

Expansion into Greece

Year 3, Quarter 4

This quarter concentrates upon Paul's second preaching tour wherein the kingdom of Christ spreads as far as the Grecian peninsula. The study includes the historical accounts of Acts 15:36 - 18:22 and the epistles of 1 & 2 Thessalonians, written most likely by Paul from Corinth. The epistles offer comfort and additional teaching to steady the troubled young church.

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- ◆ The Timing of the Return (1 Th 5:1-6)
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- ◆ Introduction (2 Th 1:1-2)
- ◆ Worthy of the Kingdom (2 Th 1:3-5)
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- ◆ The Falling Away (2 Th 2:1-5)
- ◆ Revealing the Lawless One (2 Th 2:6-8)
- ◆ Strong Delusion (2 Th 2:9-12)
- ◆ True Election (2 Th 2:13-14)
- ◆ Hold the Traditions (2 Th 2:15-17)

Week 13: 2 Thessalonians

- ◆ Mutual Blessings (2 Th 3:1-5)
- ◆ Withdrawal from the Disorderly (2 Th 3:6-10)
- ◆ Admonition of a Brother (2 Th 3:11-15)
- ◆ Closing Remarks (2 Th 3:16-18)
- ◆ Paul's Return to Antioch

MEMORY VERSES: YEAR 3, QUARTER 4

Week 1: And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

☞ *Acts 16:4-5*

Week 2: Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

☞ *Acts 16:32-33*

Week 3: These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

☞ *Acts 17:11*

Week 4: And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, so that they should seek the Lord ...

☞ *Acts 17:26-27a*

Week 5: Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

☞ *Acts 18:9-10*

Week 6: ... you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

☞ *1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10*

Week 7: For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

☞ *1 Thessalonians 2:13*

Week 8: For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

☞ *1 Thessalonians 3:5*

Week 9: For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.

☞ *1 Thessalonians 4:3-4*

Week 10: For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

☞ *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*

Week 11: ... it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 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.

☞ *2 Thessalonians 1:6-8*

Week 12: Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

☞ *2 Thessalonians 2:15*

Week 13: 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.

☞ *2 Thessalonians 3:14-15*

Expansion into Greece: The Open Door to Macedonia Week 1

Day 1: The Split Between Paul and Barnabas

Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch from the Jerusalem conference to continue their teaching and preaching in that city (Ac 15:32-35). “*After some days,*” Paul suggests to his beloved associate that they return to the cities of their former tour and investigate their progress (Ac 15:36). At this point in the ministry of Paul, an unfortunate and undoubtedly distressing situation arises. Barnabas insists on including John Mark in the new venture (Ac 15:37-39), which is understandable in view of their family connections (Col 4:10). On the other hand, Paul is reluctant to trust the young man again after his previous desertion. Neither side is willing to compromise so the two part company. As close as they had been, and as much as Paul owed the “Son of Encouragement,” surely this separation is painful.

1. Why would it have been natural for Barnabas and Mark to go to Cyprus (Ac 4:36)?

Day 2: Paul Returns to South Galatia

After having received the blessings of the brethren in Antioch Paul and Silas head north-westward toward the cities of southern Galatia (Ac 15:40-41). This route would take Paul through his home district of Cilicia (Ac 21:39). As Paul encounters congregations along the way (some perhaps started by him earlier? - Ac 9:30; 11:25), he and Silas offer them strength and encouragement. Paul’s course to southern Galatia would take him through the rugged Taurus mountains. The “Cilician Gates,” a narrow gorge north of Tarsus, was the only traversable route through these mountains. Through this pass Paul and Silas make their way to the cities of Galatia. If we have dated the Galatian epistle correctly, Paul would be anxious to see whether his letter had taken effect.

2. What special service did Silas offer to the church?
3. What was to be delivered to the Syrian and Cilician churches (Ac 15:23ff)?

Day 3: The Enlistment of Timothy

After Paul’s arrival in Derbe and Lystra, he meets a young man named Timothy (Ac 16:1-5). Perhaps this is a joyful reunion as Timothy, already a “disciple,” seems to have been converted by Paul on his first trip (1 & 2 Tim 1:2). Paul sees in Timothy a mature, dependable traveling companion and co-worker. Thus begins a mutual relationship of love and respect that will last the rest of Paul’s life. Timothy, however, must first be circumcised to prevent turmoil and controversy in the Jewish communities to be visited. When voluntary and expedient, Paul circumcised. When forced as an issue of faith, Paul refused. His actions are worthy of consideration.

Paul's Second Journey



4. Research: Who in Timothy's family had been converted before him?
5. Comment on Timothy's reputation. What did Christians and Jews know about him?
6. Why had he not been circumcised?

Day 4: The Vision of the Macedonian

The next events make it clear that although the Holy Spirit was directing the spread of the gospel, the instruments employed - the apostles and preachers - weren't always aware of His plans (Ac 16:6-10). Paul and his traveling companions try to move westward toward the province of Asia but are forbidden by the Spirit; likewise they are stymied as they assay to go northward into Bithynia. By trial and error, it seems, the company arrives at Troas where Paul receives a vision of a Macedonian pleading for help. Note Luke's use of pronouns: he has been writing of "they"; now he switches to "we" (Ac 16:8, 10). This indicates that Luke has now personally joined the group.

7. Macedonia is a: City Province District Peninsula
8. How did Paul know that he had been instructed to go to Macedonia?

Day 5: Lydia: the Firstfruits of Macedonia

It was not apparent to Paul when first embarking on this journey that he would be entering virgin territory, but as the circumstances unfolded he was willing to go where the Spirit led him. The preaching party immediately sets sail for Philippi in search of those Macedonians who need their spiritual help (Ac 16:11-15). Philippi is called "*the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a **colony**.*" The city, named after Alexander the Great's father, was the site of an important battle between Octavian and Brutus/Cassius in 42 B.C. The victorious Octavian made it a "colony," a foreign city to which was extended all the privileges of Roman citizenship. It was a ...

"military outpost and a miniature of Rome itself. The language was Latin. Here Paul is face to face with the Roman power and empire in a new sense. He was a new Alexander, come from Asia to conquer Europe for Christ, a new Caesar to build the Kingdom of Christ ..." (Robertson, **Word Pictures**, Vol. 3, p. 249).

Such grand purposes have humble beginnings as Lydia and her household, after hearing the good tidings, are baptized.

9. Where was prayer customarily made in Philippi? Who was there on this occasion?
10. Describe Lydia as thoroughly as you can from this passage (see also 16:40).
11. How do you think "the Lord opened her heart" (Ac 16:14)?

Day 1: Trouble Brews

Satanic influence begins to interfere with the gospel in Philippi in the form of a harassing demon-possessed girl (Ac 16:16-19). Luke says she was possessed with a “spirit of divination” (*python*). In Greek mythology, Python was a dragon that guarded the oracle of Delphi. Python was slain by Apollo who then supposedly became the oracle. This fortune-telling cult had priestesses who used drug-induced hallucinations to offer advice about the future. W.E. Vine observes, “Since demons are the agents inspiring idolatry, 1 Cor. 10:20, the young woman in Acts 16:16 was possessed by a demon instigating the cult of Apollo, and thus had ‘a spirit of divination’” (**Expository Dictionary**, Vol. 1, p. 328). Paul puts an end to the harassment by freeing the girl of the demon but consequently robbing her masters of income. Paul and Silas are forcibly taken to the marketplace (*agora*), the town square which was the center of commerce and civic affairs.

