

PREPARING FOR THE COMING KING

1 THESSALONIANS



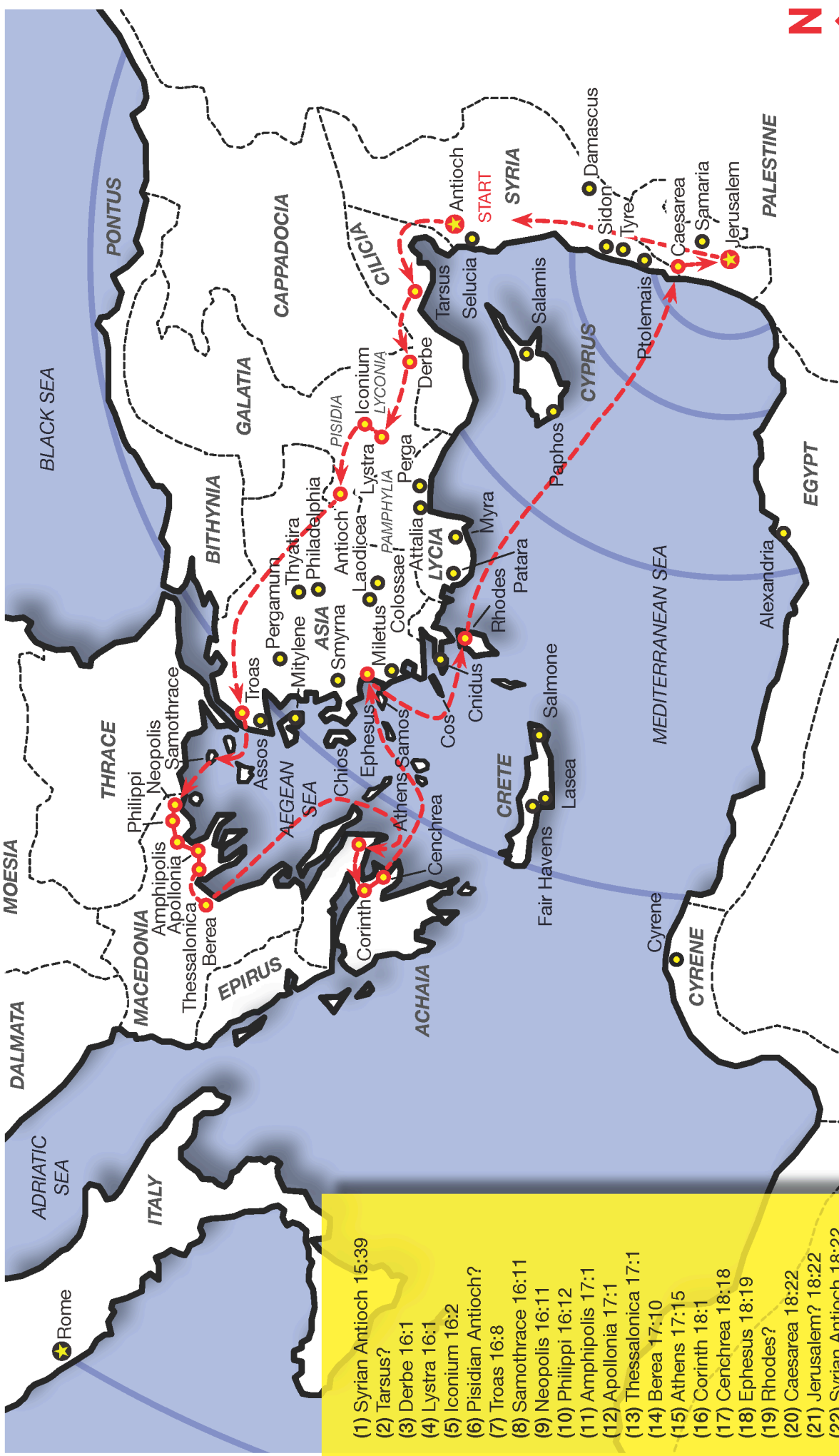
TEACHING SERIES | TERM 4, 2020

18 October	Engadine Heathcote Anglican Vision Week
25 October	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
1 November	1 Thessalonians 2:1-12
8 November	1 Thessalonians 2:13 – 3:13
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PAUL'S SECOND MISSION ACTS 15:39 - 18:22 AD 49-52

