

Teacher Class Plan

Colossians: Lesson #49: Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians For Sunday, Nov. 2nd

Read I Thess. 1:1 – 3:10 (a simplified explanation of the text is supplied at the end of these notes).

Memory Verse: I Thess. 1:6 “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.”

Paul’s Letter to the Thessalonians

- Today we are starting in I Thessalonians, another letter that Paul had written. Let’s look at our poster that tells us some things about I Thessalonians. *Review the big poster with the class.*
- Several epistles we have been studying were written while Paul was in prison, but I Thessalonians was written long before Paul was arrested. During his second preaching journey, Paul visited the church at Thessalonica. *If you have a Bible map showing Paul’s second journey, it will help the class understand what happened.*
- Several were converted and many Gentiles left their idols and became Christians, but because there was so much persecution, Paul had to leave that city after only being there three weeks. The Thessalonian Christians started being persecuted too. *[Check to make sure your children understand what persecution is – causing trouble, pain, loss, or even death to people because they were followers of Jesus.]*
- From there Paul went to the city of Athens, but Paul was so worried about the Christians back in Thessalonica, that he sent Timothy back there to check and see if they were still being faithful.
- Paul went on to Corinth, and finally Timothy came with the good news that the Thessalonian Christians were still being faithful, even though they were being persecuted.

Paul Was Thankful for the Thessalonians

- Paul talks about how he always thanked God for these Christians at Thessalonica. There are several things about them, Paul appreciated:
 - ⇒ That they received the gospel not as man’s word, but as God’s Word. When we study the Bible we should always treat it as God’s Word. When the preacher tells us what God’s Word says, we should listen to it carefully because God is speaking to us.
 - ⇒ They turned from idols to serve the living God. The Thessalonians totally changed their lives. They had always believed in idols, but Paul showed them that there was only one God. They had to leave the religion they had always had and obey God.
 - ⇒ Faith, hope and love are said to be the three greatest things we have in serving Jesus Christ. Paul said that he was proud of the Thessalonian Christians for their work of faith, their labor of love, and their steadfast hope.

- ⇒ They imitated the apostles. Paul and his fellow-workers try to be good examples. As the Thessalonian Christians watched them, they imitated them. To imitate someone is to act like them, to follow their example. We should imitate Jesus, the apostles, and other faithful Christians that have gone before us. **Our memory verse** says, I Thess. 1:6 “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” *Work on this verse with the class.*
- ⇒ They were a good example to others. When we act right other people see it. Paul said that people had heard about the good attitudes among the Christians at Thessalonica.
- ⇒ They were waiting for the Lord Jesus to return. Someday Jesus is going to come back. We don’t know when that will be, but we want to be ready. The Christians at Thessalonica wanted to be ready.
- ⇒ They continued to be faithful even when persecuted. After they were baptized, some people began to act mean toward them just because they were Christians. That might make some people want to give up serving God, but these Christians kept being faithful.
- Paul told the Thessalonian Christians that they were his hope, his joy, and his crown of rejoicing. He thought they were doing well, but wanted them to keep growing in their love and be very firm about serving God.

Paul’s Example to the Thessalonians

- As we already said, the Thessalonians had become imitators of Paul. But what kind of example did he and the other preachers that were with him set when they came to Thessalonica. Paul said that the Thessalonians were witnesses of how they had lived among them:
 - ⇒ Even though Paul had been treated badly in the town he had been in before (Philippi), still he came and preached the gospel with courage.
 - ⇒ They weren’t preaching for bad reasons – they weren’t trying to get money from people or order them around. We should never serve God or do our work for God just to get noticed, or bragged on or just for money.
 - ⇒ They did what they did to please God and not just people. It’s not bad to want to please other people, but the most important thing is pleasing God.
 - ⇒ They tried to be gentle and kind with the people they taught. When we tell people about God’s Word, we don’t every want to be rude or mean. That just makes people not listen. We have to be gentle, kind and patient.
 - ⇒ They worked hard night and day. They were always trying to do something for the Lord’s church.
 - ⇒ They treated the Thessalonian Christians like they were their children, loving them, teaching them, encouraging them and comforting them. We should always treat a fellow Christian like they were part of our family, and want what’s best for them.

Bible Quiz: Please review the Bible questions with the class.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

Paul Writes to Philemon and His Family

1:1 Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2-3 We give thanks to God all the time for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, constantly calling to mind your work of faith, your difficult labor of love, and your steadfast hope in our Lord Jesus Christ which you do in the sight of God.

4 Brethren, beloved by God, we know that God has chosen you.

5 For when our gospel came to you, it was not just words, but it also came in God's power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in complete conviction. And you know what kind of men we showed ourselves to be for your sake.