1. What did the girl say about Paul and the others? Why was this upsetting to Paul?
2. Discuss how some people today resist the gospel on the basis of economics.

Day 2: The Abuse of Paul and Silas

There are three elements to the charges brought against the preachers (Ac 16:20-24): 1) “*Being **Jews***” contrasts with “*being **Romans***” (16:20-21), i.e., a prejudicial reference to their heritage (this is especially noteworthy if, as seems likely, the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius has already occurred - Ac 18:2); 2) “*Exceedingly trouble our city*” is an exaggeration to paint them as public enemies; 3) “*They teach customs which are not lawful*” is a charge of practicing an unlicensed or unauthorized religion. Subjugated nations could keep their native religions provided they did not stir social unrest or attempt to proselytize the Romans. The magistrates are so affected by the crowds that no investigation is made into the charges; the preachers are immediately beaten and imprisoned.

3. How many times were Paul and Silas beaten? What instrument was used?
4. What measures were taken to make their custody secure?

Day 3: The Conversion of the Jailer

If Paul had been overly optimistic by the “Macedonian call,” the conversion of Lydia and the peaceful prayer-meetings at the river, he has now been rudely reawakened to the fact that rarely will he preach the gospel in tranquillity. With battered body and unbroken spirit, he and Silas sing prayers (a singular action) from the bowels of the prison at midnight (Ac 16:25-34). As if to vindicate their faith and message, an earthquake shakes the prison to its foundations and releases the bonds upon all the prisoners. The jailer,

assuming the escape of his charges, prepares to execute his own sentence against dereliction of duty but is stopped by Paul. The roles are now reversed and it is the jailer, cognizant that he is in the presence of something greater than himself, who bows before his prisoners and asks, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” Paul’s response in 16:31 is merely the starting place for a Gentile ignorant of Judaism and its scriptures which define and explain the Savior. Luke continues, “*Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house*” (16:32). In response to further teaching, “*immediately he and all his family were baptized*” (16:33). He did exactly what Lydia did when she heard the gospel (16:14). These consistently fit the pattern of conversions throughout Acts and the doctrinal explanations of what makes one a Christian and when.

5. How did the other inmates react to Paul and Silas’ prayerful songs?

6. What did the jailer do toward Paul and Silas in his penitence?

Day 4: Release from Prison

Perhaps smitten with remorse in the absence of passion, perhaps with superstitious foreboding because of the earthquake, the magistrates decide the next morning to release Paul and Silas (Ac 16:35-40). But Paul refuses to accept a private pardon after such public humiliation and demands a personal appearance by the magistrates. This would not only help Paul’s feelings but it would possibly restore a measure of credibility to the new church recently begun in Philippi. Paul returns to Lydia’s house and gives the brethren some words of encouragement before departing. Note that Luke resumes the third person “they,” indicating that he stays behind for a time in Philippi.

7. What did the jailer want Paul to do?

8. What did the magistrates learn which frightened them?

9. What request did the magistrates make of Paul as they released him?

Day 5: Paul’s Roman Citizenship

Roman citizenship was not automatically conferred upon conquered peoples; rather, it was a privilege sparingly bestowed by birth or bought at great price. Citizenship brought privilege, part of which was freedom from shackles, corporal punishment, crucifixion and expulsion from a city without due process. One also had the right in certain cases to appeal directly to Caesar. Roman citizenship was particularly cherished in a colony city such as Philippi, and it is entirely possible that the magistrates feared their own safety and security of office after learning of Paul’s citizenship. Records indicate that some cities had been punished, Rhodes among them, for violating the rights of a Roman citizen. Paul did not hesitate to use his Roman rights if it advanced the gospel.

10. Discuss Paul’s actions in light of Jesus’ “turn the other cheek” teaching.

Day 1: Thessalonica: The City

Thessalonica was founded in 315 B.C. by Cassander, a general of Alexander the Great, and named after his wife. Thessalonica was the daughter of Philip II and the half-sister of Alexander. Churches are now started in cities named after these two Macedonians. The famous Roman military road, the Egnatian Way, passed through Thessalonica and Philippi, and parts of it still exist today. Thessalonica was the capital city, major seaport and the most populous city of Macedonia. It was a “free city” because of its allegiance to Octavian and thus was able to govern to a large degree its own affairs.

1. Consult the map on page 12. In which direction is Thessalonica from Philippi?
2. What sea lies beyond Thessalonica’s harbor?

Day 2: Preaching in Thessalonica

Luke only gives a brief overview of this time of preaching (Ac 17:1-4); more details are given in Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians. The journey from Philippi to Thessalonica is 100 miles or three good days of travel. While Timothy is not named in Luke’s narrative (he is specified as being in Berea in Ac 17:14), the inclusion of his name in the salutations of the Thessalonian epistles written a short time later suggest his presence. Paul, “*as his custom was*,” begins preaching to the ready-made audiences in the synagogue. While a few Jews are persuaded, many God-fearing Gentiles and “not a few” prominent women of the city responded to the gospel.

3. For how many Sabbaths did Paul have the opportunity to teach in the synagogue?
4. What words indicate the thought processes involved in considering the gospel?
5. Would you say that the church in Thessalonica was mostly Jew or Gentile?
6. **Research:** What two brethren from Thessalonica later accompany Paul to Judea?

Day 3: The Jewish Agitators

The Jews in Judea, Antioch of Pisidia and now Thessalonica all share the traits of envy and unscrupulousness (Ac 17:5-9). Jealous of Paul’s success in teaching that which they held to be apostate, the Jews enlisted some deadbeat troublemakers from the town square and “*set all the city in an uproar*.” They storm the house of Jason, Paul’s host, in search of the evangelists. Not finding them, the mob then drags Jason and some other Christians before the city magistrates and falsely accuses them. These actions prejudice the minds of the populace and destabilize the teaching climate in Thessalonica. After a

stay in Thessalonica of undetermined length, Paul and Silas are forced to leave this young church to fend for itself in a turbulent, hostile environment.

7. What charge was particularly troubling to the rulers and citizens of Thessalonica?

8. Contrast what agitated the people of Philippi and Thessalonica (Ac 16:19; 17:5).

Day 4: The Noble Bereans

It must have been demoralizing for Paul to leave a young, thriving church under such a cloud. We shall see in First Thessalonians how troubled Paul was over these affairs and how anxious he was for the Thessalonians' spiritual welfare. But persecution was often the catalyst for the spread of the gospel, and so it is in this case. Paul, Silas and Timothy continue their journey southwest to Berea (Ac 17:10-12). What a joy it must have been to find open and honest hearts among the Jews, more so than those in Thessalonica. Many Jews are converted along with prominent Greeks, male and female.

9. What indicates a quick escape from Thessalonica was necessary?

10. How did the Bereans respond to the message delivered by Paul? What can we learn from this?

Day 5: More Trouble from the Thessalonian Jews

While it must have been frustrating for Paul to be dogged by the Jews from Thessalonica (Ac 17:13-15), surely he could relate to their mindset. He, too, had resolved to destroy Christians wherever they might be and diligently searched for them. Now he is a victim of the same misguided zeal. Note that Paul is the specific target of the attack; Silas and Timothy are able to remain behind and work further with the Berean brethren. This was to be a temporary provision as Paul requested that his two companions join him as soon as possible.