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- (1) Syrian Antioch 15:39
- (2) Tarsus?
- (3) Derbe 16:1
- (4) Lystra 16:1
- (5) Iconium 16:2
- (6) Pisidian Antioch?
- (7) Troas 16:8
- (8) Samothrace 16:11
- (9) Neopolis 16:11
- (10) Philippi 16:12
- (11) Amphipolis 17:1
- (12) Apollonia 17:1
- (13) Thessalonica 17:1
- (14) Berea 17:10
- (15) Athens 17:15
- (16) Corinth 18:1
- (17) Cenchrea 18:18
- (18) Ephesus 18:19
- (19) Rhodes?
- (20) Caesarea 18:22
- (21) Jerusalem? 18:22
- (22) Syrian Antioch 18:22

STUDY 1

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 *Transformed by God*

1. What do you think are the marks a healthy church?

READ ACTS 17:1-15

2. What do these verses tell us about the church in Thessalonica?

The church was established by Paul, Silas + Timothy. There was great persecution against Paul, Silas + Timothy, as well as some of the new converts. The reference to 3 sabbaths might mean he was only in Thessalonica for 3 weeks. Though it is possible he stayed longer, after being removed from the synagogue. Regardless, Paul was driven from the city not long after arriving. He would be unable to care for these new converts.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

3. According to v. 2, what does Paul say that he, Silas and Timothy do?

They always: thank God for the Thessalonians AND mention the Thessalonians in their prayers.

4. In vv. 3-10 Paul expands on why they do this. We'll work through these all these verses before returning to the question of 'why?'

- a. How does Paul begin to describe the Thessalonian church in v. 3?

Begin with comprehension, then think a bit further:

- i. What do you think v. 3 teaches us about work, labour and endurance?

These are the things that will be produced when we put our faith in Jesus, love Jesus, and put our hope in Jesus.

Note: as faith and hope are both in Jesus, it would seem that Paul means love to be a love of Jesus – i.e. 'your labour prompted by a love of Christ'.

Faith = trust. When we trust Jesus, we will live differently - work.

Love = when we love Christ, we will labour for him.

Hope = when we know what is to come, we will endure in Christ.

Follow up question: How do we grow in works, labour and endurance?

Grow in faith, love, hope.

b. In v. 4, Paul says 'we know ... that God has chosen you'. Examine the following verses and discuss what evidence Paul provides for this claim.

i. v. 5a

When Paul preached the gospel it was powerful. They didn't just hear words, but were deeply convicted of the gospel by the work of the Holy Spirit.

ii. vv. 5b-6

a) Convicted of the gospel, they began to follow the example of Paul's life, which was itself modelled on the Lord. b) The example they followed was welcoming the gospel in the midst of severe suffering, receiving it with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

iii. vv. 7-10

a) The Thessalonian's faith (their Christ like imitation) became a model for others. Through their lives, the gospel message 'rang out' to the surrounding regions (see map). b) The model they displayed = they turned to God from idols > to serve the living and true God > and to wait for Jesus to return.

5. Having looked at vv. 3-10, why do you think Paul, Silas and Timothy in v. 2 ...

a. "thank **God**" for the Thessalonian church?

*Because as we see in v. 4-10, it was **God** who saved them.*

b. "continually mention" the Thessalonian church in their prayers?

*Because as we see in v. 4-10, it was **God** who was transforming them by the work of the Holy Spirit.*

6. Overall, how would you describe the church in Thessalonica? How might this impact the way we understand the rest of the letter, or what we expect to come?

By the grace of God, they seem to be going really well! They are under pressure (persecution) yet they are strong in Christ. It seems that Paul's letter then will be one of encouragement and warmth (not rebuke).

7. From this passage, what would you say are the marks of a healthy church?

Because they are deeply convicted of the gospel, the Thessalonians trust, love and hope in Christ. This has produced work, labour, and endurance – or in the words of vv. 9-10: they serve the living and true God as they wait for Jesus to return. They have become an example for others to imitate.

