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Living Way Bible Study, Inc.

info4LWBS@aol.com
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"I used the Thessalonians study for the Ministry Staff Retreat (7 of us) and will be repeating a small portion of the study for a three week session with approximately so adults. The material is excellent and very helpful to me as I prepare to teach."

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## LWBS FOUR-STEP METHOD

Living Way Bible Study suggests this four-step method:

- 1. PERSONAL The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.

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LAKESIDE COMMUNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA)
OLYMPIA, WA

# 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS



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## **AUTHOR INFORMATION**

## Weldon H. Leimer

LWBS courses: 1 & 2 Thessalonians

Born in The Grove, Texas, where his father was called as a Lutheran school teacher.

#### **FAMILY**

Married Janet McMahan - 1961

Three daughters: Kathleen Evelo, Susan Brown, Barbara Bunsey

#### **EDUCATION**

Lutheran Elementary School, Hanover, KS; Storm Lake, IA

Concordia Lutheran High School, Fort Wayne, IN

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN – B.M.E.

Ball State University, Muncie, IN - M.A.

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN – MDIV

Military Science and Tactics – Indiana University

Infantry Officers Orientation Course – Fort Benning, GA

Infantry Officer Advanced Course - Fort Benning, GA

U. S. Army Command & General Staff College - Fort Leavenworth, KS

#### **EMPLOYMENT**

U. S. Army – Active and Reserve 1961-1983

Blackford County School Corporation – Hartford City, IN 1963-1979

Holy Cross Lutheran Church - Cypress, CA 1982-2002

Retired from full-time ministry in August 2002

Moved back to Indiana in 2004, to be with siblings, children and grandchildren

This Bible Study is dedicated to the glory of God, and in thanksgiving to my wife, Jan, for her patience and in appreciation to my dear sister in Christ, Lucille Collins, who years ago encouraged me to write a Bible Study.

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## PAUL'S SECOND JOURNEY

1 & 2 Thessalonians



# LESSON 1 THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION



EVENTS PRECEDING PAUL'S
SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY
THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY
THE REASON FOR THE EPISTLES
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

4 I 5

"No one knows when Jesus will return and, therefore, we are to be ready at all times."

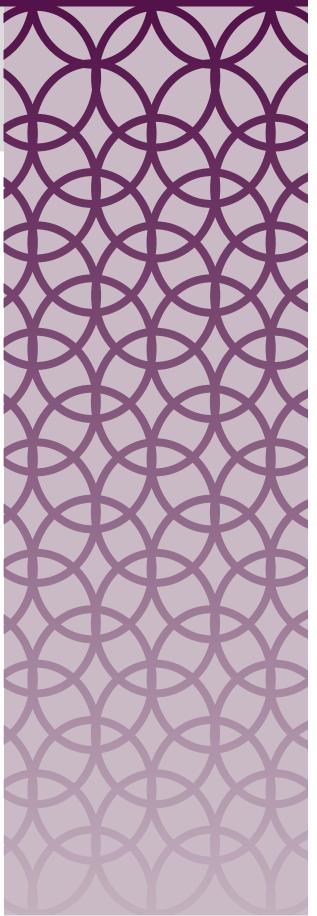
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#### SOME HISTORY OF THESSALONICA

The name of the town is pronounced Thěs ä lō nī kä and was founded by Cassander, the brother-in-law of Alexander the Great, who took control of Greece after Alexander's death in 332 B.C. After reorganizing the district and rebuilding the old town of Therme in 315 B.C., Cassander named the new town after his wife. You can probably figure out that she was the daughter of Philip of Macedon and the stepsister of Alexander the Great.

Thessalonica shared the commerce of the Aegean Sea with Corinth and Ephesus, and politically ranked with Antioch in Syria and Caesarea in Palestine. It is located on the northeast corner of the Thermaic Gulf in the Aegean Sea, 100 miles west of Philippi and about 50 miles northeast of Berea.

When the Romans conquered Macedonia in 167 B.C., they organized it into four regions. Thessalonica was the capital of the second region, and in 146 B.C. it became the capital of the entire Macedonian province. Being situated on the great Roman "interstate," called the Egnatian Way, Thessalonica had ready access to important trade routes from the Adriatic Sea on the west, to the Black Sea on the east. It was the largest city on the Balkan Peninsula until Byzantium (later renamed Constantinople) was built. Today the city is called Salonika (Sal ä nē¹ kä). Following the Balkan War in 1912, Salonika passed from Turkish hands to Greek jurisdiction.





