

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 THESSALONIANS 1-3

A Pennsylvania homeowner named Jerry Lynn has given new meaning to the phrase, **“false alarm.”**

In 2004 Jerry went to hang a TV in his living room. To determine where to poke the hole in the wall for the wire, he lowered an alarm clock down an upstairs air vent. He figured he could hear the alarm in the wall, and know where to punch the hole. But the alarm clock fell off the string holding it, and was lost in the wall.

And for the next thirteen years, every evening at 6:50 the alarm clock went off. Jerry figured the batteries would last a few months, but he was wrong. Here’s what 6:50 sounds like every night at Jerry’s house.

His wife, Sylvia, says, **“It’s not a bother. It’s kind of cute. It starts a conversation when guests come over.”**

Well, the Thessalonians were also victims of **a false alarm**, but there was nothing cute about their situation.

A spiritual deception had threatened their faith.

In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul had written to this church about the rapture - *Jesus is coming to airlift His church from planet earth before God’s coming judgment.*

But it seems the Thessalonians had received another letter. False teachers had written in Paul’s name. They were saying that Jesus had already returned for His Church and the Christians in Thessaloniki had been left behind. The believers

were in a panic. Paul writes this second letter to refute the false alarm, and straighten out the confusion it caused.

Paul hopes to restore their hope!

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

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting...” I’ve heard it said, “A real friend warms you with his presence, trusts you with his secrets, and remembers you in his prayers.” If that’s the case, then there’s never a better friend than the Apostle Paul.

In all of Paul’s letters he prays for his readers.

Recall in 1 Thessalonians 3:12 Paul prayed for this church, “may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another...” Now he thanks God for answering his prayer, verse 3, “because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other...” The believers in Thessaloniki had a *growing faith* and *abounding love*.

Verse 4, “so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure...”

Remember, the Thessalonians were wartime babies. They had been *born again* in the midst of persecution.

Acts 17 tells us about the mob in Thessalonica that arrested the leaders of the church, and ran Paul out of town. Y e t

through it all, the Thessalonians had been faithful to the Lord. *These believers were over-comers.*

So is Brother Samsul. I read his story. Along with fellow missionary, Hussain Lasker, the two men were sharing the Gospel in the Indian village of Nagaland.

The men were attacked by muslim fanatics. Hussain was murdered. Samsul was stabbed six times and left for dead. Yet after just a month in the hospital, Samsul returned to the village where he'd been brutalized.

He told a reporter, *“As a muslim convert, it is my heart's desire that my own people be won to Christ.”*

After returning, Samsul prayed with eleven people to receive Christ, and baptized them into the church. He said of Hussain's murder, *“As in history, the blood of the martyrs has become the seeds of the church.”*

Today, 245 million Christians in places like Indian, and Iran, and North Africa live under the threat of physical persecution. If these believers can remain bold in their faith; then we should be able to endure a little *office alienation* or *social ridicule* from time to time.

We need to stand tall, even when we're made the butt of a joke. Let's develop a strong, overcoming faith.

We don't know when our faith might be tested.

Notice, Paul has commended the Thessalonians for their **love** and their **faith** - but what about their **hope**?

Remember in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul spoke of the their *“work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope.”*

Here, their faith and love are still intact, but between the writing of these two letters something had happen to their hope. Their hope had been stolen from them.

Sometimes, *it's not what's said, but NOT said that matters.* This is true in our text. *What happened to their hope? We'll answer that question in Chapter 2...*

But first, Paul continues to comfort this persecuted church - *and he does so in a surprising way* - he wows them with a description of Jesus' return to planet Earth.

It's amazing, Paul encourages a church under attack with a picture of the world's future judgment...

Notice, in verse 5 Paul refers to the enduring faith of these believers as *"manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God..."* *What a heavy statement to make!*

Paul informs the Thessalonians, just a few months old in the Lord, that when Jesus returns at the Battle of Armageddon to crush Satan and annihilated the armies of mankind - God will point to them, and to all believers in all the ages, and say to a hostile world, *"There! I did this to you, because of what you did to my children."*

Nothing angers God more than how the world mistreats His kids. All persecution will be punished.