11. Who encourages Paul to leave Berea?

12. Who went with Paul as he left Berea?

13. Where did Paul go? How did he get there?

14. Discuss the faith of the Bereans and the Thessalonians in relation to the circumstances which befell them shortly after their conversion.

Day 1: Athens: City of Idols and Philosophies

Athens had passed its zenith of glory by the time Paul arrives in about AD 50-52. Still, the city was the cultural nerve center of the Roman world rivaled only by Alexandria in Egypt. “Here men still talked about philosophy, poetry, politics, religion, anything and everything. It was the art centre of the world” (A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures**, Vol. 3, p. 277). For 500 years the ancient city had been the home of the greatest of human philosophers: Zeno, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Athens was also awash in statues, temples and other structures devoted to the gods. Pliny states that at least 30,000 idols were scattered publicly about the city with countless others in private residences. And Paul is left alone to challenge the philosophies of the day with the simple gospel.

1. How does Luke describe the idols of Athens (Ac 17:16)?
2. Using the map on page 12, give an approximate distance from Berea to Athens.

Day 2: From the Synagogues to the Areopagus

The rampant idolatry of Athens so provokes Paul that he begins to preach first in the synagogues and then in the marketplace, a collection of temples, theaters, shops and “stoa” - colonnaded porches where people congregated for commercial and social intercourse (similar to our “mall”) (Ac 17:16-21). It is here that Paul comes to the attention of some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The Epicureans (disciples of Epicurus, 342-270 BC) emphasized living a pleasurable, self-indulgent life. They did not believe in an afterlife, that the world was created by a divine being, or that gods exercised providential control over human affairs. Consequently, they did not believe in future judgment. Stoics (followers of Zeno of Cyprus, died circa 260 B.C.) believed in creation by Zeus and the governance of the universe by the unalterable force of fate or destiny. “Virtue consisted of finding the thrust of destiny (or nature) and adjusting life to it. Individual passions and emotional reactions represented a disruptive force which could only cause conflict and a losing battle with nature; they were thus to be suppressed (**ISBE** [Bromiley], Vol. 4, p. 621). A familiarity with these philosophies sheds light on Paul’s address to follow.

3. What did the philosophers think of Paul?
4. With what were the Athenians preoccupied? Can you think of a modern parallel?

Day 3: The True God vs. Idols

Paul uses the idolatrous superstitions of the Athenians to his advantage by claiming to reveal to them truths about the “unknown (to them) god” (Ac 17:22-29). How could they contradict him when they admitted there was a god they did not know? Paul makes

several points which contradict the philosophers: 1) The world was created by God who is a living being; 2) He cannot be contained within manmade temples; 3) Worship is not on the basis of supplying God's needs but vice versa; 4) All humans are from a common origin and God has controlled the growth and development of each nation; 5) God is near to man, aware of his existence and needs; 6) God expects His creatures to seek a common knowledge of Him, and 7) Humans are the offspring of God; therefore, the essence of God is not reflected in inanimate objects of man's craftsman-ship. In this address Paul shows that he is not a backward "seed-picker" (17:18) but conversant on the philosophies of the day and willing to debate their proponents.

5. What had one of the Stoic philosophers said about God (Ac 17:28)?

6. How did Paul qualify this statement: *"Nor is He worshiped with men's hands"* ?

7. Who earlier observed that God *"does not dwell in temples made with hands"* (Ac 7:48)?

Day 4: A Coming Judgment

The coming of Jesus not only offers redemption from sin; it brings universal accountability (Ac 17:30-32). The fact that God in former times overlooked ignorance of His true nature does not suggest that He condoned or excused it. His judgment will be based upon what men understood about Him and whether they lived accordingly. But God was willing to patiently bear with men until He fully revealed Himself in Christ. That time has now come and obligations ensue. When Paul introduces the subject of resurrection, the assembly abruptly ends due to the skepticism and mockery of some. Others indicate an interest to hear more at a later time, but Luke does not indicate whether this opportunity arose or not.

8. Who is obligated before God to repent and come to a true knowledge of Him?

9. What kind of judgment will be rendered? By whom? How does the resurrection of Jesus give assurance of a judgment to come?

Day 5: The Meager Harvest of Athens

Some assert that Paul started no church in Athens. But it is clear from references in 1 Thessalonians that Paul spent more than a few days here, and Ac 17:33-34 mentions the conversion of several disciples. While no epistle to the church at Athens has been preserved, neither has one to the church in Berea, yet a church existed there. Still, it does not appear that large numbers came to the Lord either at this time or later. How difficult it must have been for Paul to face such ridicule and rejection alone, and how demoralizing to see so many bound by ignorance and unwilling to search for the God who is near. The gospel will not produce equal results in all situations.

10. If you have a Bible dictionary, research the term "Areopagite."

Day 1: The City of Corinth

Corinth was the capital city of Achaia and the most important commercial center in the Empire. This was due to a unique geographical feature: Corinth was located on a narrow isthmus which connected lower Greece (the Peloponnesus) with upper Greece. Since the waters around the peninsula were dangerous, it was safer and more economical to transfer cargo from ship to ship across the isthmus. The immorality of Corinth was legendary and its name became a slur (to “Corinthianize” meant to engage in illicit sexual activity). A temple to the goddess Aphrodite stood atop the Acrocorinthus, a mountain to the south of the city. Its priestesses were actually prostitutes who encouraged the sailors and citizens to “worship” through fornication. It is to this cesspool of immorality and idolatry fifty miles southwest of Athens that Paul came, alone.

1. List **all** the cities mentioned by Luke through which Paul has now traveled in Greece.
2. Define the term “isthmus.” How did this natural feature help Corinth prosper?

Day 2: Paul, the Tentmaker

As seen in First and Second Corinthians, Paul supports himself in Corinth either by plying his trade or later by contributions from other churches (1 Cor 9:12, 15-18; 2 Cor 11:7-10). His long and treasured association with Aquila and Priscilla begins at this time (Ac 18:1-4). The couple had come to Corinth when the emperor Claudius expelled the entire Jewish population from Rome. Suetonius attributes this to constant riots among the Jews “at the instigation of one Chrestus.” It is hard to imagine any other plausible explanation than the Jews were reacting violently to the preaching of Christ, and the constant turmoil led to their expulsion.

3. Where was Aquila originally from? What large sea does it border?
4. Where did Paul live in his early days at Corinth?
5. What did Paul do every Sabbath?

Day 3: Failure and Success

Paul is finally rejoined by his fellow-workers Timothy and Silas who have come from Macedonia (Ac 18:5-8). Silas and Timothy were left in Berea (Ac 17:14), but Timothy then briefly joined Paul in Athens before returning to assist the brethren in Thessalonica (1 Th 3:1-2). Upon their arrival in Corinth, Paul is refreshed with good news about the Macedonian churches, supplied with funds (Ph 4:15; 2 Cor 11:9) and freed to preach the gospel more diligently. *“Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”*

Ac 18:5 is the last mention of Silas in Acts.

6. Toward whom did Paul shake his garments? What did it symbolize?
7. What important position did Crispus hold? Did Paul baptize him personally?

