

The First Letter to the Saints at Thessalonica—Part 2

Southside church of Christ, Huntsville

Reading Assignment—I Thessalonians 4-5

Introduction

Beginning in chapter 4 Paul describes some principles that should guide Christian behavior. After a relatively lengthy discussion of sexual purity, he discusses behavior toward brethren and those not in the brotherhood. Toward the brethren, our desire should be to increase in love. This passage is similar to previous passages where we have noticed Paul's emphasis on loving the brethren. No matter who Paul is writing to, he always includes an admonition to love the brethren. He commends the Thessalonians for being very loving, but this matter is so important that he instructs them to continue growing in this. We should never think that we have obtained perfect love, but we must continue to grow in love. No matter what other good works we do, they are all worthless if we lack love. Concerning those without, we must walk in a way that is honorable and not worthy of reproach. To accomplish this we must live in peace and work diligently.

Paul changes topics slightly to discuss what will happen when Christ comes again. Only a few passages in the New Testament touch on this topic. In this reading Paul is attempting to clear up a misconception about what will happen to Christians who have already died. It seems that many were afraid that those who have died will miss out on joining Christ in heaven. However, Paul makes it clear that, even though some sleep physically, the dead are still very much alive spiritually. In fact, the dead will rise to meet Christ first. Afterward, those who are alive will rise to meet them in the clouds.

The Thessalonians may have been troubled by the fact that the second coming had not occurred yet. Or, perhaps they were looking for some sign. However, Paul tells them that there will be no warning before Christ comes again. Instead, Christ will come suddenly and when he is least expected. In fact, his coming will likely be at an inconvenient time for many. Therefore, we must always be ready. We must live our lives as if he were already on the way because he will be coming soon. We should not fear the day he comes again because he has promised salvation. He died for us to ensure we can have the hope of living with him in glory.

Paul closes the book with many practical behaviors for the Christian. Prayer and thankfulness are important themes. Paul also instructs us to pay attention to the truth. Each one of these short verses is a bite-sized behavior that we can both focus on and develop in our every day lives.

Instructions

While reading chapters 4 and 5, be sure to identify the major and minor themes as well as the major arguments used to support the themes.

Chapter 4

Major Theme:

Major Argument:

Minor Themes:

Chapter 5

Major Theme:

Major Argument:

Minor Themes:

Questions

1. How were the Thessalonians defrauding each other? (I Th. 4:6)
2. Describe what will happen the moment Jesus comes again.
3. How will the Thessalonians be able to “walk honestly toward them that are without?”
4. Find a passage that is parallel with I Thessalonians 5:21.
5. When should we give thanks? (I Th. 5:18)

6. What does Paul say about retaliation? (I Th. 5:15)

7. Notice and list some of the instructions in I Thessalonians 5:12-13. Be ready to discuss the implications of these verses.

8. What is the promise to believers? (I Th. 5:9-11)

True or False—Be sure to provide scripture for your answer.

T or F—The Thessalonians loved so much that more love was not needed.

T or F—Paul encourages the Thessalonians to stir things up in their community.

T or F—Christians should not be in hopeless sorrow.

T or F—When Christ returns people will get the chance to make themselves right with God.

T or F—Christ's delay in coming will keep some from the resurrection.

Thought Questions

1. Do a word study for I Thessalonians 4:4. What is Paul writing about?

2. What is the admonition in I Thessalonians 5:4-8?

3. Considering I Thessalonians 4:1-2, what is the importance of the inspired teachings?