

- Last week we started our study of Paul's second missionary trip. We started by reviewing the very end of chapter 15 to understand who went with him on this trip. We also talked about some of the things that occurred in the beginning of Paul's trip, including some time he spent in prison, some notable conversions, and some famous preaching.
- Today we will look at the first letter he wrote on his second missionary trip, the letter the church at Thessalonica, which we know as I Thessalonians. He loves the people at this church, and will later write them another letter. Paul writes this letter after receiving a report from Timothy that the people in the church there had not only been faithful in the face of persecution, they had flourished. Paul encourages them, prays for them, and urges them to keep improving.
- After greeting them warmly, Paul notes that in living among them they started imitating him even as he was imitating the Lord. (I Thessalonians 1:1-7)
- Paul notes that their faith is so famous, that the churches in the region have heard of them and grown because of them. (I Thessalonians 1:8-10)
- Paul notes that they worked and served diligently among them and that they were converted to God even as people around them opposed them. (I Thessalonians 2:1-16)
- Paul says that they really want to visit the Thessalonians but have been prevented so far by the persecution they have faced. (I Thessalonians 2:17-20)
- Paul notes that he is curious to know how they are faring since he was afraid that all the good work they did was being wasted. He sent Timothy to find out about how they are doing. (I Thessalonians 3:1-6)
- Timothy comes back with good news for Paul. He says the church is thriving and powerful there. (I Thessalonians 3:6-9)
- Paul says he will continue to pray for them day and night. (I Thessalonians 3:10-13)
- Paul advised them to conduct themselves in contrast to the way the non-believers are living. Especially when it comes to sex, Paul advises them to be restrained and holy. (I Thessalonians 4:1-8)
- Paul urges them to conduct themselves well by 1. loving people 2. minding their own business and 3. working so they aren't a burden to people. (I Thessalonians 4:9-12)
- Paul addresses the second coming of Christ. There are those who thought Christ would come again soon and were worried about the people who had already died. Paul assures them that the dead will be resurrected first and that those believers who are alive will join with them in meeting Christ in the sky. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- We sing a song called "I Know Whom I Have Believed" that contains a line that states we don't know if we "...will walk the vale with Him or meet Him in the air..." This line is a reference to the fact that we do not know whether we will die and be resurrected (walk the "vale") or if we will be alive when Christ returns.
- Paul says we just don't know which one will happen. He says no one knows when Christ will return. He uses an analogy and says it will come like a "thief in the night" that no one can predict. He says that regardless we should always live in such a way that proves we believe it could happen at any time. (I Thessalonians 5:1-11)

- Peter would later write about the same thing, reminding his readers that God does not perceive time the way we do, so when we sometimes think of the Lord taking a long time to return, He does not necessarily see that way. Peter says God wants to make sure that people have as long as possible to become believers also. He even uses the same thief metaphor. (II Peter 3:8-10)
- Before closing the book, Paul gives some rapid-fire advice. He reminds them to: 1. respect those who work and serve among them, especially those who lead the church; 2. be at peace together; 3. tell the lazy not to be that way; 4. encourage the fainthearted 5. help the weak; 6. be patient (especially toward the people in 3-5); 7. pray constantly; 8. give thanks always; 9. do not stop the spirit; 10. do not stop prophecies; 11. test everything and hold to that which is good; 12. don't do anything bad. (I Thessalonians 5:12-28).

Questions:

1. How does Paul talk about a chain of imitation?
2. What does Paul say the effect of the Thessalonians faith has been?
3. How does Paul describe his work among the Thessalonians and the result?
4. What does Paul say has prevented them from visiting the Thessalonians again?
5. Who does Paul send to see how the church at Thessalonica is doing?
6. What does the person Paul sent to visit the church at Thessalonica come back and tell Paul?
7. How often does Paul say he will pray for the church at Thessalonica?
8. What does Paul tell the church at Thessalonica about sex?
9. After his discussion about sex, what three things does Paul tell them to do?
10. What does Paul say about those who have died believing in Christ?
11. What does Paul say will happen to those who are alive when Christ returns?
12. What analogy does Paul use to say that no one knows when Christ will come again?
13. How does Paul say we are to live considering the second coming of Christ?
14. Name a few of things Paul advises the church at Thessalonica to do.