Day 4: Encouragement from the Lord

Luke gives a glimpse into Paul's frame of mind as he relates a vision of the Lord to Paul in Corinth (Ac 18:9-11). Literally rendered Jesus told Paul "stop being afraid, but go on speaking" (A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures**, Vol. 3, p. 298). Paul further admits to the Corinthians, "*I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling*" (1 Cor 2:3). Paul had already faced so much persecution and rejection that it would only be natural for him to hesitate or shrink from further abuse. But God's methods are not our methods; He makes things work that from a human standpoint cannot possibly work. Paul is up against many obstacles in Corinth, but the simple proclamation of divine truth will accomplish the will of God.

8. What assurance is given Paul by Jesus?
9. What did the Lord have in the city of Corinth?
10. How long further did Paul stay in Corinth?

Day 5: Before Gallio

Luke includes just one anecdote from this period which illustrates both the Jewish hostility and the general Roman ambivalence toward Christianity at this time (Ac 18:12-17). Gallio is the proconsul of Achaia, a tenure dated by archaeological discoveries to AD 51-52. The Jews rise up en masse and accuse Paul before Gallio of promoting an unlawful religion. Gallio's swift dismissal of the charges indicates that he considered Christianity to be a sect of Judaism, for which he seems to have a high degree of contempt. The tables are turned on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, as he becomes the victim of the beating he hoped to inflict upon Paul. Who administered the beating is not clear ("all the Greeks" in the NKJ is not accurate), but Gallio pretends to not notice. This is one of those times, seemingly few and far between, when the bad guys get what is coming to them.

11. What did Paul say in his defense before Gallio?
12. How did Gallio consider the conflict between Paul and the Jews (Ac 18:15)?

Day 1: Overview

Paul is encouraged by Timothy and Silas' reports from Macedonia (Ac 18:5). However, not all is well at Thessalonica. The church there, though having flourished amid persecution, has some problems which need correction. Thus Paul sends this first of two epistles to them. Three basic themes are woven throughout the book: 1) the defense of Paul's apostolic integrity, 2) the joyful anticipation of the return of Christ, and 3) the challenge of living a pure and faithful life amidst idolatry. The epistle also contains various general notes and exhortations.

1. What theme ends each of the five chapters of First Thessalonians?

Day 2: The Elect Thessalonians (1 Th 1:1-4)

Paul includes his companions in saluting the Thessalonians and offering thanks for their response to the gospel. The apostle's mind is filled with thoughts of the Thessalonians and he rejoices in their "election by God." This is a common description of Christians (1 Pet 1:2; Rom 11:5-7; 2 Pet 1:10; Eph 1:4; etc.). It does not suggest God's arbitrary choice of certain individuals for salvation but rather His sovereign choices respecting the character and conditions upon which sinful people would be restored to fellowship with Him. In his second epistle Paul tells the Thessalonians that "*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***" (2 Th 2:13). He is thankful for their obedient response in the face of persecution.

2. What three things does Paul joyfully remember about the Thessalonians (1:3)?

Day 3: The Powerful Gospel (1 Th 1:5)

As we have already seen in our study of Galatians, Paul constantly defends himself as a bona fide apostle. He is often attacked as just another itinerant philosopher intent upon material gain. But Paul does everything humanly possible to rob the charge of substance, including his present refusal to take money from the Corinthians (Ac 18:3; 1 Cor 9:12, 15, 18; 2 Cor 11:8). Paul says the gospel had not come to them "naked" but was accompanied by power, the Holy Spirit and much assurance. They had experienced the life-changing force of the gospel; they saw the value of the truth against the bankrupt philosophies of men; futility and despair had been replaced by confident hope. They must remember their beginnings so that no one may defraud them by deceit.

3. What does Paul say the Thessalonians knew about him?

4. Based on the events at Thessalonica, who is likely behind the attack upon Paul?

Day 4: The Thessalonians' Widespread Influence (1 Th 1:6-8)

Paul mentions three steps in the Thessalonians' development: 1) they became **followers**, 2) they then became **examples**, and lastly 3) they became **beacons** of the word. Remember, this growth has taken place in a relatively short time. Luke does not specify how long Paul remained in Thessalonica nor how long he stayed at Berea and Athens afterward. It can be reasonably concluded that he did not long delay in writing the Thessalonians after hearing of their troubles from Timothy and Silas. Luke's account of these residencies is sketchy but none appear long-term. Rapid spiritual growth is possible when one is completely dedicated to the Lord.

5. What feature made Thessalonica an advantageous place in spreading the gospel (see Y3/Q4/W3/D1)?
6. Of whom did the Thessalonians become followers?
7. To whom did the Thessalonians become examples?
8. How does Paul illustrate the extent of Thessalonica's reputation of faith?

Day 5: From Idols to God (1 Th 1:9-10)

Paul continues to say that everyone in the region was abuzz over what had transpired in Thessalonica. Brethren were amazed to see the gospel's success in turning such dedicated idol worshipers to "*the living and true God.*" In summary of the Christian's life, Paul says the Thessalonians now "*wait for His Son from heaven ...*". The character of such a wait, however, has been misunderstood by some in Thessalonica. It is not an idle passing of time but industrious service unto the Lord in anticipation of His eventual return. Since it has not been revealed when this will occur, it is naive and foolish to cease the normal activities of life and become an unproductive burden upon others. Paul will address this further in both epistles to the Thessalonians.

9. Upon what basis are Christians assured that Jesus will come again?
10. From what does Jesus deliver His people when He returns?

Day 1: Boldness under Fire (1 Th 2:1-2)

Paul is seeking to confirm the faith of the Thessalonians both in him and the gospel. He uses the phrase “as you know” or a similar sentiment at least six times in the first twenty-one verses of the epistle (1:5; 2:1-2, 5, 9, 11). Lest persecution should cause the Thessalonians to reconsider their commitment, Paul reminds them that he had arrived in their city fresh from a humiliating experience in Philippi. If he had allowed suffering to stifle his boldness, where would the Thessalonians be? And further, what kind advantage had he gained in Philippi? Was he preaching for personal gain? All he got for his efforts there was beating and imprisonment.

1. Paul spoke _____ in much _____.

Day 2: Paul’s Impeccable Integrity (1 Th 2:3-6)

Paul states his case negatively in this passage; that is, he reminds the Thessalonians what did **not** characterize his work among them. His exhortation was not from deceit, uncleanness or guile. He did not try to gain favor by flattery, nor was he interested in personal glory or fame. He preached “*not as pleasing men, but God ...*”.

“Few temptations assail the preacher more strongly than this one to please men, even if God is not pleased, though with dim hope that God will after all condone or overlook. Nothing but experience will convince some preachers how fickle is popular favour and how often it is at the cost of failure to please God” (Robertson, **Word Pictures**, Vol. 4, p. 17).

2. How did Paul willingly limit himself (1 Th 2:6)?
3. What does God test? How should this affect us?

Day 3: Paul’s Affection for the Thessalonians (1 Th 2:7-12)

Now comes the positive argument: Paul reaffirms his love for and devotion to the Thessalonian brethren. He uses the figures of a nursing mother who tenderly cares for her child and a father who gives instruction and guidance to his children. Note the descriptive terms: gentle, affectionately longing, dear. Further, as a spiritual parent, Paul affirms his willingness to give his very life for them. Paul challenges the Thessalonians to judge him by the precept of Jesus: “*Beware of false prophets ... you will know them by their fruits*” (Mt 7:15-16). His deportment among them can withstand fair scrutiny.