During the first century A.D., when the apostle Paul would have been there, Thessalonica was comprised mostly of Greek, Roman, and Jewish ethnic groups. Of course, with that came a variety of religions. The two that were recognized throughout the eastern part of the Roman Empire were the mystery religions of Dionysus (Bacchus) and Orpheus. Both of them were fertility cults whose adherents expressed themselves in phallic symbols, frequent sexual orgies, and extravagant ecstasies. In addition to those mythological religions, was another of similar emphasis called Cabiri. Furthermore, emperor worship had also crept in, with its high priest residing in Berea. They also had a Jewish synagogue. As was Paul's custom, he would always begin his missionary work at the local synagogue.

# EVENTS PRECEDING PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

It would probably be of benefit to give you a little historical background. After Stephen was martyred, many of the lay people in Jerusalem and the surrounding territory left Judea and moved to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. It was in Antioch that not only Jews but also Gentiles came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and where the people of God were first called Christians. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard about this, they sent a man to Antioch, by the name of Barnabas, who was filled with the Holy Spirit. Shortly after arriving at Antioch and seeing "the fields ripe for harvest," Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Saul to Antioch. The two of them were there for a whole year teaching the people. Sometime later, the Holy Spirit told the prophets in the Antioch congregation to set apart Barnabas and Saul. After laying their hands on them they sent them out on, what has come to be known as, Paul's First Missionary Journey.

Leaving Antioch, Barnabas and Saul went to the island of Cyprus, from there north to four towns in southern Galatia: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. The two of them retraced their steps through those four towns and returned to Syrian Antioch, from which they were sent. They reported to the congregation what God had worked through them. I suppose that Paul also told the congregation how at Lystra he had been stoned, dragged outside of the city and left, thinking him to be dead.

Paul and Barnabas remained there in Antioch for "a long time" (Acts 14:28). While they were there, some men came from Judea teaching that unless the Gentiles were circumcised, they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas vigorously disputed that teaching. So the church sent them to the apostles in Jerusalem to resolve the issue.

A convention was called in Jerusalem to discuss what should be required of the Gentile Christians. After hearing many speak to the situation, the convention resolved to write this: "To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings... You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality" (Acts I5:23ff). The Jerusalem church sent along with Paul and Barnabas two men, Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas, who were leaders of the church to verify the writing. Having arrived back in Antioch, everything was reported to the congregation.

Sometime later, Paul yearned to know how the churches were faring at which he and Barnabas preached during his first missionary journey. When Barnabas wanted to take along his cousin, John Mark (also known as Mark) who had deserted them on the first missionary journey, Paul refused. So Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas and departed on his second missionary journey.



#### THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

In the original manuscript, Paul calls Silas by his Roman name: Silvanus instead of his Hebrew (Aramaic) name Silas. The name Silas appears only in the Acts of the Apostles. All other references to him in the New Testament call him Silvanus, but scholars are very certain it is the same person. Regarding the Acts of the Apostles, Luke obviously accompanied Paul, Silas, and Timothy, but we don't know when or where he joined them. We are able to form this conclusion, because Luke records in Acts 16:10: "After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once."

Paul's second missionary journey begins at Syrian Antioch, goes north through Syria, Cilicia, and into southern Galatia where he visits those congregations which he had established earlier. Those of you who have a set of maps in the back of your Bibles will undoubtedly have one showing the route which they took on the second missionary journey. While in Lystra, a man by the name of Timothy is added to the team (Acts 16).

After leaving Pisidian Antioch, they traveled west through Phrygia and Galatia, but the Holy Spirit did not allow them to stop and preach the Gospel in Asia (western Turkey). So Paul and his "troupe" continued traveling until they came to Troas, a large city on the western coast of Asia. There the apostle had a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come and help them.

They left immediately and sailed to Neapolis, proceeding overland to Philippi. While at Philippi, the Holy Spirit opened a door for Paul and Silas to begin their first congregation on the European continent. It was not without difficulty, however. They were beaten and thrown into jail. Through the power of God, the jailer and his whole family

became Christians (Acts 16). Nevertheless, the town leaders asked them to leave, so they went west along the Egnatian Way through Amphipolis and Apollonia stopping in Thessalonica.

As was his custom, Paul went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and was able to teach the people three Sabbaths before the Jews, out of jealousy, stirred up the crowds against them. However, a Christian congregation was established there. When night had come, the Christians there sent Paul and Silas to Berea. It is about the Bereans that the Scriptures say, "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). When the Jews at Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching in Berea, they went there and agitated the people against Paul. Consequently, the believers there sent Paul to the coast and then to Athens, while Silas and Timothy remained at Berea.

After being in Athens, the center of Greek philosophy, a short time, Paul was able to speak to some of the philosophers at the Areopagus, on Mars Hill. While in Athens, his spirit was restless about the people at Thessalonica, so he sent Timothy back to encourage and strengthen them. Judging from Acts 18:5, Silas was also sent to Macedonia. Some scholars think he may have gone back to Philippi. After having sent them, the apostle left for Corinth.