And Paul insures the Thessalonians, *"that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you..."* The evil world we live in

thinks it can oppose Christ, and trash His Church, and there be no penalties... *not so!*

At the moment, Jesus commands us “to turn the other cheek.” But in the end, He returns - not to turn His cheek, but to bust some chops. He’ll repay the world’s tribulation on us with Great Tribulation on them.

In the end, God will trouble the wicked, “and... give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels...”

Imagine your son goes out for the baseball team. He’s by far one of the better players, but because of Little League politics another kid starts in his place.

An injustice has been done, and as a parent you feel it’s your obligation to talk to the coach. You plan to do so after the next game. But in that game your son gets to play, and he’s terrible. It’s his worst game ever. He strikes out every at-bat, and makes a couple of errors.

Now you said you were going to talk to the coach about your son not starting - and it might still be an injustice - but your son’s poor performance has weakened your argument. *What are you going to say?*

And this is why the faith of the Thessalonians, and our faith, is so strategic. Our endurance in the face of persecution is “*evidence of the righteous judgment of God.*” Thus, we need to live “*worthy of the kingdom...*”

For if we repay evil with evil, and show hatred to our persecutors - and don’t respond to them with grace and love;

then one day they'll say to God, "*Why are you judging us, when Your people were no different?*"

Stoop to their level and we weaken God's argument.

At Jesus' second coming *justice will be restored - sin will be repaid - and the righteous will be relieved...*

When the smoke clears on the battlefield, and Jesus is the only one left standing - a sigh of relief will ascend from the saints - the wickedness of this world will have finally been punished, and righteousness rewarded.

But if God is going to judge the wicked in the Lord's day; then we need to avoid their same sins in our day.

Verse 8 tells us, Jesus will come "*in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" *Notice, how men are judged in the last days?*

It all boils down to the Gospel. *What did they do with Jesus? Did they obey or reject the Gospel of Christ?*

People who reject the Gospel, "*shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...*" Here's the essence of Hell - *its eternal separation from the Lord.*

You can't live a life defiant of Jesus - or on the run from Jesus - then expect to live with Him for all eternity.

Since you didn't like Him, and resisted His influence, eternity is designed to honor your choice forever. It's "*everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.*"

For “when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” Jesus is returning to be **glorified** where He was **crucified**. He’ll **rule** where He was **rejected**.

Even today, Jesus is mocked and ridiculed - and His followers are treated with the same disdain. But on Judgment Day Jesus will be admired by the world.

Then, you and I, the Church, will be unveiled as His greatest work - *His masterpiece*. Irony of ironies, the world will glorify Jesus in us. *How the tables will turn!*

Thus, Paul intercedes for the Thessalonians, verse 11, “Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

What a high calling we have been given... *that Christ will one day be glorified in us for all the world to see!*

Let’s begin to live in light of that calling today.

Chapter 2, “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him...” This was Paul’s subject in 1 Thessalonians 4.

There he described **the event called the rapture**. One day, Jesus will come in the clouds and snatch away His Bride... We talked about the rapture last time. Like a scene from Star Trek Jesus will beam-up His church!

In the twinkling of an eye, our *earthly bodies* will be transformed into *eternal bodies* - bods fit for God. And we'll be gathered together to Jesus in the heavens.

Paul didn't leave the Thessalonians *up in the air* about the rapture. He carefully explained *what was up* with this important event. *Yet, confusion had occurred.*

False information had been disseminated. And in verse 2, Paul confronts it... "we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come." The phrase, "*The day of Christ*" is a synonym for "*day of the Lord.*" This is how the NAS, and newer translations render it, "*the day of the Lord.*"

Now, what happened to the Thessalonians' hope?

From Paul's statement in verse 2 we can infer that someone had told them they'd missed the rapture and "*The day of the Lord,*" or God's judgment, had begun.

Put yourself in Thessalonian shoes... with the fierce persecution they were under it would've been easy to conclude that they were experiencing Great Tribulation.

Remember, today is "*the day of man.*" For the most part, mankind is *having his way* and *getting his say.*

But God is about to spoil the party. The day is coming when God will intervene in the affairs of men and have the final say! Daniel 9 speaks of a final seven year period that will end mankind's rule of planet earth.

