

AUTHENTIC: REAL FAITH IN REAL LIFE

1 Thessalonians – Lesson 9



In our study of 1 Thessalonians, we have learned about the return of Christ, the coming Kingdom, the resurrection of the dead, and the ultimate destiny of all believers. It is wonderful to contemplate our glorious future! Even so, as we wait for Christ's return, we have lives to live and a gospel mission to accomplish.

In the closing paragraphs of this letter, Paul gives a flurry of practical instructions to help us live in a way that pleases God. We who believe in Christ are called *children of the light* and *children of the day* (5:5). Paul's final words are a description of how *children of the day* are called to live.

Examine the text: **Authentic faith strengthens the family of God**

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22
 - a. What two instructions does Paul give to the church about how they should relate to their leaders—to their pastors, teachers, and elders? (5:12-13)

 - b. What instructions does Paul give to God's people about how they are to care for their fellow believers? (5:14-15)

- c. What attitudes should we maintain if we are to walk in His will? (5:16-18)

- d. God has not left us without guidance for our lives. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have the revelation of God in His Word. How are we to make use of the resources God has given so that we may follow a path of life that pleases God? (5:19-22)

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

- a. What is Paul's summary objective for God's work in the lives of these beloved believers? (5:23)

- b. How will this lofty goal be accomplished in our lives? (5:24)

Explore the concepts:

- 3. Visualize a community that includes all of the characteristics of relational interconnection described in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15. How would their interdependence serve to strengthen and encourage the individuals in the community? How would it help the people of the community follow a path of wisdom?

- 4. *For personal reflection:* As you consider the list of instructions given in 1 Thess. 5:14-15, is there one of these instructions that seems most difficult to you personally? Why is it difficult for you? Explore how you can reshape your thinking by considering the teaching and example of Jesus.

5. Suffering and loss are a reality of life in this fallen world. Each of us will encounter failure, pain, disappointments, and death. Why is it important to cultivate a thankful, hopeful, and prayerful lifestyle as we deal with the hardships of life and wait for the return of Christ? (5:16-18)

6. *For deeper thought:* The fruit of the Holy Spirit includes *joy*, and that is a spiritual joy that is independent of our physical circumstances. How would you explain how we can draw on a deep-seated joy even in the face of life's sorrows and trials? (Hint: what truths do you know about what God has done through Christ in the past, in the present, and His plan for the future?)

7. Although we are to grow in knowledge and understanding of spiritual things, we are cautioned in 5:21-22 to be discerning—to test the teaching and prophecies we receive. How are we vulnerable in this regard? What resources do we have to help us discern truth from error, and to follow teaching that is good rather than teaching that is false?

8. *For deeper thought:* From your study of 1 Thessalonians (and in light of the assurance of 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24), how would you describe in practical terms the teamwork and cooperation between God's purpose, God's power, God's grace, God's guidance, and our human will?

Exalt the Savior

In the first century, certain residents of the Greek cosmopolitan city of Thessalonica heard a message of hope from the apostle Paul. This message contained *truth* about God and His purposes, but it also carried the *power of God* for salvation for those who embraced it.

The gospel message revealed that God's ancient promise has come to a new stage of fulfillment—the promised King has come! The righteous King who will reign over God's people forever has come. The King who conquers sin and death has come. The King who willingly dies for the sins of the people—the King who restores God's people to fellowship with Him—this long-expected King has come!

This King is Jesus. He has taken on humanity so that He could die as a substitute for humanity. He has suffered what we deserved to suffer. He has defeated the power of evil at the cross. Now Jesus has risen from the dead to proclaim victory over sin and death on our behalf.

This gospel message came with power to change the lives of the believers in Thessalonica, and it comes with power to change our lives as well.

Have you asked Jesus into your life? Have you taken refuge in His embrace? Take a moment to pray and ask Him to come into your life in a deeper way, so that you may live a life that pleases God—a life of joy, prayerfulness, and thanksgiving—a life of authentic faith.

Grace and peace to you—now and for eternity.

The gospel brings the power of God for authentic life change