In Corinth, God told Paul that he should stay, "because I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10). The apostle remained in Corinth for eighteen months. Consequently, Silas and



Timothy joined Paul in Corinth when they returned from Macedonia. Furthermore, it was while Paul was in Corinth that he wrote the two epistles we are studying: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Luke mentions Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia (Greece), in Acts 18:12ff. When that information is added to an inscription found on a limestone rock in 1909, it is possible to accurately determine the years Paul was in Corinth. He arrived in the fall of A.D. 51 and left in the spring of A.D. 53.

#### THE REASON FOR THE EPISTLES

After Silas and Timothy returned from Macedonia, the first letter to the Thessalonians was written. In it Paul mentions how he wanted to come to them again and again, but that Satan prevented him from doing so. Consequently, he sent Timothy to them when he could no longer stand the suspense of not knowing whether they were holding firm to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Based on the report which Timothy brought, and maybe even a letter from the Thessalonian congregation, the first epistle addresses the following subjects: 1) Paul rejoices and praises God that the Thessalonians are holding firm to the Gospel which had been proclaimed to them. 2) They are encouraged, not only to continue in their faith, but also in their spread of the Gospel despite their persecution by the Jews and their own countrymen. 3) A defense of the motives of the missionaries. They are not charlatans who are here today and gone tomorrow as they seek a quick buck. It seems that the Jews were trying to discredit Paul's message by initiating such slanderous rumors. 4) Some specific questions are answered, especially about the death of believers before the return of Christ. No one knows when Jesus will return and, therefore, we are to be ready at all times.

The second letter seems to have been written shortly after the first one and addresses some of the same topics. Of specific note is the subject of the return of Christ. There apparently were further questions on that issue which had to be addressed forthrightly. Some people, in anticipation of the Second Coming, sold their belongings and were waiting around in idleness. As a result, they were becoming busybodies and meddling in the affairs of other people. The apostle had to repeat his admonition: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Additionally, the people of Thessalonica are cautioned not to become disturbed by prophecies or letters which were supposedly written by the apostle. There apparently were many forgeries going around bearing the name of Paul or other apostles. Consequently, he continues to clarify the subject of Christ's return and the coming of the Antichrist.



## PERSONAL APPLICATION - 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

"Lord, open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things in Your Word." Amen. (Ps.119:18)

'	Why do you think the apostle Paul uses the name Silvanus instead of Silas, as Luke does in Acts? (RSV, NASB)
	In verse 1, the word "church" is used: a. What do you usually think of when the word "church" is used?
	b. The literal translation of the Greek word for "church" is to call out. In what way is the Thessalonian church, and your church, "called out"?
	As you read chapter one, list the verses which mention specific persons of the Triune God.
	"Grace and peace to you." What do you think the apostle wants to communicate to the Christians in Thessalonica with those words?
	In verse 3, three words seem to stick out: faith, love, and hope. What do you understand the Bible to say about – a. Faith?  Hebrews 11:6
	Romans 10:17
	Ephesians 2:8-9
	b. Love? Matthew 22:37-40
	1 Corinthians 13:13
	2 Corinthians 5:14
	1 John 4:7

	1 John 4:19
	c. Hope? Hebrews 6:18-20
	1 Peter 3:15
	2 Corinthians 3:12
	1 Thessalonians 4:13
6.	Verse 4 presents both an active and a passive part.  a. Who is active and who is passive?
	b. Write the first paragraph of Luther's explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed (if available).
7.	Why did God choose you? v.4
	Ephesians 1:4-5
	Romans 8:37
	Galaltians 2:20
	2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
8.	How did Paul know that the Thessalonian believers were chosen by God?
9.	In what way were the Thessalonians "imitators" of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy? vv. 6-7

	Acts 16:16-40
	Acts 17:5-10
	Acts 14:22
	John 16:33
	In what way were the Thessalonian Christians models for other people? v. 3
	v. 6
	v. 8
11.	Describe how you are modeling the three points you listed in question #10 above.
	What does v. 10 mean "who rescues us from the coming wrath"?
	To receive help in making your response, summarize the following passages:  Matthew 11:21-24
	Matthew 25:31-46
	Luke 16:19-31



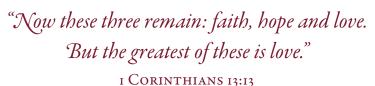
## **THESSALONIANS**

LESSON 2

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

PERSONAL APPLICATION - 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-16

13



uring the first century A.D., the opening words of letters contained three parts: 1) the name of the person writing the letter; 2) the person or persons who were to receive the letter; 3) a word of greeting. All three sections, or any one of the sections of the salutation, may be expanded or shortened. For example, compare the salutation of this letter with that of Romans 1:1-7; Galatians 1:1-5; Titus 1:1-4; 1 Peter 1:1-2.