God will rain down His wrath on this wicked world, purify His people Israel, and usher in His Kingdom. And that period, yet

future – starting at the rapture and culminating with the Kingdom - is “the day of the Lord.”

Yet what scared the Thessalonians was the possibility they’d missed the opening act - the rapture - and been tossed into this Great Tribulation.

In fact, they had even received a letter, supposedly from Paul, that had confirmed their fears. Paul assures them the letter was a forgery. They’d been duped.

Several years ago a man from Clearwater, Florida, was getting a kick out of dialing 9-1-1. Fourteen times in three years he called in a false emergency.

Today, the knucklehead is in the slammer, but when arrested he told police he enjoyed watching fire trucks and flashing lights. He got his jollies creating panic.

There must’ve been a similar fellow in the church at Thessalonica. He enjoyed setting off false alarms. The church was panicked, *but they had no reason to be...*

Recall the two types of tribulation spoken of in Scripture. Jesus promised His Church that “in this world you will have tribulation.” There is a tribulation the world brings upon the Church. But the tribulation that comes in “the day of the Lord” is the wrath of God poured out on an evil world. This is the **Great** Tribulation, and from it God will spare His Church.

As we’re promised in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, “God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus.” The rapture is our great escape!

Verse 3, so “**Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day...**” *What day does he mean?* Not the rapture, but the day he just referred to - “***the Day of the Lord.***” It’s the period when God pours out His fierce judgments. It’s preceded by the rapture, but it’s more.

And this final period “**will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed...**”

Follow the logic Paul uses to clear up this confusion. If events unfold A, then B, then C - and you haven’t seen A and B - then you know C hasn’t happened yet.

Thus, before God’s day of judgment, there’ll be a ***falling away*** and ***the man of sin is revealed***. Since the Thessalonians had seen neither - they weren’t in the Great Tribulation, and hadn’t missed their escape.

Paul is clear the next event on their prophetic horizon, *and ours*, is Jesus’ coming for His church!

Here Paul mentions two prophetic landmarks....

First, “***the falling away***” - the Greek word means “**departure.**” It’s interpreted by most Bible scholars as *a departure from the faith*. Paul predicts an apostasy that’ll plague Christianity. False doctrine will abound.

In the last days, believers will no longer rightly divide God’s Word. They’ll move away from the truth of Scripture, and create their own designer religions.

Sadly, the Church today is barreling towards this apostasy. It’s the religion that catapults the Antichrist to power. Revelation 17 envisions it as a spiritual harlot.

Yet there's another possible interpretation of *"the falling away."* Famed Greek scholar, Kenneth Wuest, points out the Greek word could also refer to another departure... *of the Church* - or the rapture itself.

Paul could be saying *"the day of the Lord"* won't begin until the Church has been snatched away!

They know that they're not in the Great Tribulation because *"the falling away* (or the rapture) *comes first"*

And the second landmark, *"the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition..."* The Great Tribulation in Daniel 9 begins when a world leader, known in Scripture as *"the man of sin"* or *"the Antichrist"* makes a covenant - or signs a treaty - with the nation Israel.

Piecing various passages together: The Antichrist will rise as the leader of a confederacy of ten European nations. He expands his power to rule the world.

At the midpoint of the Great Tribulation he'll violate his agreement with Israel, and desecrate their Temple.

And Paul's point to the Thessalonians is that if he isn't on the scene currently you know you're not in the Great Tribulation - and haven't missed the rapture.

We're told in 2:4 that the Antichrist *"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."* This man starts out an atheist and a secularist, *except when it comes to himself.* At some point he claims to evolve to the level of a deity and demands for the world to worship him.

And Revelation 13 explains how *the man of sin* garners such influence. We're told he blackmails the world into worship. To buy or sell a person is required to take his number. It's a mark in the right hand or forehead... it's the infamous three numerals, 6-6-6.

Apparently, this man will use the hardware of electronic exchange. Cashless technology and digital currency may be his tools to extort the world's worship. He'll use some kind of configuration - three digits 666.