8. How does this passage help us understand where the imitation of Christ begins? (v. 6)

It's not about just doing better. It comes from being deeply convicted of the gospel. That is what will produce faith, love and hope in Christ. We need to pray for this, like Paul does for the Thessalonians, because deep conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit.

9. Do you think our growing in understanding the gospel matters? Why?

As we grow in our understanding, we will grow as servants of God. Our faith in Christ will transform our works. Our love of Christ will see us labour in love for others – building up and reaching out. Our hope in Christ will see us endure, even under severe persecution.

And as we do this, as we become more like Christ, we become a model for others to follow. Causing the Lord's message to 'ring out' from Engadine-Heathcote, as we wait for Jesus to return. He is ultimately the one who can rescue people from the coming wrath.

STUDY 2

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 *Authentic Gospel Ministry*

1. What do you think are the marks of healthy Christian leadership?

RE-READ ACTS 17:1-4

2. How long did Paul spend in Thessalonica?

3 Sabbaths = 3 weeks. It is possible he remained longer, after speaking in the synagogue. But given how quickly the Jews ran them out of town, it seems unlikely it could have been much longer.

In 1 Thess. 2:1-12, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his ministry during his time with them. This is how he proclaimed the gospel and established the church in Thessalonica.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

3. In vv. 1-2, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of when he, Silas and Timothy, told them the gospel. What was significant about this?

Had been persecuted – outrageously – in Philippi (Acts 16). Then in Thessalonica (Acts 17) they continued to face strong opposition. Yet they ‘dared to tell you his gospel’.

4. How and why did they do this? (vv. 2-4)

‘with the help of God’. Helpful to connect back to last week. It was the power of the Holy Spirit that God helped with. The did it because they trusted God was at work.

Because they had been entrusted with the gospel and were seeking to please God.

5. List the motives and tricks that were *not* found in Paul’s gospel proclamation (vv. 3-6)

6. In vv. 7-12, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that it was not just the gospel they shared. What else did they do? List out the different ways they did this, and discuss why they might have done this. (c.f. 1 Thess. 1:6)

They shared their lives.

Like young children – the idea of innocence. The opposite of the impure motives of v.3-6. Like a nursing mother – caring for her children. Nurturing, feeding, tenderness, love.

Like a father – encouraging, comforting, urging, to live lives worthy of God.

They worked hard in secular work, so as not to be a stumbling block to sharing the gospel. In this case, it meant he made sure he did not need to ask them for money or food. The point is not that no one should not be freed up from secular work for full time ministry – see what Paul says in 1 Thess. 5:12-13, 1 Tim. 5:17-18, for example.

They were holy, righteous, blameless - there is no doubt a connection here with the idea of model/imitation in 1 Thess. 1:6.

7. In these verses, Paul is reminding the Thessalonians of his ministry among them, as he proclaimed the gospel and established the church. Why do you think he is reminding them of this? (c.f. 1 Thess. 2:17-20)

It's unlikely that it was because others were discrediting Paul's ministry – there is no mention of this anywhere in his letter. That is, Paul is not defending his ministry.

Rather, as we saw in chapter 1, Paul is writing to a young church that is going well, but under pressure. And he wants them to remember his affection for them. Because ministry is more than telling the gospel, it is sharing life, and Paul could only do this for a very short time. Now unable to be with them, Paul wants to remind them of his life.

8. We are not Apostles, like Paul was. But neither were Silas and Timothy. And like Silas and Timothy, we too have been entrusted with the proclamation of the gospel – Matt 28:18-20.

What are some ways that these verses help us consider how we might “Build Up and Reach Out for the Glory of Christ”?

9. In what ways do you see these verses helping us have healthy expectations of those who lead us in Christ?

Proclamation and sharing life in such a way that it leads to people living lives worthy of the gospel (v. 11). A good leader is not one that pleases you, but one who seeks to please God by proclaiming and modelling Christ to you.

10. How do these verses contribute to our thinking about “physical” and “online” church?

It's hard to share life with others online! It hampers your ability to Build Up and Reach Out. It also disconnects you somewhat from those who are responsible for leading you, limiting how they are able to lead you.