It is supposed that the name Silvanus is used for the same reason that Paul had taken his Roman name, because they were ministering to the Gentiles. Silvanus was also a Roman citizen. Acts chapters 16, 17, and 18 speak of the labors of Silvanus (Silas) with Paul. Peter also used the services of Silvanus and considered him to be a "faithful brother" (1 Peter 5:12).

Timothy was Paul's spiritual child, converted during the first missionary journey. Timothy accompanied Paul during the second missionary journey and seems to be the close companion of the apostle throughout the rest of Paul's life. All three men are mentioned in the salutation because they were all a part of the founding of the Christian church in Thessalonica.

The word "church" is used with several different connotations. Often times, the building in which people worship is called the church. Other times that word has been used when referring to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Question #2 in the personal application sheet already mentioned that the Greek word for church is "to call or summon out." God has summoned us out of the world and the ways of the world. We, as God's "summoned" people, are different and are to remain different. When the Christian Church fails to





be different than the world, they have ceased to be "called out." Through the use of television and other modern media also comes a real struggle to avoid adopting the ways of the culture around us. Abortion, divorce, and going to court against a fellow Christian are all evidences of our failure to be "called out." Some statistics have recently shown that divorce among non-Christian couples is decreasing, but among Christian couples the number of divorces is escalating. Many Protestant denominations are not only condoning, but fostering homosexual marriages, homosexual pastors, and homosexual congregations. What poor witnesses the Christian Church is becoming!

Additionally, many Protestant churches, including some Lutheran churches, are approaching outreach from the perspective of lowering our doctrinal standards so that we can reach those outside the church. Remember, we are different. The world does not know anything about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we water down our doctrine to reach the world, we have already gone down the slippery road of becoming like the world. We, through teaching the Word of God purely, must allow the Holy Spirit to change the non-Christian from the ways of the world. That is what Paul, Silvanus and Timothy were doing in Thessalonica.

Notice in this chapter that various members of the Trinity are named. It is a basic understanding of the writer that all of them are members of the Godhead. Even though our Lord Jesus, in Matthew 28:19, is very explicit about the members of the Triune God, other places in Scripture also mention the persons of the Trinity in less succinct language. Already in the opening words of Scripture we see God revealing something about Himself in these ways: 1) "In the beginning God..." The Hebrew word for "God" is Elohim. The root word comes from the Arabic which means "to fear" or "to reverence." God, by His very nature and His creative acts, induces fear and reverence in mankind. The "im," of Elohim, is a Hebrew suffix which denotes the plural. 2) In Genesis 1:3 we read, "And God said, 'Let there be light.'" The Word of God is elucidated for us in John 1, and Colossians 1:15-20, revealing Him to be the second Person of the Trinity. 3) Genesis 1:2 says,

"And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." As New Testament people of God, we are able to understand that from the first three verses of the Bible, God is already revealing something about Himself as a Triune God.

Furthermore, as New Testament Christians, we know not only to "fear and reverence" the God of Genesis 1, but also to love the God who would reconcile us to Himself through the blood of His one and only Son. The Holy Spirit says it well, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Grace, a word used 155 times in the New Testament alone. Such frequent use of a single word causes it to become one of the fundamental words of God's revelation. Thus, a clear understanding of the word enables the Bible student to grasp more fully the love of God in connection with Christ Jesus. Grace means simply, "undeserved love."

Contrary to what the marketing people repeatedly emphasize, we do not deserve a new car. We do not deserve an expensive house. We do not deserve to own their product. The only thing we deserve is the wrath of God and eternal separation from His presence in hell. Our Confession of Sins in the Divine Service affirms this concept: "I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess to You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your punishment now and forever" (emphasis is mine). That is what our incessant sin against Him has earned us. However, the undeserved love of God is what we receive through faith in His beloved Son Jesus Christ. Ah, what grace! So if we are blessed to be able to own a new car, house, etc., it is purely by the grace of God. That is what Paul is communicating to those new Thessalonian Christians in his salutation.

Peace is frequently misunderstood. When the Christmas Season approaches, words from Luke 2 are often quoted and misquoted. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14 KJV). Unfortunately, many people, including some Christians, understand that to mean that there is to be "peace on

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

earth." The choir of angels is not guaranteeing peace between nations. Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Again, Scripture says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand" (Romans 5:1-2). These passages of God's Word enlighten us as to what kind of peace the angelic choir is singing. Our peace is with God because of the perfect life, substitutionary death, and resurrection of Jesus our Savior.