4. Who are witnesses of Paul’s integrity (1 Th 2:5, 10)?

5. Into what does God call Christians?

6. Did Paul accept funds from the Thessalonians while working with them?

Day 4: The Word of God vs. the Word of Men (1 Th 2:13)

Paul is thankful that the Thessalonians were able to see through the superstitions, philosophies and general skepticism of the day and appreciate the gospel for what it truly is, “*the word of God.*” It is easy to get frustrated with the religious error of our day when it deceives people we are trying to teach or subverts the faith of weak Christians. But Paul had the same problem; his gospel competed with all sorts of evil influences determined to destroy it. And so long as the kingdom stands it will be this way.

7. What does the gospel do in believers?

8. What competition did the gospel have in Philippi? In Thessalonica? In Athens?

Day 5: The Persecution of the Thessalonians (1 Th 2:14-16)

In speaking of the persecution that befell the Thessalonians upon their conversion, Paul reflects upon the similar persecution of the Jews against the brethren in Judea in which he himself once took part. The continued Jewish persecution of the apostles is not merely concerned with the conversion of their countrymen to Christ but they are “*forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved ...*”. The Jews took great offense toward the claim that their Scriptures had been fulfilled in the person of Jesus and that He had been made King according to the covenant of David. The extension of the Messianic blessings rooted in Judaism to the defiled, non-covenant Gentiles was both an insult and a threat to the Jews. If the gospel was a false system concocted by men, then the Jews should have opposed it with all their might to protect the integrity of the Law. But if the gospel was from God, then the Jews were in rebellion and “*wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.*” Paul affirms this latter conclusion. Paul is thankful that the Thessalonians were able to see the truth and withstand the opposition to their faith.

9. How were the Thessalonians imitators of the churches in Judea?

10. List the indictments of Paul against the Jews.

11. How would you respond if someone accused Christianity of being “anti-Semitic”?

12. How had wrath come upon the Jews to the uttermost? What would be the most visible sign of this within the next twenty years?

Day 1: Paul: An Apostle for the People

Paul did not consider his enlistment in the Lord's service as a duty to be begrudgingly discharged. Rather, Paul was burdened with care over the welfare of those whom he converted and the distress brought upon them by their loyalty to the Lord. He later will mention that which "*comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches*" (2 Cor 11:28). Such personal concern has always been the mark of a true leader, and it is a side of Paul that can be easily overlooked in view of his sternness and forthrightness. Paul will speak at length in 1 Th 2:17-3:13 of his love and concern for the Thessalonians in the days after his departure.

1. How can being away from those we care about produce anxiety?

Day 2: Hindered by Satan (1 Th 2:17-20)

Note the general time reference in 1 Th 2:17: "... *having been taken away from you for a short time in presence ...*". This, coupled with the past tense mention of being in Athens (3:1), invites an almost certain conclusion that 1 Thessalonians was written from Corinth. Paul makes it clear that he did not leave Thessalonica or that he has failed to return because of disinterest in them. Instead, Paul says his great desire to visit with them has been thwarted by Satan. By this, Paul acknowledges that Satan is an active force in the world and that God allows his influence to affect earthly circumstances. Paul has confidence, however, that Satan's power cannot nullify God's will in the end. God always provides answers and solutions for His people if they will but search.

2. How does Paul express his desire to see the Thessalonians again (1 Th 2:17-18)?
3. What does Paul wish to see at the coming of the Lord?

Day 3: Timothy to the Thessalonians (1 Th 3:1-5)

Paul's anxiety over the Thessalonians is centered upon the afflictions that came upon both him and them as a result of the preaching of the gospel. Paul went from Thessalonica to Berea and on to Athens but was extremely troubled by what would befall the Thessalonians. "*Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy ...*" (3:1-2). The exact sequence of events is in some doubt. Timothy and Silas had been left in Berea (Ac 17:14), but Paul urged them to come as quickly as possible to Athens (Ac 17:15). Later, both Timothy and Silas come to Corinth from Macedonia (Ac 18:5). Did Timothy come to Athens only to be immediately sent back to Thessalonica? Or did Paul send word to Timothy in Berea to return to Thessalonica instead of coming down to Athens? Whatever the case, Paul thought it counter-productive for him to go back to Thessalonica personally and sent Timothy "*that no one*

should be shaken by these afflictions” (3:3). Again Paul speaks of the influence of Satan: *“I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you ...”* (3:5). Note the tremendous confidence Paul has in his young assistant Timothy. No one is capable of doing everything they wish to see accomplished. It is sometimes necessary to depend upon trustworthy people to help overcome our limitations.

4. What had Paul told the Thessalonians up front (1 Th 3:4)?
5. How is Timothy described? What did Paul want Timothy to do?
6. How is this passage helpful in proving “once saved, always saved” a false proposition?

Day 4: Timothy’s Good Report (1 Th 3:6-10)

Paul is greatly relieved to hear not only of the Thessalonians’ steadfast faith but also to know that they *“always have good remembrance”* of him. How worried he had been that in his absence their opinion of him would change and that their faith would wane. Consider the terms describing Paul’s relief: good news, comforted, thanks, joy, rejoice, etc. He ties his whole purpose of life to their continued faith: *“For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord”* (3:8).

7. For what specific reason did Paul wish to see the Thessalonians again (1 Th 3:10)?
8. List the phrases indicating that Paul’s mind was constantly filled with the welfare of the Thessalonian brethren (1:2-3; 2:13, 17; 3:1, 5, 10).

Day 5: Blameless at the Lord’s Coming (1 Th 3:11-13)

As badly as Paul wishes to visit the Thessalonians, he entrusts the entire situation to the will of God. Surely Paul would not have survived the rigors and responsibilities of apostolic work if he had depended solely upon his own resources. But he sees himself as an extension of the Lord and thus prays that God would *“direct our way to you”* (3:11). In the meantime, Paul also prays for the growth of the Thessalonians in love and holiness so that they may be prepared in the eventuality of the Lord’s return. Modern scholars read into Paul’s sentiments his belief that the second coming would soon occur. But Paul says nothing more than what we affirm today: the Lord **may** return at any moment and believers in **any** age must be prepared for that possibility. If we live a holy and blameless life it truly does not matter when the Lord returns, and we may pray freely for His arrival without fear. Note again that Paul ends every chapter with thoughts of Jesus’ return.

9. Who is working together to accomplish things in the kingdom through Paul?
10. What should love do within the heart of a Christian (1 Th 3:12)?

Day 1: Walking to Please God (1 Th 4:1-2)

The secret to a fruitful Christian life is the pursuit of steady growth. No matter our chronological age or years of citizenship in the kingdom, there are aspects of knowledge and behavior that always need reinforcement, renewal or repair. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to “abound more and more” in their walk. Paul again tries to reassure them by stressing what they knew by his teaching and presence with them (4:2; 3:3-4; see also 1:5; 2:1-2, 5, 9, 11).

1. How were the Thessalonians to “walk” in 1 Th 2:12? And in 1 Th 4:1?
2. What did Paul give the Thessalonians “through the Lord Jesus”?

Day 2: Controlling Passions (1 Th 4:3-5)

A difficult obstacle to faith among the Gentiles was God’s demand of sexual purity. The Gentiles were so conditioned to sexual liberty that it was difficult to bridle their passions and live with restraint. Paul reminds them, “*For this is the will of God, your sanctification ...*” (1 Th 4:3). In other words, “This is not merely **my** philosophy but the command and expectation of God Himself for your life.” Negatively, Paul says they should abstain from sexual immorality, unlawful sexual relations in any form. Positively, he commands that the married Thessalonians sanctify and honor their mates by remaining exclusively loyal to them (4:4). Wives were not mere property, sex slaves or baby-producers. They were equally valuable creatures of God and deserving of higher treatment than then generally afforded females. Detractors of Christianity will often suggest that it makes women second-class citizens, but they do not realize that it is paganism that undermines the worth of the woman.

