you putting 1 Thessalonians into practice in your life?

2. Paul commended the Thessalonian believers for practicing brotherly love, and he encouraged them to love even more. Are you practicing brotherly love, and are you ready to practice it even more? It may cost you in time, effort, and finances. Are you willing?

3. Paul gave guidelines to the Thessalonians believers, and to us, to practice lifestyle discipline. Re-read these guidelines in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. Are you practicing lifestyle discipline?

Challenge

1. We are declared positionally sanctified before God, but sin is still a problem in our everyday lives. It is easy to become stagnant in our sanctification. With God's help, it's up to the believer to practice sexual purity, brotherly love, and lifestyle discipline.

**One of the Great Rapture Passages in the New Testament
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The rapture of the church is a controversial doctrine.
2. The rapture of the church is a comprehensive doctrine.
3. The rapture of the church is a comforting doctrine.

Practical Application

1. Remember, we do not sorrow as others sorrow.

Questions

1. What is "Eschatology"?
2. What specific eschatological truth did the Thessalonian believers want to know about?
3. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, how is the word "sleep" used?
4. In the New Testament, is the word "sleep" used for everyone?
5. What doctrine answers the question, "What happens to the body that goes into the grave, and when is the resurrection of the bodies of believers?"
6. Where is the word "purgatory" found in the Bible?
7. How were details of the doctrine of the Rapture given to Paul?
8. Is the Rapture taught in the Old Testament?
9. Does the Great Tribulation take place before, during, or after the Rapture?

Answers

1. The Greek word “eschatos” means “last”. Eschatology is the study of last things.
2. What happens to believers who die before the Lord returns?
3. It is used figuratively for death, like a peaceful sleep.
4. No. It is only used of believers.
5. The doctrine of the Rapture, when the Lord returns for His own.
6. It is not in the Bible.
7. By revelation from God Himself.
8. Not in doctrine, but only in type. Enoch was raptured out of this world just before God's judgment.
9. After the Rapture. Therefore, believers are spared from God's great wrath.

Discuss / Consider

1. Look at the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21). This discourse is about the coming Tribulation Period and the Return of the Lord to set up His kingdom, not the Rapture. The Rapture takes place before these events. Discuss reasons for this view of the timing of the Rapture of the church.

2. At the Rapture, the dead in Christ will rise first with the resurrection body, then the Christians who are alive will be caught up to meet them and the Lord in the air. What does this doctrine mean to you personally?

Challenge

1. The Lord cried at the death of Lazarus. What does this tell you? Remember that as Christians we do not sorrow as those who have no hope. We know our loved ones who received Jesus are with the Lord, and we will be together one day. Death for the believer is just a stepping stone into eternal glory and happiness. Therefore, comfort one another with this hope.

A Description and Some Details of the Day of the Lord **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The day of the Lord will not come like a thief in the night for Christians.**

- 2. The day of the Lord will not be a day of wrath for Christians.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let's stay awake and be watching.**

Questions

1. Is the day of the Lord the same as the rapture?
2. Why is the rapture called a mystery (1 Corinthians 15:51)?
3. Is the day of the Lord referred to as a mystery?
4. Did the prophets of the Old Testament look forward to the day of the Lord in end times?
5. Has the day of the Lord already taken place, is it taking place now, or is it yet in the future?
6. What is the name for the part of the day of the Lord that occurs before the Lord's return in glory to this earth?
7. What is the name for the part of the day of the Lord that happens after the Lord's return to this earth in glory?

Answers

1. No, although they are related, the Rapture is distinct and precedes the day of the Lord.
2. A mystery in the New Testament is not something mysterious. It is a doctrine that was concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament.
3. No. It was well known from the pages of the Old Testament.
4. Yes, there are many prophetic texts dealing with the day of the Lord.
5. Although there have been precursors of this day in history, and although tribulations are in the world now, the ultimate day of the Lord is still future.
6. The Tribulation. The Tribulation occurs after the rapture.
7. The Millennium. See Revelation 20.