*We long to live in relationship with our church family in the best ways possible. e.g. Paul wrote a letter. Us – met online when necessary. **But best is to meet in person!***

STUDY 3

1 Thessalonians 2:13 – 3:13

God's Word At Work In You

1. What did/do you miss the most when, because of Covid-19, we were/are unable to physically gather on Sunday's or in our Growth Groups?

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13–3:13

1 Thess. 2:13-16

2. According to v. 13, why does Paul give thanks?

Because a) they received and accepted the word of God as the word of God; b) the word of God is now at work in the Thessalonians.

3. What evidence does Paul give for this? (v. 14-15)

Their standing firm in the face of severe persecution.

4. Why is Paul so negative about “the Jews” in vv. 14-16? Is he talking about all Jews? (c.f. Acts 17:1-4)

They are doing all they can to stop Paul, Silas and Timothy from preaching the gospel (“speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved”). That is, they are trying to silence the word of God, preventing people from being saved.

“The wrath of God has come ...” – most likely Paul uses the past tense as a way of speaking about the certainty that God's judgment will come upon them. It was already decided at the cross, it is not in doubt, what will happen to those who continue to oppose the gospel.

5. Why is it so important that we recognise the “word of God” for what it really is?

It is through His word that God works to bring salvation and growth.

1 Thess. 2:17-20

6. Why is Paul so eager to see the Thessalonians face-to-face? What do you find surprising about this?

No doubt it is because he is worried how they are going in the midst of persecution. But v. 19-20 are the key. Paul's repeated attempts to return to Thessalonica were not motivated by any sense of obligation but out of affectionate and the belief that these believers were his "hope and joy and crown in which we will glory" at the coming of Christ.

Perhaps surprising is that Paul's hope, joy and crown on the final day is not Christ, but the Thessalonians!

Hope – they are the proof Paul can present to Jesus of his faithful service.

Joy – the delight of presenting the Thessalonians to Christ.

Crown – not the crown of a king, but the victory wreath of ancient athletics. The victory of the faithful Thessalonians that God achieved through Paul's work.

7. What do these verses teach us about the importance and purpose of our relationships with each other?

Our relationships ought to have an eternal purpose. We are not friends for the sake of being friends. But brothers and sisters helping each other wait for the return of Jesus. We are eternally family – 'forever friends'.

1 Thess. 3:1-10

8. Unable to see the Thessalonians face-to-face, Paul sent Timothy instead. Why Timothy? And for what purpose? (vv. 1-5)

Timothy was someone they knew and trusted. He was sent to find out the news.

But most important is the way Paul describes Timothy and his purpose in v. 2: "... co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith".

Paul's solution to his fear of the Thessalonians giving up because of persecution, was to send someone who would minister to them with the word of God. This is what Paul trusted would help the Thessalonians stand firm as they waited for Christ to return.

9. What news did Timothy bring back to Paul? What does Paul still hope for? (vv. 6-10)

The news is good! They are "standing firm in the Lord". God's word is still at work in them. But Paul still longs to see them, so that he can: "supply what is lacking in your faith". That is, he wants to continue teaching them the word of God! To help them

further grow and be better equipped to stand firm as they prepare for Christ to return.

1 Thess. 3:11-13

10. Here Paul prays for the Thessalonians. What does he pray for?

v. 11: *To come to Thessalonica (to teach them more).*

v. 12: *That their love increase and overflow, for each other and everyone.*

v. 13: *Strengthen hearts so that they will be blameless and holy in the presence of God when Jesus returns. Important to note this is not about sinless perfection. But **hearts** being strengthened (i.e. 1:3 – faith in Christ, love of Christ, hope in Christ), it's Christ who makes people blameless and holy in the presence of God.*

11. As God answers Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians, in what way would you expect him to do so?

Through His word, that is already at work in them.

12. As a group discuss together how 1 Thess. 2:13 – 3:13 challenges the way we think about the purpose and shape of our relationships with each other.