3. Lustful passions rule what kinds of people?

Day 3: Consequences of Sexual Impurity (1 Th 4:6-8)

One of the natural consequences of uncontrolled sexual urges is the commission of adultery. Paul says it is more than a biological act but the defrauding of another (4:6). Adultery is a “package deal;” it is accompanied by a host of other sins. It is destructive to the adulterers, the wronged mates, the children involved; it is an embarrassment to extended families and acquaintances; it is a black-eye upon the Lord’s cause in the community. Yet in spite of the damage, the hurt and the humiliation wreaked by adultery, it continues to be practiced *even among Christians*. Part of the justification lies in “no one will find out.” But Paul says “*the Lord is the avenger of all such ...*” and God cannot be fooled. He forewarned the Thessalonians of this in the short time he was with them. Christians should have the sense to act according to this knowledge.

4. Those who reject these standards of moral purity reject whom?
5. How should this give Christians confidence in their teaching of these standards?

Day 4: Brotherly Love (1 Th 4:9-10)

Paul is confident both by his teaching and the Thessalonians' behavior that they understand and practice brotherly love, yet he encourages them to "*increase more and more.*" These admonitions to put forth effort (4:1, 10) suggest that the Thessalonians were perhaps a bit lazy or lackadaisical. Paul seems to be behind them pushing, urging and rallying them onward.

6. To whom had the Thessalonians particularly demonstrated brotherly love?

Day 5: A Calm, Productive Life (1 Th 4:11-12)

After praising them for their abounding love, Paul now gently mentions an area which needs work. Some among the Thessalonians were not properly attending to their own lives; they were overly zealous in critiquing others perhaps with a view to what they thought was the imminent return of Christ. A line is to be drawn between an active concern for the spiritual welfare of a brother or sister and improper meddling in affairs that are not our business. The former creates peace and harmony; the latter produces strife and discord. Paul's instruction: 1) "*aspire to lead a quiet life*" - do not be a source of agitation or irritation to others, 2) "*mind your own business*" - do not be preoccupied with the details of other people's lives, 3) "*work with your own hands*" - do not be idle and unproductive for this promotes undue curiosity about others.

Paul further exhorts the Thessalonians to give attention to their interaction with non-Christians. This was especially needful in a hostile environment like Thessalonica; unbelievers didn't need further incentives to oppose Christianity. Further, to be gainfully employed so as to enjoy financial independence is a worthy ambition. There is no virtue in being materially dependent upon others though this may occasionally happen due to circumstances beyond our control. Note that the goal is "*that you may lack nothing,*" not "*that you may have everything you want.*" Everything good and right within itself can be exaggerated into evil.

7. Discuss some guidelines which may help distinguish between meddling in the affairs of others and genuinely being concerned and helpful.
8. What does God expect men to do in order to have their material needs met?
9. What are some of the positive byproducts of gainful employment?
10. What suggests that these were problems which Paul had to address previously?

Day 1: Death Before Christ's Return (1 Th 4:13-18)

Paul spends a considerable amount of space at the end of this short epistle on Christ's future return. It is crucial to note that Paul does not intend to discuss the subject at length; rather, he addresses those issues of concern to the Thessalonians. Failure to understand this has generated many false ideas about the second coming of Jesus.

Paul gives a sequence of events which is designed to comfort Christians regarding their brethren who have died prior to the return of Christ. Will they somehow be at a disadvantage or excluded when Jesus comes? Paul, "*by the word of the Lord*" (1 Th 4:14), says "no": those living at Jesus' return "*will by no means precede those who are asleep*" (4:15).

- 1) Jesus will descend from heaven accompanied by those who "*sleep in Jesus.*" This descent will be heralded by a shout (or command), the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God. It will be a noisy affair and will arrest the attention of all living.
- 2) The dead "*in Christ*" will rise first.
- 3) The living will be taken up together with the resurrected dead "*in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*" Thus all the faithful shall ever dwell with the Lord.

1. Who sorrows over thoughts of death and the unknown future (1 Th 4:13)?
2. In what two ways are saved people described in this passage?
3. What should this knowledge provide for Christians (1 Th 4:18)?

Day 2: The Timing of the Return (1 Th 5:1-6)

Both the details and the timing of the Lord's return have long been matters of speculation and error. In spite of the assertion that the time cannot be determined or anticipated, men have continued to set dates and give false warnings. While Paul reaffirms that the precise time is unknown, he stresses something more important: *whenever* it happens, it need not catch men spiritually unprepared. Christians are enlightened by the word of God; they know that Jesus *might* return at any moment. They must be ready. The Thessalonians are troubled by what Paul says they "know perfectly." Somehow they have allowed themselves to be shaken on this point. Paul hopes to remove their doubts.

4. What two illustrations describe the suddenness and unexpectedness of Jesus' return?
5. At the moment when Jesus appears, what will some be saying?
6. As sons of light and day, what should Christians **not** do?

Day 3: Day-People (1 Th 5:7-11)

Paul continues the figure of “day” and “night” to describe believers and unbelievers. Sleep and drunkenness, states which epitomize lack of awareness, mostly occur at night. But Christians are “of the day” and are sober, adorned with the breastplate of faith and love and wearing the helmet of hope (1 Th 5:8). This is the second time faith, hope and love have been grouped by Paul (1 Th 1:3). Jesus died for us that death would have no effect upon our relationship with God (5:10). **Physical** death is not to be feared; it is of no consequence spiritually. It is **spiritual** death that will doom men, but Christians have been given the knowledge to avoid this fate.

7. Christians are not appointed unto what?

8. What is the ultimate goal of existence (1 Th 5:10)?

Day 4: Various Exhortations (1 Th 5:12-22)

These brief exhortations can be categorized as follows: 1) concerning others - 5:12-15; concerning self - 5:16-22. It may be adduced that the Thessalonian church had elders by Paul’s reference to those “*over you in the Lord*” (same as “rule” in 1 Tim 5:17). Elders are to be loved and respected for the service they render to the church. Conversely, the unruly are to be warned. Just treatment is to be afforded all. Each Christian should continue steadfastly in prayer and thanksgiving and work to develop a joyful spirit. The Holy Spirit should not be resisted but allowed to do His work through the gifts available in that day. The Thessalonians must not be naive but discerning and careful about all things. Evil must be recognized in every subtle form in which it appears and avoided.

9. What should be done to the fainthearted? The weak?

10. How does one pray “without ceasing?”

Day 5: Closing Admonitions (1 Th 5:23-28)

Paul again states his desire that the Thessalonians be sanctified and blameless until the coming of the Lord. Note again how often Paul speaks of the Lord’s return in this short epistle. It was fundamental to his teaching in Thessalonica. He further commands that the epistle be read to all, for it contains teaching and admonition that will foster knowledge, unity, purity and fruitful living. The epistle closes with the prayer of the Lord’s grace to rest upon them.