That is what the Old Testament Hebrew word shalom implied. It was more than simply absence of war, it is completeness, wholeness, harmony, and it is the idea of an unimpaired relationship with someone. Shalom is the result of God's activity in covenant, and is the result of righteousness. In nearly two-thirds of its occurrences, shalom describes the state of fulfillment which is the result of God's presence. In Isaiah, the Messiah is identified as the "Prince of Peace." Paul (Ephesians 2:14ff) links these themes in his identification of Christ as our peace. (Portions taken from Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Harris, Archer, Waltke, Vol. 2, page 931.)

Do you see what the apostle is communicating with the church in Thessalonica with those power packed words? "Grace and peace to you."

Very early in this letter to the Thessalonians, Paul uses the triad of what we, as Christians, are constantly to strive to live out in our life: Faith, Love, and Hope. You probably recall the famous words in the "Love Chapter": "Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13). The faith to which the apostle is referring is faith demonstrated through acts of love. See also Galatians 5:6 and James 2:4-26. In the closing chapter of this first letter to the Thessalonian Christians, the Holy Spirit causes Paul to re-emphasize this triple formula. "But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet" (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

Verse 4 of this chapter is very explicit as to who is the active force in our salvation. "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you." God is the One who is active, we are completely passive. Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last." Again, "I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:16, 19). This is an important point, because some of our Christian brothers and sisters use the terminology, "I decided to follow Christ." Some may say, "Well, Pastor, you are just straining at gnats. Stop being so picky." The intent is not to strain at gnats, nor is it our desire to put down our fellow Christians. However, one of the key "job descriptions" of a pastor (shepherd) is to defend the flock from anything that would attack it. The danger in using such language is that the focus becomes on self as the one who is active in our salvation, thus robbing God of the glory which is due Him. The old evil foe is constantly striving to get our attention off of Christ Jesus and onto ourselves. Our sinful nature aids such thinking as: "We are the master of our own destiny."

The devil seldom makes a radical, blatant lie in his preliminary temptations. He usually seduces us a little bit at a time, so that the movement away from God's Word is so slight, it is almost unperceivable. The illustration which is often used to demonstrate this is the one about the frog in the kettle. If we put a kettle of water on the stove and bring it to a boil, then put the frog into the water, it will immediately jump out. However, if we put the frog into the kettle with cold water and gradually bring the water to a boil, we will soon have frog meat to eat. The devil constantly uses this principle against God's people. Consequently, the Holy Spirit cautions us: "Be selfcontrolled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9). Even to put the best construction on everything, by saying, "I decided to follow Christ," we are sending out mixed signals which tend to confuse the unbelievers, the very ones we are trying to win.

Dr. Luther summarizes Scripture very precisely when he writes: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason



or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" (Explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed). To substantiate this statement, Ephesians 2:1 says: "You were dead in your transgressions and sins." Again, "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Yet again, "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

OK, so God chose you, but why did He choose you? It is true, that our sinful nature would answer "because I am better than so and so." However, our renewed spiritual nature informs us otherwise. All the passages of Holy Scripture, which refer to this subject of why God chose us, summarize it in one word: LOVE. God loved you already before He formed the universe (Ephesians 1:4). If you want an awesome concept, meditate on that one for a while. Furthermore, the love which is expressed is not an erotic love, or feeling love. It is a love which is determined in the mind of God to love unconditionally. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16-17).

Paul knew that the Thessalonian believers were chosen by God because he had proclaimed the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. He did not preach salvation by works. He did not proclaim Paul, but spoke the true Word of God in all its purity, allowing the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of faith. Consequently, he could see from their actions the faith which they modeled. "You became imitators of us and of the Lord" (v. 6). In so doing, they were models of Christianity to believers, not only in Macedonia and Achaia (northern and southern Greece), but "everywhere." Verses 3, 6, & 8 summarize the modeling which Paul enumerates: He could see the works which their faith produced; their labor which was prompted by their love for their Savior; and the endurance inspired by hope in

the Lord Jesus, which they demonstrated in proclaiming the Word despite the sufferings that Satan employed to dissuade them. Through all of this, they possessed the joy of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit closes this chapter with the triad of Christian living which was introduced at the beginning. "They tell how you turned to God from idols [faith] to serve [love] the living and true God, and to wait [hope] for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath" (vv. 9b-10). The phrase, "turned to God from idols," would lead one to believe that the make-up of the Thessalonian congregation was primarily Gentile. That terminology is not used in the first century A.D. when speaking of Jews. They had a long history of God punishing them for their worship of idols, e.g., Baal and Ashtoreth of Canaan, Moloch of the Ammonites, Chemosh of Moab, etc. One of the struggles the Jews had with the Romans was over the coinage with Caesar's image on it. In their radical, legalistic view, that was considered to be an idol.