13. What is one thing that this passage will change about how you ...

a. relate to others in your Growth Group

b. walk into church on a Sunday

STUDY 4

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 *God's Will, Your Sanctification*

1. As a follower of Jesus, when do you find yourself living differently from those who don't?

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

2. According to v. 1, what has Paul instructed the Thessalonians to do in the past? How are they going with this?

Instructed to live in such a way as to please God. They are going well!

3. What does Paul urge them to do now? What does this teach us about the Christian life?

To do so more and more! The Christian life is one of transforming and growing to live in ways evermore pleasing to God.

4. In v. 3, Paul repeats himself with different words: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified".

- a. What does 'sanctified' mean? (See also v. 7)

Sanctify = holy = 'set apart' or 'distinct'. So, for example, God is holy because he is entirely distinct from everything else – there is God, and there is everything God has created. God is perfect, nothing else is.

Likewise, as followers of Jesus we ARE sanctified/holy. Because God has already called us out of this world and set us apart to be His people.

*Yet at the same time, we are **not yet** sanctified/holy, because we still often live like the world, as we struggle with sin. It's this 'not yet' sense that Paul writes in v. 3 and v. 7, God saved us to be distinct from the world in the way we live our lives. It's a continuing process.*

- b. How does being sanctified connect with Paul's instructions in v. 1?

God's will, what pleases Him, is when we live as the people he has called us to be. Living distinctly from the world around us.

5. Where does a sanctified life, that is pleasing to God, come from? Look through the following verses together and discuss what they add to our understanding of sanctification.

Spend time on this question as it is important for helping us understand that sanctification is not 'works', but comes by the grace of God. You will need to be well prepared to generate and lead your group through a discussion.

- a. vv. 1-2:

A life pleasing to God comes from knowing and obeying Paul's instructions. He describes them as instructions given with the authority of Jesus himself. i.e. God's word.

- b. v. 4:

Sanctification involves us learning to control ourselves. It's not automatic, but a process requiring discipline.

- c. v. 8:

Another reference to Paul's instructions as the word of God. But importantly, Paul finishes by reminding the Thessalonians that God has given them his Holy Spirit.

- d. Explore how these different aspects of sanctification work together. It might be helpful to also look at: 1 Thess. 1:3, 5; 2:13; Gal. 5:23.

1 Thess 1:3 – Faith in, love of, hope in Christ produces work, labour, endurance. So knowing Christ better will help us learn things like self-control.

1 Thess 1:5 – It is the Holy Spirit who brings deep conviction of the gospel (God's Word), allow us to grow in faith, love, hope.

1 Thess 2:3 – Paul's teaching is the Word of God = the authority of Jesus (v. 2).

Gal 5:23 – self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. Our sanctification comes only by the work of the Spirit > who convicts us of the gospel > where we come to know Christ better > which transforms us.

Sanctification requires effort on our part, but our effort is entirely and graciously empowered by God, through the work of the Spirit. He gives us all we need to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

6. In these verses, Paul addresses holy living with regards to a particular issue: sex.

- a. How are Christians to use/not use their bodies and sexual desires?

- b. Look through Paul's motives/reasons for living this way. Why do you think it is God's will for us to live sanctified lives?

v. 4: it is honourable, because it is what God intended.

v. 5: it is unlike the pagans, which means being distinct, standing out for God.

v. 6a: sexual immorality hurts others – it is not good.

v. 6b: God's judgment on those who persist in unrepentant sexual immorality.

v. 7: This is a positive reminder – God called us into the goodness of being holy like He is holy. Don't throw away what He has graciously given you.

v. 8: it is to reject God's gracious word and the work of His Spirit in us.

Summary: It is for 1) our good, 2) the good of others, 3) to stand out from the world.

It is pleasing to God when we enjoy the good life he has saved us for, when we love others as he does, and when we display the goodness of the gospel to the world around us.

7. It is God's will that each one of us should be sanctified. Where do you find yourself living in the same way as the world? How can you grow in this?

Link back to question 5 and 6b. Most of us will default to saying: "I need to have more self-control, I need to do better!" That might be true, but that will only come from the Spirit, who works through God's word.

