

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **1 THESSALONIANS LESSON 2 (Chapters 2-4)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess. 2:19-20). I’m Timothy Sparks.

### **Ben Bailey:**

And I’m Ben Bailey. Welcome to our study of the Book of 1 Thessalonians. Today’s message is being brought to you by individual members and congregations of the churches of Christ. The church of Christ in your area would like to invite you to stop by and visit them. If you have a Bible question, they would be happy to sit down and study the Bible with you. We, too, would like to be of assistance. We are offering a free CD or DVD of today’s lesson, or any of the other lessons we have produced. If you would like to have copies of any of these, we will be glad to send them to you free of charge. If you would like to take a copy of these to give to friends or relatives, we will be happy to send you copies for them too. Visit our website at [www.thegospelofchrist.com](http://www.thegospelofchrist.com), fill out the request form that you will find there, and we will send you whatever you request. We also have real streaming audio and video lessons available. You can download those and listen to or view them to help you in your study of God’s Word.

At the end of chapter 2, we learned of Paul’s great love for the Christians in Thessalonica. He referred to them as “imitators of us,” and said that they were his “glory and joy.” What was Paul’s daily joy? On what did he have his heart set? It was **Christians who remained true to the Word of God**. That was what made all his sorrows, trials, and afflictions worthwhile. Any preacher or teacher of the Gospel knows that the greatest joy is to see people accept the Gospel and truly change their lives as a result.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

At the end of chapter 2, Paul had mentioned that his own work had been hindered by Satan (vs. 19). Now, his concern is that perhaps Satan has afflicted the church in Thessalonica as well. In chapter 3, Paul says, “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” (vs. 5). This reminds us of other warnings about Satan. We know from 1 Peter 5:8 that Satan is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Paul had done what he could to provide the Christians a good example. And they had followed in his steps. But just as Satan had hindered him, so he knew that Satan would try to hinder them as well.

### **Ben Bailey:**

We know that there **is** a tempter. Paul had done everything he could to help and warn these brethren. He had done everything he could to strengthen and encourage them. And they had lived up to his expectations! But he does not want them to forget that the tempter **is** out there. Satan is a **real** adversary. Perhaps many people fall prey to Satan because they fail to realize just how real an adversary he truly is. Peter described him as “a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Consider the Book of Job. Within the first two chapters, we witness the active, adversarial role that Satan plays in Job’s life. Everything was going well with Job. But then Satan took his family, his income, his cattle, and even his health. Why did all those things happen? Because of Satan! There are things that Satan is doing to try to make each one of us fall. Satan is no dummy! He knows exactly what to do to tempt each one of us. He knows our weaknesses, and he knows exactly what to throw out before us to tempt us and make us fall. Thus, Paul tells the Christians in Thessalonica that he does not want them to be **tempted**, but to be **aware**. He wants them to know that Satan is “out there.” One of the ways Satan might have been working was through false teaching. False teachers are the direct workers of Satan himself. Some false teachers are in it for money. Some are in it for pleasure. Many of them do not even know what the Bible says, yet they want to establish a following for themselves. What kinds of people are these? They are the direct servants of Satan himself! We must beware of these kinds of people. Paul wanted the Christians in Thessalonica to beware as well.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

One of the false teachings that Paul addresses centers on the Second Coming of Christ. In fact, Paul addressed the subject of false teachers in a number of his epistles. He told Titus to “speak the things that befit sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). Paul mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 2:1 that he knew his labor among the Christians in Thessalonica “was not in vain.” But he fears it **will** be in vain if they fall prey to false teachers! Then he mentions the good report that he received when Timothy came back to him. In verse 6 of chapter 3, Paul writes, “Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you.” Then, in verse 8 he says, “For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” Part of “standing fast in the Lord” is remaining faithful and true to the Word of God. We learn from 2 Kings 19:30 that we are to **bear roots downward**, so that we may **bear fruit upward.**”