11. What does Paul request the Thessalonians do for him?

12. What does Paul want done with the epistle once it arrives in Thessalonica?

Day 1: Introduction (2 Th 1:1-2)

It is apparent from the second epistle to the Thessalonians that Paul's first letter did not effectively solve all the problems facing them. He addresses two main themes in this second volume: 1) the return of the Lord, and 2) the idleness of some brethren. Paul also indirectly affirms his apostolic authority by five exhortations to obey his commands in the letter. The epistle is apparently written before his departure from Corinth and his salutation includes his co-workers Timothy and Silas (or Silvanus, see 2 Cor 1:19).

1. In the NKJ version, how does Paul's salutation differ in 1 Th 1:1 and 2 Th 1:1-2?

Day 2: Worthy of the Kingdom (2 Th 1:3-5)

Paul continues his thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' ever-expanding faith and abounding love for each other. In spite of their faithfulness to God they are suffering persecution and tribulation from worldly opponents. The Thessalonians' patient endurance of their mistreatment results in two things: 1) Paul's boasting of them among the churches, and 2) God's favorable disposition toward them at the coming of Christ. The term "worthy" in 2 Th 1:5 does not mean "merited" in the sense of earning redemption. That was provided by God's grace. But God's creatures are obviously beings of value and their faithful response to Him makes them dearer objects of His pride and pleasure. Citizenship in the kingdom is reserved for those willing to suffer for the King.

2. Why do you think Paul boasted of the Thessalonians to other churches?

3. What qualities made the Thessalonians worthy of the kingdom?

Day 3: Rest and Retribution (2 Th 1:6-8)

Paul wishes to reassure the Thessalonians that the suffering which they endure for Christ will eventually be addressed at His return. "*It is a righteous thing ...*": 1) for God to afflict those who persecute His people, and 2) to give rest to those who have suffered. This two-edged judgment will take place when "*the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven ...*". The term "revealed" (*apokalupsis*) means an uncovering or unveiling. Though currently a real and active Being, Jesus cannot be seen in heaven with the naked eye. But the NT writers clearly posit a literal, visible return of the Lord for the purpose of judgment. Paul elaborates on those who will be subject to the wrath of Jesus: 1) those who do not know God, and 2) those who do not obey the gospel of Christ. The Scriptures afford no comfort or hope to those who die in ignorance or apathy regardless of how morally upstanding they may be. **All** men and women need redemption from sin, and the only source of that redemption is Christ. God has sufficiently manifested Himself in both word and deed to be found by those attuned to Him. There are no valid excuses for unbelief.

4. Who will accompany Jesus upon His return?
5. With whom will the Thessalonians receive rest at the Lord's return?
6. How does Paul characterize the judgment? Is God unfair or unjust to condemn?

Day 4: The Adored Christ (2 Th 1:9-10)

Paul continues to elaborate upon the fate of the wicked: they will be banished forever from the presence of the Lord. Because of their rejection of Him, they will never again witness the "*glory of His power*." The term "everlasting destruction" is not annihilation or nonexistence but the perpetual ruin of well-being which is the natural result of being separated from God, the source of all goodness and love. Those who believe, however, will receive the Lord in greatest admiration as the Savior of their souls and the giver of eternal life.

7. Who will reflect upon Christ to His glory at His coming?
8. What makes Paul confident that the Thessalonians will be blessed at Jesus' return?

Day 5: Worthy of the Calling (2 Th 1:11-12)

While Paul is confident of the faith of the Thessalonians, he does not take their salvation for granted or assume it is irrevocable. Otherwise he would not have been so anxious over their spiritual welfare (1 Th 3:1-5). He again tells the Thessalonians that they are subjects of his constant prayer, specifically that God would bless their every endeavor of goodness and faith unto the glory of Christ. Note that God expects His people to remain faithful and fruitful in the face of suffering, looking past it to the glory and joy of the Lord's return.

9. How are Jesus and His people mutually glorified in each other (2 Th 1:12)?
10. Describe the return of Jesus from 1 Th 4 and 2 Th 1. What will be seen and heard as He appears?

Day 1: The Falling Away (2 Th 2:1-5)

[Note: Paul's prophecy of events preceding the coming of Christ presents extreme difficulty. M.R. Vincent, a Greek scholar and author of several volumes of NT word studies, admits, "I attempt no interpretation of this passage as a whole, which I do not understand. The varieties of exposition are bewildering" (**Word Studies**, Vol. 4, p. 67). A.T. Robertson is equally uncertain: "... the whole subject is left by Paul in such vague form that we can hardly hope to clear it up. It is possible that his own preaching while with them gave his readers a clue that we do not possess" (**Word Pictures**, Vol. 4, p. 51). The primary difficulty lies not in grammar or definitions but in *application*. *Who* is the "man of sin"? *What* is the restraining force? *How* will the son of perdition be revealed? The student is invited to make his own applications of the text.]

After discussing in the first chapter the nature of Jesus' appearance from heaven, Paul now turns to the Thessalonians' misunderstanding concerning the time of His return. Some were erroneously attributing to Paul the idea that the second coming was imminent (2 Th 2:2). This was agitating the church and producing such anxiety that some had ceased working (see ch 3). Paul's express purpose is to correct these ideas by reviewing some events which will occur before Jesus comes again.

Paul says "the falling away comes first" (*apostasis*, apostasy). Key to this apostasy is "the man of sin" (or lawlessness) who is also called "the son of perdition" (or destruction) (2:3). This one provokes an apostasy not of atheism but of religious corruption as he takes the privileges and prerogatives of God upon himself (2:4). The difficulty of application is whether this prophecy refers to a singular individual, a succession of individuals or an entire movement personified. From our vantage point today, there does not appear to be one clearly obvious entity which fits the profile. This is evidenced by a perusal of commentaries in which the man of sin is variously identified as the Jewish nation, Simon Magus (Acts 8), Caius Caesar, Caligula, the Catholic Papacy, Protestantism, the little horn of Daniel 7, Mohammed, the Antichrist (1 Jn 2:18), the sea-beast of Revelation 13, etc., etc. *ad nauseam*. Paul chides the Thessalonians: "*Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?*" (2:5). Paul seems to suggest that the Thessalonians should be able to clearly recognize this person or principle of apostasy when revealed. If he is speaking of circumstances to unfold in their own lifetime, then he possibly refers to the events of John's Revelation where the church and the Roman Empire would eventually meet in a great battle of ideology. If he is speaking of events that have not yet transpired, then the man of sin has not been clearly revealed.

1. What must happen before Jesus' return could possibly occur?
2. How were the Thessalonians affected by the idea that Jesus' coming was near?
3. Describe the man of sin (2 Th 2:4).

Day 2: Revealing the Lawless One (2 Th 2:6-8)

Paul indicates that a future revealing of the lawless one will occur *“in his own time.”* “Revealed” is the same word as Jesus’ revealing from heaven (2 Th 1:7). It is *apokalupsis*, an uncovering, of which Vine says, “The objective use is that in which something is presented to the senses, sight or hearing ...” (Vol. 3, p. 292). This manifestation of the man of sin is presently being restrained by a force or person(s), seemingly divine in origin, which will eventually be removed thus allowing the lawless one to be fully manifest.

Though the man of sin is restrained at the time of Paul’s writing, he says *“the mystery of lawlessness is already at work”* (2 Th 2:7). This sounds similar to some other warnings in the NT: *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith ...”* (1 Tim 4:1ff); *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come ...”* (2 Tim 3:1ff); *“... it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist (“that antichrist” - KJV; ASV) is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour ...”* (1 Jn 2:18ff). Whatever or whoever the man of sin is, the principle of rebellion against God is already active.