As an example, from what Paul has said about sexual immorality: it is growing in our faith in, love of, hope in Christ, that will drive us to install accountability software on our computer/phone.

Or, materialism: it is growing in our faith in, love of, hope in Christ, that will drive us to make gospel-focus decisions about how we spend and invest our finances.

Prayer: is action inspired by the Spirit. As we grow in our faith in, love of, hope in Christ, we come to trust less in ourselves, and more in Christ, which drives us to prayer.

STUDY 5

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 *Love Each Other*

1. How is it possible for our actions to hinder the church and the gospel?

2. Re-read 1 Thess. 4:1-2. What is Paul aiming to achieve in this part of his letter?

God's will, your sanctification. He's written about sexual purity. "Now" (v. 9) he will move to the next topic. Note: v. 1 and v. 10 the repeated "more and more".

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-12

3. According to vv. 9-10, what area of life is Paul addressing in these verses? How are the Thessalonians going in this area? What does Paul now want to see?

"Your love for one another." They are going well! Loving not just each other, but throughout the churches of Macedonia (the surrounding region).

4. Compare Paul's instructions here, with his prayer of thanksgiving in 1 Thess. 1:2-3, and his prayer for the Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 3:11-13? What about our sanctification are we reminded of?

This question is aiming to link back to the previous study, Q5. Sanctification requires effort on our part, but our effort is entirely and graciously empowered by God. He gives us all we need to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

Paul thanks God for their love, prays to God for them to increase in love for each other, instructs them to love each other (v. 9 – Paul's teaching is God's word).

5. Paul now focuses on a specific way for the Thessalonians to love one another more.

a. v. 11: What is it? What is it not? See also 2 Thess. 3:6-13.

Making it their ambition to lead a quiet life. Quiet = minding own business, working with your hands (i.e. toiling at a job).

It seems that there was a small group amongst the Thessalonian church who refused to work, instead relying on the generosity of others. We can know this because a) v. 10 says Paul told them about this previously; b) he addresses it for a second time here; c) he addresses it at length in 2 Thess 3:6-13.

The issue is being unwilling to work. Refusing to obey Paul's (God's) instruction to

work (2 Thess 3:10). It's not about unemployment, retrenchment, being busy at home (Titus 2:5).

- b. v. 12: How is this 'loving one another'?

Refusal to work = becoming a burden on others in the church who now have to support you because of your laziness. It distracts the church.

Mind your own business = busybodies. Gossip, stirring up trouble, because you've got nothing else to do.

- c. v. 12: Why does our love for one another matter? See also John 13:34-35.

Our love for each other has the potential to either enable or hinder the church and the gospel.

6. How do Paul's instructions here about work, help us think about the place of secular work in the Christian life?

It shows that while secular work, in and of itself, is not gospel work. But the way we conduct ourselves with regard to work, is. That is, our work has purpose in Christ:

- a. *it's part of loving our church family (not being a burden, able to support others)*
- b. *the way we work, and our attitude towards it, will either enable or hinder the proclamation of the gospel. Both in how the world sees Christ in us, and if we are a distraction to the energy and focus of our fellow believers.*

This changes the way we walk in the front door of work! The work itself is futile (Gen 3, Ecclesiastes), but never will our day be futile.

7. Can you think of other situations where is it possible for our actions to hinder the church or gospel? Why does our sanctification matter?

STUDY 6

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Hope in the Lord

1. Have you ever been to a funeral? Did you feel you had anything to help to say to those who were most affected by the person's death.

Christian funerals – we can talk about Jesus.

Non-Christian funerals – let people express how hard this is. It helps us recognise the hope we have in Jesus.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

2. What appears to be the issue Paul is addressing in these verses?

Believers who have died. Perhaps the Thessalonians were 'uninformed' about members of their church who had died. It might be that they were concerned that these people had missed out on the resurrection, because they had died before Jesus returned.

3. Paul does not want the Thessalonians to be "uninformed about those who sleep in death" (v. 13). What do you think he means by sleep? See also: v.14, Luke 23:43, Phil 1:21-23.

Paul is changing the way we understand death. It is not the end, but 'falling asleep', which holds out the promise of a new day in which to rise from sleep and continue serving the Lord.

v. 14 – "bring with him", implies that before Jesus comes back, the believers who have died will have already been with Jesus.

