

## 1 and 2 Thessalonians Lesson 4 3Q 2012

Joyous and Thankful

Read Memory Text 1Thes 1:2,3:

- We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, <sup>3</sup> remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (ESV)
- We always thank God for you all and always mention you in our prayers. <sup>3</sup>For we remember before our God and Father how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm. (GNT)

Thoughts? While they are saying the same thing does one version resonate more with you?

SUNDAY

In reference to the memory text the lesson asks, “For what things are Paul, Silas, and Timothy giving thanks? What do these things mean in a practical sense? That is, how would they be manifested in the daily life?”

Thoughts?

What would it mean? Would it not mean that the people have accepted Gods Remedy to their sinful state? Would it not mean they are getting well?

If you were a parent and your children were all infected with a terminal disease, and you brought a remedy, and when you checked back you noticed the fever was down, the bleeding had stopped, the appetite had improved, their color was better, they were getting up and playing games again – would you not rejoice in all of these things? Why would you rejoice? Would it

be because all of this is evidence that they were being healed and restored?

What does it mean to be saved? Doesn't it mean to be restored to Godliness, to God's original design?

Then wouldn't we expect the symptoms of sin to remit and the signs of spiritual health to appear?

Is this what Paul is thankful for?

What are the signs of spiritual health? As the lesson asked, what does it look like to put your faith into practice?

- Stop practicing pagan rituals?
- Stop practicing worldly principles, cheating, extorting, selfishness?
- Trusting God with how things turn out?
- Seeking to help one another?
- Sharing the message of God's kingdom with others?
- Changing one's lifestyle habits to move into harmony with God's design for life?
  - Any examples?
- Change relationships?
- Others?
- Do we need to make any changes in our lives?

## MONDAY

Monday's lesson talks about being chosen, elected, and if we have time we will return this idea. But let's read the second paragraph, "Some Christians have taken..." thoughts?

Does it sound like the lesson is connecting lifestyle choice with our salvation?

What is the place for lifestyle and behavior in our salvation?

Is our salvation based on our lifestyle and behavior choices?

- Eating cheese?
- Eating meat?
- Refusing to exercise?
- Drinking coffee?
- Getting Tattoos?
- Wearing Jewelry?
- Watching non-Christian TV?
- Gossip?
- Smoking cigarettes?
- Drinking alcohol?
- Owning a store/restaurant that sells alcohol?
- Working on Sabbath?
  - Nurse, ER MD, Paramedic, Fire department, Police department, Coast Guard Rescue, cook at restaurant, cook at SAU cafeteria, banker, auto-mechanic, welder, plumber, electrician?
- Smoking marijuana?
- Premarital sex?
- Viewing porn?
- Promoting porn?
- Visiting prostitutes? – How about for single persons in states where it is legal?

What impact does lifestyle choices play on our salvation?

Are some lifestyle choices inconsequential while other choices are clearly destructive and still others are healing?

- Does the circumstance matter?
- Does the heart motive matter?
- What is the balance between lifestyle choice and salvation?
- Who is to determine for each of us where the line is to be drawn?
- Is the bottom line issue one of choosing self, selfishness, self-indulgence over God and his methods of love?

## WEDNESDAY

1Thessalonians 1:6 tells us that they were “imitators” of Paul, and the lesson rightly points out that Christ is our ultimate role model, but often we benefit from human role models.

What concerns should we have in following the example of others? What about following the example of Apostles and Prophets?

Should we follow the lead of an Apostle, say like Paul, without thinking for ourselves? Is it safe to disagree with a prophet?

What about when Peter wouldn't mix with Gentiles? Should his example have been followed?

What about the old prophet in 1Kings 13 who told the young prophet to come and eat with him, but he was lying?

The old prophet answered, “I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: ‘Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.’ ” (But he was lying to him.) <sup>19</sup> So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.

<sup>20</sup> While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. <sup>21</sup> He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, “This is what the LORD says: ‘You have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. <sup>22</sup> You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers.’ ” 1Kings 13:18-22

Should we blindly follow the example of those inspired by God?