A proper understanding of 2 Th 2:8 is crucial to one’s interpretation of this passage. Paul assures the Thessalonians that after the revealing of the lawless one Jesus will destroy him *“with the brightness of His coming.”* Contextually, this “coming” (*parousia*) sounds like the “second coming” since this has been the subject of discussion (2 Th 1:10; 2:1). If so, then the lawless one will be fully manifest at the end of the Christian dispensation to be defeated by the Lord. But the term “come” also carries the connotation of Jesus’ judgment and punishment of someone *before* the final judgment. Matthew 24:29-31 portrays Christ *“coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory ...”*. In that context, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is under consideration. In John’s Revelation Jesus is pictured as coming in triumph against Rome, the beast intent upon annihilating the church: *“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations”* (Rev 19:15). If this latter view of 2 Th 2:8 is taken, then the unloosing of the man of sin, his revelation and consequent defeat by the Lord could have already been fulfilled.

4. What was keeping the man of sin from being fully manifest?
5. What power was already at work when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians?
6. With what would the Lord consume the lawless one?

Day 3: Strong Delusion (2 Th 2:9-12)

Further description of the lawless one is here given by Paul. He (or it) is a product of Satan who employs “unrighteous deception” to lead people down the path of destruction. Such people perish *“because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved”* (2 Th 2:10). This willful rebellion toward God causes Him to *“send them strong*

delusion, that they should believe the lie” (2 Th 2:11). The presents a frightening truth about God that some find hard to accept: God will withdraw from those intent on wickedness and will provide the means for deepened depravity. Paul will later elaborate on this treatment of the Gentiles (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), and the OT describes this principle in action at the death of Ahab (2 Chr 18:18-22). God does not take lightly deliberate rebellion against His word.

7. In what do these rebellious people take pleasure?

8. What does Satan use to deceive men (2 Th 2:9)? Can you think of modern examples?

9. What is the power of salvation?

Day 4: True Election (2 Th 2:13-14)

Paul now turns his attention back to the Thessalonians and their spiritual standing. He *again* expresses his thanksgiving for them, for their selection by God unto salvation is an outgrowth of His plan or scheme “*from the beginning.*” But what is it which God had chosen from the beginning? Was it *individuals* to be arbitrarily assigned to salvation and damnation? So says the doctrine of predestination. But it is a *method* of choosing about which Paul speaks; God chose them **through**: 1) sanctification by the Spirit, 2) belief in the truth (which was *willfully* rejected by those in 2:10-12) and, 3) calling by gospel. What God predetermined was that men would be saved through free response to the gospel of His Son and transformation by the Spirit into His image. The arbitrary election and rejection of individual men and women is a monstrous doctrine of demons.

10. Who is to be condemned (2 Th 2:12)? Who is to be saved (2 Th 2:13)?

11. What does salvation result in (2 Th 2:14)?

Day 5: Hold the Traditions (2 Th 2:15-17)

In view of the unrest caused by false ideas of Christ’s return and the fundamental importance of truth unto salvation, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to “*stand fast and hold the traditions ...*” (2 Th 2:15). He does not say “hold to traditionalism” but what they had received “*by word or our epistle.*” “Traditions” is *paradosis* and simply refers to what is handed down to another regardless of source. But the source here is apostolic teaching. This is the same source of salvation today. Paul closes this section with a prayer for God’s blessings to be upon the Thessalonians.

12. What has God given to us by grace (2 Th 2:16)?

13. In what does Paul pray the Thessalonians would be established?

Day 1: Mutual Blessings (2 Th 3:1-5)

Paul is not merely a source of blessing to others but welcomes blessings offered to him by others. He frequently solicits prayer on his behalf as he does in 2 Th 3:1-2. He desires that the gospel have “free course,” that it spread rapidly throughout the whole Empire. While not all men have faith (3:2b), “*the Lord is faithful*” (3:3a). Paul is confident that God will strengthen the Thessalonians against the evil one and will encourage them to do what he has commanded (3:3b-4). We can take a very valuable lesson from Paul’s mention of deity in his epistles: his vocabulary overflows with references to his dependence upon God and his awareness of God’s help in the lives of His people.

1. From whom does Paul desire to be delivered?
2. How does Paul wish the Thessalonians’ hearts to be directed?

Day 2: Withdrawal from the Disorderly (2 Th 3:6-10)

As noted in the Introduction, Paul stresses the need to obey his commands at the conclusion of the epistle. This passage begins and ends with commands concerning those who refuse to seek gainful employment. The term “disorderly” (*ataktos*) “signifies not keeping order ... it was especially a military term, denoting not keeping rank, insubordinate” (Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, Vol. 1, p. 320). The specific manifestation of such disorder was idleness leading to meddlesome activity (3:11). Paul’s command: “*withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly ...*” (3:6). “Withdraw” (*stello*) originally meant to bring together or gather up as in the furling of sails. In the context of fellowship, the brethren are to shrink from or retract association from the disorderly. This is the first time chronologically that Paul mentions such action though Jesus introduces it in Mt 18:17. Clearly the local church is invested with corrective and punitive power in the matter of fellowship. It is not a loose, “revolving door” association where members set their own terms of association and are unanswerable to the community.

3. How did Paul set an example of proper conduct in Thessalonica?
4. A man’s right to eat is connected to what action?
5. Paul gave up his right of support to be what to the Thessalonians?

Day 3: Admonition of a Brother (2 Th 3:11-15)

Paul now amplifies his instructions. He gives two commands to the idle: 1) work in quietness, and 2) support themselves. “Quietness” is not verbal silence but tranquil, harmonious, not given to agitation and disruption. To the church he says, 1) do not tire of

doing good, 2) identify the disobedient and do not keep company with them, and 3) do not treat them as an enemy but admonish as a brother. This is a necessary but unpleasant process which is designed to bring shame (3:14b). Neglecting such discipline or softening it until it has no bite is itself disorderly and not according to the tradition of the apostles.

6. In this context, why did Paul admonish the faithful not to grow weary in service?
7. T/F The command in an epistle is just as valid as a command personally delivered.
8. In the exercise of congregational discipline, what actions can help the disorderly know they are not our enemy?

Day 4: Closing Remarks (2 Th 3:16-18)

Paul's habit was to dictate his epistles for reasons he does not divulge. But to establish authenticity he would hand sign each at the end. This, along with writing style, personal familiarity and in some cases the spiritual gift of discernment would help brethren avoid forgeries.

9. What blessings from the Lord does Paul hope for the Thessalonians?

Day 5: Paul's Return to Antioch

Sometime after the writing of 2 Thessalonians, Paul departs from Corinth and sets sail for Jerusalem (Ac 18:18-22). Priscilla and Aquila accompany him as far as Ephesus and remain in residence there while Paul continues his travel. He vows to return again to Ephesus "*God willing*" (Ac 18:21). Paul was ever conscious that he was the instrument of the Lord and thus subordinated his purposes and desires to the will of Christ. Luke condenses the remainder of Paul's trip to landfall in Caesarea, a visit to Jerusalem and his trek northward to Antioch. Thus ends the second preaching tour of the great apostle.

10. Where is Cenchrea? What did Paul do to himself in this city?
11. What did Paul do in Ephesus? What was the reaction?
12. Why was Paul interested to go to Jerusalem?