### **Ben Bailey:**

In his letters, Paul frequently mentions how he prays for people, and how he prays for the church as a whole. Paul’s prayer for the Christians in Thessalonica was that they would be rooted and grounded in their faith and in their love for one another. In verses 11 and 12 of chapter 3, Paul says, “Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you.” Paul wanted to return to Thessalonica to see these brethren. But Paul also prayed that they would “abound in love to one another..., just as we do to you.” Paul wanted these people to “increase and abound.” In other words, he wanted them to “double abound” in their faith and love for one another. What is Christianity all about? How can people around us tell that we are truly living the Christian life? Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Christians have to stick together, love

one another, and encourage one another. It is easy at times to fall by the wayside. But if you have a brother who sticks out his hand and says, "Let me help you up, because I have been where you are, and I know how much it hurts," then it is much easier to get up and move forward as a Christian. Thus, Paul prays that the faith of the Christians in Thessalonica will grow, and that they will increase in their holiness toward God. Why? It is because we all are to be looking forward to the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

As Paul enters chapter 4, he says, "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God" (vs. 1). This is the same principle as "increase and abound." By telling them to "increase and abound more and more," Paul is stressing that he wants them to continue to grow in the strength of their faith so they do not fall prey to false teaching. Peter emphasized this when he said, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). Christians are to "keep on keeping on." If we "plateau out," we have ceased to grow. And when we do that, then we begin to digress. Christians must grow daily! The person who thinks that he has learned as much as he needs to learn, is the person who is destined to become weaker and weaker, spiritually speaking. We must keep on growing. There is no "maximum amount" that we can reach, where we no longer need to grow. In Matthew 5:48, Jesus said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." To be "perfect," we have to continue to grow.

### **Ben Bailey:**

Paul then discusses something from which they must abstain. He writes, "This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thess. 4:3). Paul is telling them that God wants them to be set apart as a special people who are saved. One of the ways to remain a "special people" is to refrain from sexuality immorality, which could include premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, prostitution, bestiality, and things of that nature. Paul's command is to "abstain" from those things. Today, the message to our children is that premarital sex is acceptable, and that they do not need to abstain from it as long as they participate in "safe sex." Then we wonder why we have so many single-parent families, why we have so many people on welfare, and why there are so many children being reared without any morals or incentives to succeed in life. We need to teach our children to "abstain from sexual immorality." Peter wrote, "Beloved, I **beg** you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). If we want to pull our country back to its original moorings, and if we want to bring society back from the precipice of destruction, then let's teach our children to abstain from sexuality immorality. Let's teach our children that God's plan is for one man and one woman to be together until death, with the only exception being sexuality immorality. Moses wrote in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Paul provides a very practical lesson on how to be clean and sanctified in God's sight.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

This is a "plea for purity." In 1 Thessalonians 4:5, Paul says, "not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God." Paul is saying, in essence, "You are not people who should be living as though God does not even exist. You are children of God. You turned **from**

worshiping and serving dead idols **to** serving the true and living God (1 Thess. 1:9-10). So, live like it—as people who have the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).” Paul is making a strong plea for purity. He is stressing holiness. From Hebrews 12:14, we learn that we must be a holy people, because without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Peter wrote, “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). We must be holy, because God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). We must be people who exhibit self-control and self-discipline. Romans 6:11 tells us to be “dead to sin, but alive to God.” We must not live merely to please ourselves, but rather, to please the God of Heaven. Holiness and self-control help prepare us for eternity.

### **Ben Bailey:**

In order to get across the seriousness of this matter, Paul says, “He who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 4:8). Paul is trying to get across the point that his words are not “just a good idea,” or “a mere suggestion,” or “my personal interpretation.” Rather, if you engage in sexual immorality, you are rejecting the will of God for your lives. You are rejecting the Holy Spirit of God, which He has sent to indwell us. Is the idea of the Holy Spirit indwelling the Christian something that is “better felt than told”? Not at all! How does the Holy Spirit indwell us? He indwells us as we read God’s Word and learn His will for our lives. When we read such passages as 2 Timothy 3:16 (“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”) and John 14:15-16 (“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever”), we learn that the work of the Holy Spirit was to give us the Bible. If you reject it, then you are rejecting the God Who gave it through His Holy Spirit. Thus, you are not prepared for eternity. Paul is stressing to the Christians in Thessalonica that they need to “clean up their act,” and do what must be done to get ready for eternity.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

We live in a society that condones such things as abortion and homosexuality. We live in a society today that is much like the one that existed in the time of the Judges, when it was said that “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jdg. 17:6; 21:25). Today, people seem to do “whatever feels good.” But Paul tells the Christians in Thessalonica **not** to act in such a manner. Rather, he wants them to walk in an orderly fashion according to the Word and will of God. He wants them to know that they must not live to please themselves, because they have a much higher calling. Christians have been called to a higher calling (Phil. 3:14), a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), a holier calling (2 Tim. 1:9). As we stop to consider the type of calling we have received, and Paul’s appeal for purity, it should cause Paul’s message to sink deeply into our hearts. Then, we should strive daily to set a good example for those in the world, in order to impress upon them the good news of the Gospel of Christ—that they **can** be saved, and do not have to go to Hell.