Last week we read some passages from the following from one of the founders of our church:

Every individual exerts an influence in society. In our favored land, **every voter has some voice in determining what laws shall control the nation. Should not that influence and that vote be cast on the side of temperance and virtue? . . .** {GW 387.1}

The advocates of temperance fail to do their whole duty unless they exert their influence by precept and example--**by voice and pen and vote**-- in favor of prohibition and total abstinence. We need not expect that God will work a miracle to bring about this reform, and thus remove the necessity for our exertion. We ourselves must grapple with this giant foe, our motto, No compromise and no cessation of our efforts till the victory is gained. . . . {GW 387.3}

Was she right? Should she have been followed on this issue, or was she, on this issue, like Peter when shrinking away from Gentiles?

- What method was she advocating?
  - Was she urging us to present the truth in love and leave others free? Or, was she urging that we use the power of the state to enforce a particular religious view on others in society that don't hold that view?
  - Don't some religious groups use alcohol in their services?
  - Is this method any different than using the state to enforce worship on a particular day?
- Prohibition was eventually passed, and how did it actually work out? Was society better for it? Or, did it result in more rebellion, conflict, violence, crime, etc? Why? What happens when liberty is violated? Love is destroyed and rebellion is incited.
- If an Apostle, like Peter, makes a mistake, as he did regarding associating with Gentiles, does that mean he is not inspired?
- What does it mean?

- Does anything we have said suggest we are in favor of alcohol? NO! Alcohol destroys. I deal with families that have been ruined by alcoholism, drunkenness, etc. We are not advocating alcohol – what are we advocating? Freedom! We present the truth in love and leave others free!

The lesson says in fourth paragraph, “God’s Word can always be trusted.” Thoughts about this? It is true – does that mean how people understand, interpret, or teach God’s Word can always be trusted?

Can the trustworthy Word of God be misunderstood? Is it easy or hard to misunderstand God’s Word?

What makes it easy to misunderstand it and what makes it hard to misunderstand it?

The lens we use to view God’s Word through.

If we view God’s Word through a lens in which God’s law is imposed, God is arbitrary, God is severe, God uses His power to inflict pain and suffering – then God’s Word is easily misunderstood.

If however, we view God’s Word through the lens of God’s law of love, the design protocol upon which life is built, through the life of Jesus who revealed selfless love perfectly, then God’s Word is hard to misunderstand.

#### THURSDAY

In 1Thes 1:8-10 Paul notes that the Thessalonians had become known in other regions by the way they were living. What do you think had changed that caused others to take note?

In verse 10 Paul states that Christ is going to save us from the wrath to come – what is this talking about?

What do we understand God's wrath to be? God letting go to reap what people choose. What references support this?

In *Hard Sayings of the Bible* published by IVP we read:

The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the *inevitability of human debasement* which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32). (emphasis theirs)

The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves.

In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained... God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. (Kaiser, W., et al., *Hard Saying of the Bible*, Intersity Press, 1996, p. 542-543)

Thoughts?

## TUESDAY

The lesson asks, “How do we gain assurance that we are right with God?”

Thoughts about this question?

What makes us “right with God?”

What makes us “not right” with God?

The lies we believe about God and our fallen natures, our selfish motives.

What makes us right? The truth about God, which destroys lies, restores to trust, and in trust we open the heart, and the HS comes and restores Christlikeness within, we become partakers of the divine nature!

Here is what one of the founders of our church said:

Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with **power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him.** Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, **that men might lose the true views of God's character,** and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. **The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary.** He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the**



**character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God.** Jesus came to teach men of the Father, **to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth.** Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes.** That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became **a partaker of his nature.** {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 6}

What an incredible paragraph. What did you hear?

- When man is armed with power and intelligence we can break away from Satanic captivity – what captivity?
- Satan had misrepresented God and holds our minds captive in fear as we believe God is a cruel tyrant.
- The law of God was represented as that of Rome, burdened with rules and seen as imposed, rather than seen as the law of love
- Jesus came to reveal God, to destroy lies, to win us to trust and to provide us with his nature!