It's interesting how many people get the creeps over the number 666... Recently I bought a piece of carpet for \$666. When I told the lady I didn't want to write a check for 666, she said to just make it out for \$665.

But I'm not alone... In 1979 Ronald and Nancy Reagan moved to a new home in LA. Their address was 666 St. Cloud Road. They had it changed to 668.

US Route 666 was once known as the Devil's Highway, until officials changed the name to US Route 491... And many new moms went to great extremes to keep from birthing their babies on June 6, 2006...

There's actually a term for the fear of the number six hundred, sixty-six, "[Hexakosioihexekontahehexaphobia.](#)"

But here's the good news. Christians don't have to be afraid over 666! And this is Paul's point in 2 Thessalonians 2. We're not looking for the Antichrist, *but for Jesus Christ*. Paul is clear that He comes first.

Verse 5, “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?” This was actually old information. They had been over these truths before.

Paul continues, “And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.” Paul tells us “*the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.*” There’s a spirit in our age that wants to throw off God-instituted boundaries.

Today, gender differences are outright denied. Biblical roles in marriage are under assault - *as is the very definition of marriage*. People defy natural order and biology to do whatever pleases them. Self-identity trumps biological reality. A real lawlessness is at work.

And if you think it’s bad now, just wait until “*He who restrains is taken away.*” *And who might this Restrainer be?* I believe it’s **the Holy Spirit in His Church.**

Not the Holy Spirit per se - for the Spirit will continue to be around after the rapture - but right now the Spirit in His Church is providing the primary push back to the lawlessness in society. He’s keeping the devil at bay.

And once the Church is raptured, it’ll be katy-bar-the-door. Today, the Holy Spirit in His Church is all that’s holding back the rising tide of evil in our world. Realize it or not, our love for Jesus and our stand for the truth is resisting the devil, and keeping his evil in check. But when the Church is gone the devil will have a heyday.

Verse 8, “**And then the lawless one will be revealed...**” Once the Restrainer is gone, the Antichrist will be free to take control and move his real agenda to center stage... *but he’s not in power for long...*

For he is the one “**whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.**” Here’s a show of power!

You’ve heard of breath-that-kills - well, that’s Jesus!

Here, a breath from the Lord’s mouth and a glimmer of His glory will combine to vaporize the Antichrist.

After the British Navy defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, Admiral Drake asked Queen Elizabeth if she would honor his troops with her presence. He wanted the Queen to pass out medals to his admirals.

She agreed, but before she arrived Drake commanded his men, “**On account of the dazzling loveliness of her Majesty, all men, upon receiving their prizes, should shield their eyes with their right hand.**”

And thus was born the military salute.

Here, Paul is telling us the only protection from the searing heat of the glory of Christ is a salute. We need to submit ourselves to the Master’s authority. We can either yield to His glory now, or be destroyed by it later.

Paul adds that “**The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders...**” Satanic power is real.

Remember when Moses turned his rod into a serpent, Pharaoh's magicians duplicated the feat.

The Antichrist will be a *miracle man*. He'll perform wonders, but "*lying wonders*." God uses miracles to draw men to the truth. Satan uses them to sell his lies.

Verse 10 highlights the purpose of his lies. "*And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*" Satan knows he's going down. He wants to take as many people with him as possible.

It's sad, but *once a person rejects the truth, they'll fall for anything*. This means people alive in the Great Tribulation will be vulnerable to Satan's deceptions.

Verse 11, "*And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie...*"

Notice, this is not just *a lie*, but "*the lie*." Perhaps it's the very first lie - the lie that upended utopia. Satan convinced Eve that God was holding her back. That He didn't want her to eat the fruit or she would be like Him!

And this is the ultimate lie: *that Satan is the good guy and God is the bad guy*. That Christianity is evil.

The Bible is just a way to oppress individual freedom and keep humans from reaching their full potential.

In the last days God will send on society this "*strong delusion*" to consolidate man's rebellion. Verse 12 tells us, "*that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*"

Why do people reject the truth? As Paul says, there's *"pleasure in unrighteousness."* Sin is fun. *It feels good. It tastes good.* If it didn't it wouldn't be tempting. Yet in the end God will condemn those *"who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousness."*

Verse 13, *"But 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 through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." It's not enough to hear once and believe. We need to *"stand fast"* and hold on to the Scriptures.