Verse 10 is a beautiful pronouncement of both Law and Gospel. "The coming wrath," is severe Law. However, God has rescued us from that "coming wrath" through the blood of His Son. The one and only Son whom He vindicated by raising Him from the dead, Jesus, by name. He is the One who rescues us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to believe in the perfect life, death, and resurrection of that Savior, Jesus. Believing all that, we confidently wait (hope) for His return. For "He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets" (Acts 3:21). At the proper, predetermined time of the Father, Jesus will return in the clouds of heaven (Acts 1:11) in glory, and all the angels with Him to judge and deliver, to condemn and to "rescue from the coming wrath." God be praised. He has truly done everything well.



## PERSONAL APPLICATION - 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-16

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Amen.

PSALMS 19:14

Write why you think Paul would spend so much ink and space on the above focus.
Paul spends some time in this section talking about Christian suffering. He even makes it sound as if this is norr Why? Luke 9:23
Galatians 6:12
Philippians 1:29-30
2 Timothy 3:12-13

	2 Timothy 4:16
	b. What was Paul's reaction? Ephesians 6:19-20
	Acts 14:19-22
	1 Thessalonians 2:2
	c. What was the reaction of the Thessalonian Christians?  1 Thessalonians 1:6-8
5.	In verse 4, Paul writes: "we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel." What do you understand that to mean?
	After you have written your answer, look up the following passages: 2 Timothy 2:2
	Titus 1:6-9
	2 Timothy 1:13-14
6.	What characteristics are ascribed to mothers (v. 7)?
	1 Samuel 2:19
	1 Kings 3:26
	Isaiah 66:13

	Proverbs 31:1
7.	What do the Scriptures say about fathers (vv. 11-12)?
	Psalm 78:3-8
	Proverbs 4:1-5
	Ephesians 6:4
	Hebrews 12:7-10
8.	In v. 9, we see the hallmark of Paul's method of operation. Why do our professional workers get paid by the church
	Verse 6b
	Numbers 18:26-32
	Deuteronomy 14:27
	1 Timothy 5:17-18
	1 Corinthians 9:1-14
9.	"You received the word of Godas it actually is, the word of God" (v.13). Other places the word "Scripture" is used In the passages below, which ones refer to the O.T. as Scripture and which ones refer to the N.T. as Scripture?
	John 10:35b OT NT
	1 Timothy 5:18 OT NT
	2 Peter 3:15-16 OT NT

# ESSON 3 THESSALONIANS THESSALONIANS 2:1-16



PERSONAL APPLICATION - 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-3:13

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Paul seems to be trying to defend his actions and the actions of his helpers, Silvanus and Timothy, while they were in Thessalonica. We must remember three factors which come into play here: 1) Paul and his co-workers were not in Thessalonica very long, because they were driven out. 2) Consequently, those Thessalonians who believed the message of the Gospel which they presented did not have much time to become grounded in their new-found faith. 3) The enemies of Christ, Satan and those he uses, used the above conditions, not only to slander or speak against the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus, but also to resort to various means of persecution.

As you recall from the introductory statements of this Bible study, the lifestyle of the Thessalonians prior to the arrival of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, was very immoral. When they accepted the Word of God as truth, their way of life suddenly changed. They no longer ran with the old friends. If any of you have ever experienced that kind of change you can appreciate how difficult it is to make the break with immorality. The old friends are asking you why you, all of a sudden, think you are better than them and refuse to be with them anymore. There is a considerable amount of social pressure exerted upon the new convert to return to the old ways. Some give in to such temptation. Those who do, Peter writes, "Of them the proverbs are true: A dog returns to its vomit, and, A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud" (2 Peter 2:22). Another example is given by our Lord Jesus in the parable of the sower: "Some [seed] fell on rocky places, where it did



not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root" (Matthew 13:5-6). This happens more frequently if the convert is not well grounded in why he believes what he believes.

Seemingly, those enemies of the Gospel also slandered the missionaries by putting them in the same category as all the other religious preachers who were constantly coming through the area. They would "hit" one town; pick up some money from the listeners and move on to the next town. Basically, greed was their motive for preaching. Those charlatans would flatter their hearers in order to get more money from them (vv. 5-6). The opponents of the Gospel attempted to turn the Thessalonians attention away from the Word of God by attacking the character of the men who brought that Word to them. The old evil foe uses that same tactic today as he tries to divert our focus from Christ to some other inconsequential matter.