Three paragraphs later in the same article we read:

Oh, that men might open their minds to know God as he is revealed in his Son! Truth came forth from the lips of Jesus, uncorrupted with human philosophy. His words were from heaven, such as mortal lips had never spoken nor mortal ears ever heard. **His heart was an altar** on which burned the flames of infinite love. Goodness, mercy, and love were enthroned in the breast of the Son of God. He set up **his tabernacle** in the midst of our human encampment, pitched his tent by the side of the tents of men, that he might dwell among them **and make them familiar with his divine character and love.** No one could love Christ and pay homage to him without serving and honoring the infinite God. Those who had an

appreciation of the character and mission of Christ, were filled with reverence and awe, as they looked upon him and felt that they were looking upon **the temple of the living God**. Officers were sent to take the Son of God, **that the temple in which God was enshrined might be destroyed**. But as they drew near and heard the words of divine wisdom that fell from his lips, they were charmed, and the power and excellence of his instruction so filled their hearts and minds that they forgot the purpose for which they had been sent. Christ revealed himself to their souls. Divinity flashed through humanity, and they returned so filled with this one thought, so charmed with the ideas he had presented, that when the leaders of Israel inquired, "Why have ye not brought him?" they replied, "Never man spake like this man." **They had seen that which priests and rulers would not see,-- humanity flooded with the light and glory of divinity**. Those who would behold this glory would be drawn to love Jesus and to love the Father whom he represented. **Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,--to set men right through the revelation of God**. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, "I have manifested thy name." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." **When the object of his mission was attained,--the revelation of God to the world,--the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men**. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 9}

Thoughts? What did you hear in this paragraph?

What was the method that Christ used to reach man, to set us right with God? To reveal the truth about God.

So what is it that gives us assurance with God? Coming back to a true knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus!

What is the temple of God? The living intelligent being, where God dwells by his Spirit. Christ came so that the temple could be rebuilt and that God could again dwell in his temple.

When we speak of the cleansing of the temple, what does it mean? Does it not mean cleansing the minds of men from the lies about God, so that the hearts can be cleansed from selfishness and fear?

MONDAY

Read 1Thes 1:4

- Our brothers and sisters, we know that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own.

Top section of the lesson asks, “What does it mean that God has chosen or elected us? Does that mean we don’t really have a choice? On the other hand, does it mean that someone who is not chosen by God cannot have salvation even if he or she wants it?”

Thoughts? Any other Bible texts come to mind?

- For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Rom 8:29,30)

Thoughts about this text – first – if God doesn’t have foreknowledge then who was he predetermining to conform to the likeness of his Son?

If God doesn't have foreknowledge about who will be saved, then does this text have any meaning?

The Greek for foreknow is *proginōskō* from which we get prognosticate, to foretell. And means to know beforehand.

- All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13)
- declaring the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10)

Foreknowledge is part of God's supreme omniscience – to remove it is to diminish him.

Some people get confused about this because they believe that if God foreknows then we have no choice – but the foreknown events do not occur because they are foreknown, they are foreknown because they will take place.

It is our freewill choices that provide the foreknowledge that God knows. In other words God foreknowledge is informed by our choices.

But, what about predestined – does God predetermine who will be saved? Here is what Graham Maxwell says about this passage in Romans:

- **Predestinate.** Gr. *proorizō*, “to mark off beforehand.” The word is translated “determined before” in Acts 4:28, and “ordained” in 1 Cor. 2:7. God predestinated those whom He foreknew. To use human language, as God foresaw, and thus foreknew, each generation of men that would come upon the stage of this world's action, He coupled immediately with His foreknowledge the decision to predestinate them all to be saved. God never had any other purpose than salvation for the members of the human family. For God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “As I live,

saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Eze. 33:11). Christ Himself said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)...

Salvation is not forced upon us against our will. If we choose to oppose and resist God’s purpose, we shall be lost. Divine foreknowledge and divine predestination in no way exclude human liberty. Nowhere does Paul, or any other Bible writer, suggest that God has predestined certain men to be saved and certain others to be lost, regardless of their own choice in the matter.<sup>1</sup>

Thoughts?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1, 3, 5

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 6*. 1980 (F. D. Nichol, Ed.) (575–576). Review and Herald Publishing Association.