Luke 23 – Today you'll be with me.

Phil 1 – to die is gain. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.

It seems from this passage and the others, that when a believer dies they go to be with Christ in heaven. Our bodies sleep in the dust. But our souls go to be with him, as we wait for the resurrection.

4. According to v. 14, what is the Christian hope? How do we know it is certain?

a) Jesus died and rose. So b) God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep. Our hope is based in reality and truth: Jesus rose physically, or bodily, from the dead.

5. Explore the different things that will take place when Christ returns (vv. 15-17):

a. What will it be like?

b. What will happen to those who are asleep?

c. What will happen to the rest of us who are in Christ?

6. Why do you think Jesus' resurrection matters? What about ours?

It shows that God has defeated death. If Jesus' body remained in the grave, then death won, it would have claimed his body. But the tomb was empty, death was defeated. God has won the victory over death.

Likewise, if our eternal life is only spiritual and not physical, then God has not defeated death. Death wins as it lays claim to our bodies.

*But because Christ has already risen, we can be assured and certain, that we too will be raised **physically** from the dead.*

7. How will these words shape the way we grieve when a Christian brother or sister falls asleep? How can we help each other to grieve well? (v. 13, 18)

*We **will** grieve, but not as the world does. It's important to note that Paul is not saying "do not grieve". Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. But he is saying, our hope in Jesus changes our grief – it's not as the world does. These verses are an 'encouragement' to us in our grief.*

It might be helpful to reflect with your group on what was different about Christian and non-Christian funerals they have attended.

It might be helpful for group members who have lost someone to share what they found helpful/unhelpful from others.

STUDY 7

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 *Preparing for the King*

1. What clothing do you tend to wear, when you:
 - a. head out for the day?
 - b. get home in the evening?

The point of this question is to raise the contrast between dressing for the day vs. dressing for the night. When we know it's daytime, we dress for it. When it's night time, we dress for it. And it's not right to swap the two – you don't wear your old tracky-daks to the office, or a suit to bed!

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

2. In 1 Thess. 4:13-18 Paul spoke about the hope believers have, in the return of Jesus. From vv. 1-3:

- a. When will this day come?

We don't know when. Mark 13:32 – only the Father knows.

- b. What illustrations does Paul use to explain it's coming?

Like a thief in the night – unexpected, when people are saying “Peace and safety”.

Like labour pains: pregnancy ends in labour. You know it's coming, but you never know when. And once it starts, it cannot be escaped!

- c. 'the day of the Lord' is a common phrase from the Old Testament. Look up the following examples: Jeremiah 46:10, Ezekiel 30:2-3, Joel 1:15, Amos 5:18-20. Why do you think Paul uses this phrase here and how might it shape what follows?

The phrase is commonly used in the Old Testament as a reference to the coming judgment and wrath of God. So, v. 3 = destruction, v. 9 = suffer wrath.

So whereas 1 Thess. 4:13-18 speaks positively about the coming of Jesus, the tone now changes. The coming of this day is something to be prepared for.

3. From vv. 4-5, should the Thessalonians be worried about the day of the Lord? Why/why not?

They don't need to be worried in the sense of anxious or concerned. Unlike the those in darkness, it won't surprise them like a thief, they know it is coming. Neither do they need to be worried about the judgement of God, they are children of the light.

But given they know it is coming, and that it is a day of judgment, they need to be worried in the sense of making sure they are prepared for it.

4. In vv. 6-7, Paul makes generalised descriptions of life at night, and in the day. Compare and contrast the two. What does Paul mean by it?

Night – time of sleep and drunkenness.

Day – time of being awake and sober.

There is a difference between night time and day time behaviour.

Sleep = you're not alert. Awake = ready.

Drunk = numb from reality. Sober = clear minded, alert.

Being awake and sober means being alert. It means avoiding the things that numb us to the need for Jesus' return.

5. What will enable the Thessalonians to be awake and sober? Why is this so vital? (v. 8-10)

Put on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. The appropriate clothing for the daytime is armour = it's putting on Christ (c.f. 1:3).