6 You started becoming imitators of us and of the Lord taking hold of God's Word in the middle of a great amount of pressure; yet even so you still had joy in the Holy Spirit.

7 You responded so well to the Gospel that you became to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia an example worth copying.

8 For from you the sound of the Lord's word went out, not only into Macedonia and Achaia, but everywhere your faith toward God has gone out so that we have no need to speak anything.

9 For when we get there, they themselves tell the story of our work at Thessalonica and the kind of reception we had from you, and especially how you turned from idols to serve the real God who is really alive.

10 Also told is how you are waiting with great anticipation for God's Son to come from heaven – the same Son that God raised from the dead, Jesus, who has rescued us from the wrath of God that is coming because of mankind's sins.

2:1 Brethren, you know that when we came in among you that it was not useless.

2 You know how even after we had suffered and been so shamefully treated at Philippi, we still came in among you and spoke the gospel with courage in our God, not holding back even though there was so much conflict.

3 The encouragement and admonition we gave you did not come from any desire to lead you astray, or from any unclean motives, or from any plan to trick you.

4 But since it was God that approved us to be entrusted with the gospel, we preach, not trying to please men, but trying to please God because He is the one who tests our hearts.

5 For you know that there was never a time that we try to persuade you using insincere flattery, just to hide greedy desires.

6 Nor did we ever seeking glory from others, you or anyone else, although as apostles of Christ we could have weighted you down with our demands.

7 But we made ourselves gentle among you, like a nursing mother would tenderly care for her own child.

8 We had such a strong affection for you, that we took great pleasure in sharing with you, not just the gospel, but our own lives, too, because we had come to love you so much.

9 I know, brethren, that you remember we would work and struggle until we were worn out. We worked night and day because we didn't want to be a burden on any of you when we were preaching the gospel to you.

10 You, along with God, are witnesses of how our lives among you who believed were devoted to God, upright, and blameless.

11 And you also know how we treated you like a father would his children, in a very personal way admonishing, encouraging, consoling, and talking in a serious way to every one of you.

12 We did this with the hope of getting you to walk in a way worthy of the God who called you into His kingdom and glory.

13 And for this reason we are so constantly thankful to God, because when you heard us preach God's Word, you received it, not as man's words, but for what it really is – the Word of God that works so effectively in you who believe.

14 For you, brethren, became imitators of God's churches in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. You have suffered many things from your own countrymen, just like they have from the Jews.

15-16 They not only killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, but they have also persecuted us and driven us out. They do not please God and are against everyone because they try to keep us from preaching to the Gentiles so that they can be saved. Such attitudes will only result in them always filling themselves full of sin, but the wrath of God will ultimately come on them to the end.

17 Now, brethren, we were taken from being there with you for a little while (of course our hearts are still there with you), and that's just given us an even stronger desire to work hard at getting back there to see you.

18 In fact, we would have already come back to you (if were up to me, Paul, I would have come several times), but Satan hindered us.

19 For who is our hope, our joy, and our crown of rejoicing? Won't that be you when Jesus comes again and we stand there in His presence?

20 For you are always our glory and our joy.

3:1-2 Because you are so important to us, when we had to leave Thessalonica so quickly, we were very concerned about the persecution you were facing. It bothered us so much that we stopped in Athens. I stayed there and sent our brother Timothy back to you. Since he is our brother and a servant of God, and one who works with us in the gospel of Christ, I knew he could help your faith to grow more solid and encourage you.

3 We knew that then no one would be thrown back and forth by this pressure they were bringing on you. Brethren, you remember that I had already told you that we are appointed for this.

4 And we told you before back when we were with you that we will suffer persecution. Now its come to pass and you know its true.

5 So because of what you were facing, when I could bear it no longer, I sent back to find out about your faith, if perhaps the Tempter may have tempted you. I was concerned that all our hard work there may have be in vain.

6 But after Timothy had been to see you and came back to us, he brought us good news about your faith and love. He said you still have good memories of us, and really want to see us again. And, of course, we feel the same way about you.

7 So, brethren, even in all our needs and pressures, we found comfort in this report about your faith.

8 We feel alive, just as long as you are standing fast in the Lord.

9 How could we ever give thanks to God enough to pay Him back for all the joy we've had before God because of you?

10 Night and day we will keep praying more and more prayers that we will be allowed to see your face again and finish anything that might be lacking in your faith.

11 And may our God and Father, Himself, and our Lord Jesus guide our way to you.

12 And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all, even as our love abounds toward you.

13 To set your hearts on firm ground, so that you will be blameless and holy before God our Father when Jesus comes with all His saints.