"Now 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." The Thessalonians are reminded not only of *love* and *faith*, but their *"good hope by grace."*

Chapter 3, *"Finally, brethren, pray for us..."* Paul prayed earlier for the Thessalonians, now he asks them to return the favor... *"That the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you..."*

I like the Bible's depictions of the Bible... Jeremiah says the Word of God is like a hammer... Hebrews tells us it's like a sharp, two-edged sword... The psalmist says it's sweeter than the honeycomb...

And here we're told God's Word has 4.2 speed in the 40 yard dash. It *"runs swiftly."* *It spreads quickly.* Let's pray that God's Word spreads swiftly in this new year.

"That we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one." Wicked and faithless men abound - and they often oppose us - but the Lord is an All Pro left tackle.

Hey, if you follow Jesus, He has your blindside. He guards you and I from getting sacked by the devil.

"And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ."

There's no greater truth than, *"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."* But so often we wander from that truth. The love of God feels distant.

Our prayer needs to be, *"Lord, direct my heart back into your love. Keep bringing me back to your love..."*

And this is not a prayer Paul would've prayed, if it wasn't a prayer God was willing and faithful to answer.

Verse 6, *"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us."* The folks who caused the confusion in this church needed to be disciplined. And if a wayward

believer resists correction the final remedy is to exclude them from the fellowship.

They can no longer be part of the church.

You wake someone up and bring them to repentance by removing the protection of the church family - and letting the rebel taste the consequences of their error.

“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.” Paul was a pastor, and a pastor had the right to be compensated by his Church.

But for the betterment of the Body, Paul was willing to forego those rights. In fact, Paul was bi-vocational and worked a secular job. He was a tent-maker by day, a pastor by night, and as a result a burden to no one.

He continues, “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” I read about a guy in New York City who enjoys fine food, *but he doesn't like to work*. Thirty-one times he's entered an expensive restaurant, eaten fine cuisine; then shrugged his shoulders upon receiving the check, and waited for police to haul him off to jail.

The police say he actually looks forward to jail-time.

He gets three square meals a day and a place to sleep. Over five years New York taxpayers shelled out \$250,000 to feed, clothe, and house this one lazy man.

You may not be able to work... You may be able, but can't get a job... In such cases the church should help.

But if you just don't want to work, then you shouldn't be given a handout. We shouldn't interfere with the lesson God and your hungry stomach will teach you.

Paul is adamant... **“no loafs for the loafers.”**

Realize what was going on in this church. Because of their emphasis on the coming of Christ there were believers who had decided to sit out life - *why go to school, or get a job* - just wait for the rapture. They mooched off other believers. And Paul says **“stop it.”**

Christian charity should never breed a person's irresponsibility. **If you won't work, you don't eat.**

Verse 11, **“For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.”** Without a regular job, folks grow idle, and stick their noses in other people's business.

It's often said, **“Idleness is the devil's workshop.”**

The Jewish rabbis use to teach, **“He who doesn't teach his son a trade, teaches him to be a thief.”**

The ancient Romans put it, **“By doing nothing, men learn to do evil.”** Good honest work keeps food *on a person's table* - and keeps the person *out of trouble*.

Verse 12, **“Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in**

quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.”

Making a living and doing good to others are the two pursuits that should occupy every Christian’s life.

Verse 14, “And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

Note the balance in Paul's discipline.

If a brother persistently disobeys, don't pretend it's all cool - don't be buddy-buddy and hang out with him like nothing's wrong!... Yet don't completely abandon him either. He's your brother in Christ. Sit him down and discuss the issue until the issue gets resolved.

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.

The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.” The Thessalonians had been duped by a false alarm. They'd received a letter supposedly from Paul, that wasn't. Here he tells them how authenticate his letters - *check the signature*.

Paul dictated his letters, but at the end of each letter he would take the quill in hand and sign it personally.

His signature was his stamp of authenticity.

Verse 18 closes the book of II Thessalonians, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”