It's vital, because without Christ we will not be prepared for the day of God's judgment. But in Christ, we will receive salvation from God's wrath, because he died for us.

v. 10: Awake or asleep – throughout 4:13 – 5:11, Paul has used 'sleep' in 2 different ways: 1) The 'sleep' of the believer who has died in Christ (4:13-18); 2) the 'sleep' of the non-believer who is not awake to the reality of Christ's return (5:6-7). Here he seems to be using it the first sense. Whether we have died or are still alive, when God's judgment comes we will be saved from it and raised up to live with Christ forever.

6. In v. 11, Paul concludes by instructing the Thessalonians to “encourage one another and build each other up.” What do you think this involves?

It means helping each other continue in Christ, by putting on the armour of faith, love and hope in Christ. THINK BACK TO PREVIOUS STUDIES: The way this happens is through

God's word in the Bible.

7. Thinking about our own context, where do you find us 'sleeping' and 'drunk' when it comes to the return of Christ?

Thinking about areas of life where we are not considering and numb to the return of Christ. Where something else has distracted us from his return.

8. In what practical ways can your group encourage and build up others?

STUDY 8

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

A Church Preparing for the King

1. How important are relationships within any organisation?

Before concluding his letter in vv. 23-28, Paul writes in vv. 12-22 about three different relationships within the church of the Thessalonians: 1) with their leaders; 2) with each other; 3) with God.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-22

2. In vv. 12-13 Paul addresses relationships with the church leadership.

a. According to Paul, what is Christian leadership about?

- *Working hard (labouring)*
- *Care for you in the Lord (or can be translated: "over you in the Lord). Leaders in the church are responsible, before and under God, to care for the members of the church.*
- *Admonish (warn). A positive thing, part of caring for God's people.*

b. How does Paul call the Thessalonians to relate to their leaders? Why do you think this is?

- *Acknowledge (or respect)*
- *Hold in highest regard in love*
- *Be at peace.*

- *Because of their work is the reason given. Not their personality or position. When leaders are serving well in leadership (like Paul in 2:1-12), it is for the good of the church and the individuals within it. So work for good, peaceful, relationships.*

c. Can you think of some practical examples of what this could (or shouldn't) look like in our life together as the church of Engadine + Heathcote?

3. In vv. 14-15 Paul addresses how the Thessalonian church are to relate to each other.

a. List out the different instructions Paul gives.

- b. Who is responsible for doing these things?
i.e. not just the leadership, but everyone.
- c. Can you think of some practical examples of what this could (or shouldn't) look like as the church of Engadine + Heathcote?

4. In vv. 16-22 Paul address how the Thessalonian church are to relate to God.

- a. How are they to speak to God? How is this possible in their context of persecution? (vv. 16-18)

It might help to recap some of the ways we have seen God working in and through the Thessalonians throughout this letter.

- b. How are they to listen as God speaks to them? (vv. 19-22)

Note: Prophecy is speaking the revelation of God. In the New Testament we see that Jesus is THE revelation of God. In Jesus everything has already been revealed (John 1:1-18, Heb 1:1-4), there is nothing 'new' for us to know. Prophecy in the NT seems to be primarily about speaking the truth of Jesus in a way that builds up – encouraging and edifying others (1 Cor 12-14).

It's important to remember that the Thessalonians (nor anyone else at that stage!) didn't have the New Testament. It was still being written, like the letter of 1 Thessalonians. But there were people who still spoke the truth about Jesus.

What Paul seems to be saying here is that those words about Jesus were not to be treated with contempt, 'but test them all'. That is, test them against the Apostolic teaching. What is good – hold on to. What is evil – reject.

- c. How do you think vv. 16-22 ought to shape our life together as the church of Engadine + Heathcote?

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-28

- 5. In vv. 23-28 Paul concludes his letter with: 1) a prayer of blessing; 2) final instructions; 3) a final prayer. How is Paul's prayer in vv. 23-24 a fitting conclusion to the entire letter?

Summarises the main themes of the letter: complete sanctification, blameless (prepared) for the coming of Jesus, God is the who will do it.