To counter the false allegations leveled against them in Thessalonica, the apostle had to "defend" his actions. However, he did it in such a way so as not to be boasting, but did it by presenting the facts about their manner of living while they were in Thessalonica. Look in your Bible how Paul reminds them of the facts: "You know, brothers," (v. 1); "You know" (v. 5); "Surely you remember, brothers" (v. 9); "You are witnesses" (v. 10); "For you know" (v. 11). All those statements are offshoots of what he said in chapter 1:5, "You know how we lived among you for your sake."

Paul not only brings the facts to their remembrance, he also encourages them because they were suffering for their new faith. Most of us, here in America, have not been physically persecuted for our faith as Christians. Some people view that as a blessing and others view it as a curse. It is a blessing from the standpoint

that the Word of God has been able to be spread throughout the world. It may also be a curse when the lack of suffering for one's faith causes grace to become "cheap grace." "Cheap grace" says, "I know that God will forgive me even if I go ahead and commit a certain sin." What a person has not had to struggle to gain or retain, soon becomes less highly prized, it becomes common, ordinary. Or, as Jesus said, "He who has been forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47).

The apostle Paul understood clearly how much he had been forgiven, and thus unrelentingly spoke of the God who had redeemed him. This is amazing, because the natural tendency is to stop speaking about Jesus if we get "beat up" for it. We do not enjoy pain and will usually try to do what is necessary to avoid it. Paul was fully human, too. That is why he sought the prayers of God's people, in order that he might speak boldly of the grace of God, as he ought to speak (Ephesians 6:19-20). How often have we failed to speak boldly about Jesus, just because someone made fun of us?

During the first 300 years after our Lord Jesus, there were intermittent periods of persecution. Whenever the Church had to wrestle with the possibility of dying for her faith, she became strong spiritually. The zeal and fervor for proclaiming Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord was noticeable by the way they lived and loved. On the other hand, those who were half-hearted in their faith ceased to practice it and thought little of denying the Lord who bought them.

Remember the words of our Savior: "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master...If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household" (Matthew 10:24-25). See also Mark 8:31-38. Again Scripture says, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts

14:22). Along this same line, read Hebrews 11 to see how God encourages us to emulate those great saints of old. Then He causes His writer to add, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:1-3).

The Thessalonian Christians were known throughout the whole area for their love of the Lord, in spite of suffering. Their faith in the risen Christ empowered them. "O God, grant me such a faith!"

The Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is not to be entrusted to any "Tom, Dick, or Harry." Paul, in his instructions to Timothy writes, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others" (1 Timothy 5:22). The NASB is more accurate in translating the Greek. It reads: "Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others." The laying on of hands was a practice in the first century A.D., of what we today consider ordination. The apostle is cautioning Timothy not to be too hasty in ordaining pastors/elders and thereby share in their sins. We are given a rather strict code of character for overseers, elders, deacons (pastors) in 1 Timothy 3, as well as Titus 1. Peter adds a few more: 1 Peter 5:1-4. We, in the Missouri Synod, attempt to screen the character of potential pastors before they are admitted into the seminary. Furthermore, during the four years of training at the seminary they are thoroughly instructed in the doctrine of Scripture as Titus 1:9 says: "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose

it." That is our (LCMS) method of complying with God's instruction, through Paul, not to be hasty in the laying on of hands and entrusting the Gospel to faithful men. What a great responsibility! Paul is assuring the Thessalonians that he, Silvanus and Timothy are trustworthy messengers of God's holy Word. For they are not seeking the praise of human beings, but of God (v. 4).

In his defense of their behavior, the apostle compares their way of life in Thessalonica with that of a mother (v. 7), and of a father (vv. 11-12). It seems no coincidence that some characteristics of both parents are mentioned in his bringing to their remembrance how the missionaries dealt with them. When God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18), He was speaking not only because it would be lonely for the man, but because God would endow each with complementary abilities.

Look back to your comments on question 6 of the previous application page. Note some of the key words: "gentle," "compassion," "comforts," "taught." In the 1 Samuel reference, there is more of an implied love for young Samuel, and no single word to describe a mother's love. God has given the mother a natural, intense love for her young child that is unparalleled. We also see that motherly love in the animals and birds of nature. God compares His love for His chosen people with that of a mother: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne" (Isaiah 49:15)? The intended and obvious answer is "No, she cannot."

The characteristics mentioned for fathers, in question 7 of the application sheet, have some overlap, i.e., they are listed for both fathers and mothers. Again, look at some of the key words: "encouraging," "comforting," "urging to live lives worthy of God," "teaching," "training and instruction of the Lord," "discipline." So, who is supposed to comfort? Who is supposed to teach, the father

or the mother? It is not a case of one or the other. It is a matter of both, and, i.e., both father and mother! This in no way implies that the mother is not to discipline the children. However, if the father is present, God has given him the ultimate responsibility to discipline the children and holds him accountable to do it. The discipline which is administered should be thought out and not be done hastily or in anger. Whatever you do, DO NOT NAG! If you have to say, "I've told you twice," you are nagging. Tell them what is expected of a Godfearing person, make sure it is understood, and discipline them the next time it is violated — no exceptions!