Discuss / Consider

1. Believers are sons of light and of the day. We will not be overtaken by the sudden judgment of the day of the Lord, because we won't be here. We will be here however, for the kingdom of the Lord and His blessings, because we will return with Him when He comes back to this earth. Is this your hope?

2. We, as believers, are not appointed unto wrath. The package of salvation for believers not only includes salvation from the wrath of God in hell, but all the wrath of God, including the tribulation period of the future. Does this comfort you? Does it prod you into evangelizing the unsaved now?

Challenge

1. We are admonished to stay awake and be watching. The rapture could come at any time. Are you watching? Read 1 Peter 5:8 and Ephesians 6:10-18. Are you watching?

Teaching on Church Life: Church Leaders and Fellow Believers
1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should love their elders.

2. Believers must deal with problem people.

Practical Application

1. Always follow the “always” of 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

Questions

1. How is Chapter 5 divided between doctrinal content & practical exhortations in Chapter 5 of 1 Thessalonians?
2. What is the authority structure that God has set up for the church?
3. How should elders rule?
4. What is the responsibility of the sheep to their shepherd?
5. How are elders chosen?

Answers

1. Doctrinal content is covered in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; practical exhortation concerning church life is are found in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15.
2. The elders have authority from the Lord to rule over the believers in the church.
3. As shepherds to feed, lead, and guide. They should work with the sheep and take care of them.
4. They are to recognize and acknowledge their shepherds; they are to esteem them highly in love; and they are to be at peace among themselves.
5. They are made and chosen by the Holy Spirit. It is up to the church to recognize or acknowledge them.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the Biblical teaching of the plurality of elders.
2. Review the three responsibilities of the sheep to their elders. Is your church fulfilling these responsibilities?
3. Review 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15. Believers must deal with problem people- the unruly are to be warned; the fainthearted are to be comforted; the weak are to be encouraged. How have you dealt with these problems in your local church?

Challenge

1. Always follow the “always” of 1 Thessalonians 5:15. Can you recall a specific project you pursued that was good for you and for others, even outside the church?

**Godly Living as a Christian; Final Greetings of the Letter
1 Thessalonians 5:16-28**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Complete sanctification is God's will for the believer.**

- 2. Complete preservation is God's will for the believer.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let's practice the do's and don'ts of Scripture.**

Questions

1. How does Paul begin and end this letter?
2. Would this be a good letter to be read publicly in the church today?
3. What is the theme of 1 Thessalonians?
4. Is it wrong to ask for prayer for ourselves?
5. List the do's and don'ts in the Christian life found in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22.
6. What was the custom of greeting the brethren with a holy kiss?
7. What is meant by "sanctification"?
8. What is the difference between the soul and the spirit?

Answers

1. With a reference to the grace of God.
2. Yes. The content was important for the believers in the first century, and it's just as important for believers today.
3. The Return of the Lord.
4. No, it is biblical. At the end of this letter, Paul asked for prayer. (1 Thessalonians 5:25). Prayer is important to all of us.
5. **Do:**
 - a. Rejoice always.
 - b. Pray without ceasing.
 - c. Give thanks in everything.
 - d. Test all things.
 - e. Hold fast what is good.
 - f. Abstain from every form of evil.**Don't:**
 - a. Quench the Spirit.
 - b. Despise prophecies.
6. It was usually people of the same sex greeting one another by a kiss on the cheek.
7. Sanctification means to be set apart for God's use.
8. The soul has to do with our emotions, desires and propensities. The spirit includes our God-consciousness and our moral conscience.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the three terms of sanctification: positional, perfect, and progressive. Remember that God is at work in us, setting us apart from sin and the world. As such, we should sin less. See Philippians 1:6.

2. Consider 1 Thessalonians 5:23, that our whole person is to be preserved blameless. See 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Peter 2:11, and Romans 6:19. This preservation is only possible when there is a steady diet of the word of God, prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit, along with the fellowship and accountability to other believers. How diligently are you pursuing this?

Challenge

1. Review the do's and don'ts of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. Are some areas more difficult for you? Work on these areas so that you might live an exemplary Christian life.