### **Ben Bailey:**

It is a wonderful thing to know that God has made salvation available to **all** people. If you are not a child of God, we hope you will consider seriously what the Bible has to say about the plan of salvation. We, like Paul, are concerned for your soul, and we want you to go to Heaven, not remain on the road to Hell. The good news is that Jesus has made it

possible for all people who will submit to God's will to go to Heaven. God wants **all** people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4-6). God loves you so much that He sent His only Son to die on the cross for you. John 3:16 is an illustration of that fact: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." What does a person have to do to be saved? Jesus said in John 8:24, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." We must believe that Jesus is God's Son. But there is more to it than just belief alone. Like the Thessalonians, we must repent (1 Thess. 4:9-10). They turned from worshiping idols, and began serving the true and living God. That is true repentance. You must turn **from sin to God**, and serve Him in your life. Peter told the people in Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." A person also must confess that Jesus is the Savior (Mt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:10). Then, you must be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." In Acts 2, when Peter gave the first Gospel sermon, those to whom he spoke were cut to their hearts, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Peter told them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). They had to be baptized in order to obey God's will and to have their sins forgiven. Throughout the New Testament, it is made clear that people **must** obey God's will in order to be saved.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

It has been said, "You have only one life, and it soon will be past. Only what is done for Christ will last." This life is all you have. God has graciously given you an opportunity to do His will. He is the giver of "every good and perfect gift" (Jas. 1:17). We plead with you today: if you are not a Christian, yet you believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repent of your sins. Turn—just as the people in Thessalonica did—from whatever "idol" it may be that is keeping you from serving God correctly, and confess Christ as the Son of God. Be baptized to have your sins washed away (Acts 22:16) so that you can be saved (1 Pet. 3:21). Then, live faithfully all the rest of the days of your life (Rev. 2:10). It is our hope today that if you are not a child of God, you will do the things that God wants you to do, that you will become a New Testament Christian, that you will live according to God's Word, and that will do as Jesus would have you to do.

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 THESSALONIANS 2 (CHAPTERS 2-4)

1. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:20 that the Christians in Thessalonica were his “glory and joy.” What had they done that caused Paul to make such a statement?
2. At the end of 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul commented on how his work had been “hindered.” What had hindered him?
3. What is one of the ways that Paul feared the Christians in Thessalonica might be “hindered”?
4. Apparently, there was some false teaching occurring in Thessalonica. Judging from Paul’s comments, on what topic did that false teaching center?
5. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul told the Christians to “stand fast in the Lord.” How does one do that?
6. Explain the meaning of 2 Kings 19:30.
7. Explain the connection between 1 Thessalonians 3:11 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1.
8. In Matthew 5:48, Jesus urged Christians to “be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” What must a Christian do in order to “be perfect”?
9. Explain the connection between 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and 1 Peter 2:11.
10. In 1 Thessalonians 4:5, Paul referred to the Gentiles in an uncomplimentary manner. What point was he making when he did so?
11. The Thessalonians had turned from something to something. Tell what they had turned **from**, and what they had turned **to**.
12. Paul urged the Christians in Thessalonica to abstain from sexual immorality. But he also told them that those who refused to do so were not rejecting his words, but someone else’s words. Who was that “someone else”?
13. People who refused to listen to Paul would not find themselves ready for something. What was that “something”?
14. What did the writer of the Book of Judges mean when he said that “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jdg. 17:6; 21:25)?
15. Explain the connection between Philippians 3:14, Hebrews 3:1, and 2 Timothy 1:9.
16. According to 1 Timothy 2:4-5, God wants something. What is it?
17. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 3:6 that Timothy had brought him a “good report” about something. What was that something?