"In the modern church, spiritual illiterates are in almost every pew; people who, with a lifetime of attendance, have not yet learned the ABC's of their religion, and carefully avoid the pain of thought. An ignorantly minded church is rooted in an ignorantly minded home. The great betrayal is that by parenthood. The trouble, to a major extent, with the young people is the old people. Sir John McClure, headmaster of the famous Mill Hill School, bitingly said, 'The more I see of the average parent, the more I respect the average schoolboy.' The family altar is almost completely dismantled. The father is no longer the high priest of his home, gathering his family around him at morning or evening for the reading of the Scriptures and prayer. How much Christian conversation is there around the dinner table?" (James W. Clarke, The Interpreter's Bible, p. 269).

Verse 9 of our text lays out the method of operation which Paul used at many of the places at which he preached. The apostle worked as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) when not actively proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. Although we, in the Missouri Synod, have some pastors who make their living outside of the Gospel (we call them worker-priests), most pastors are paid by those whom they shepherd. There are always some exceptional circumstances, but we generally make use of the rights accorded to us by God: "The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). Again, "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor" (Galatians 6:6). Why, if he could have made his living by proclaiming God's Word did he not do so? You remember having read that the method of operation of the charlatans was to go from town to town, extracting money from the listeners and doing so with the motive of greed. The apostle Paul was determined that he would not give the enemies of the Gospel any opportunity to accuse him of false motives. He had decided to offer the Good News of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus as a free gift.

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (v. 13). What is included in the Word of God, or Scripture? For we read "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). That has to refer to the Old Testament, since the New Testament was not written yet, or so some theologians claim. Paul, writing to Timothy, says: "For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,'" (Deuteronomy 25:4) and 'The worker deserves his wages'" (Luke 10:7). In the Luke

passage, he is quoting the words of Jesus. There the New Testament is considered Scripture. Here is another example: "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:15-16). Yes, you already looked this up, but it is worth repeating. Notice in the 2 Peter passage where he speaks of Paul and considers "all his letters" to be Scripture. Furthermore, this is what Peter says about Scripture, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

On this subject, many have wondered how our Bible came into existence. The Old Testament books became canonical (a Greek word meaning rule or list) over several centuries of time. Even the Pentateuch (the five Books of Moses), was not recognized as canon until about 400 B.C. The Jews of Alexandria, in Egypt, included in their canon the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Judith, additions to Esther and Daniel, 1 & 2 Maccabees, 1 & 2 Esdras, Baruch, and the Prayer of Manasses. These books are known as the Old Testament Apocrypha. However, the Palestinian Jews excluded those books. Jesus and His disciples seem to have acknowledged the Palestinian canon. The Old Testament as we know it today (without the O.T. Apocrypha), was firmly established as canon at the Synod of Jamnia about A.D. 100. All of Christendom, except the Roman Catholic Church, recognize the Old Testament canonical Scriptures to be the 39 books of the Palestinian canon. The Roman Catholic Church canonized the apocryphal

books in 1546, after Luther died. This was among the edicts established by the Council of Trent.

The New Testament canon also came about gradually. The early church fathers were very careful what they included as God's Word. All the books we now consider to be New Testament, were meticulously compared with the known Scriptures of the Old Testament to insure that there were no contradictions, for God cannot contradict Himself Additionally, the churches were asked which books were universally accepted in their worship services as Scripture. Most of our New Testament books were considered to be Scripture by the end of the second century. Over a period of time, the five books in question (James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, and Jude) were also included as canon.

The last sentence of verse 16 deserves some consideration. "The wrath of God has come upon them at last." What is that saving? Does that mean that the destruction of Jerusalem has already taken place? Paul is referring to the Jews who were persecuting him and his cohorts, but not even stopping with that. They did everything they could to prevent the Gentiles from hearing about the forgiveness of sins which was earned for them through the blood of Jesus. After looking at the Greek and doing a word study, it seems that Dr. Paul Kretzmann says it quite well. "By this entire list of hostile acts, moreover, they were heading toward a terrible result and end: they were filling up the measure of their sins to the very top; with every new transgression they were approaching nearer to the limit of God's forbearance. And so the wrath of God must now discharge itself; the Jews are ripe for the judgment of God, it was even then imminent, and His wrath was poured out upon them at the destruction of Jerusalem. The fate of the Jews is a warning example for all times, bidding all men to refrain from all enmity to the Word of God" (Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament, Vol. II, page 346f).