

LESSON 12

Summary and Conclusion

We conclude our study of 1–2 Thessalonians by summarizing the big picture of God’s message through these letters as a whole. Then we will consider several questions in order to reflect on various Gospel Glimpses, Whole-Bible Connections, and Theological Soundings from this entire study.

The Big Picture of 1–2 Thessalonians

Two thousand years have passed since Paul penned these letters. The Roman Empire and the ancient city of Thessalonica have been reduced to rubble. You can buy a ticket to tour the ruins. The Greco-Roman gods—once the object of so much worship, devotion, sacrifice, and hope—have been relegated to museums and the occasional Disney film. Meanwhile, Christianity has spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth ([Acts 1:8](#)).

So much has changed in the world since the Thessalonians assembled to hear these letters from their beloved apostle. Yet, in many ways, little has changed. Are we really so different? We also need encouragement ([1 Thess. 1:2–10](#)). We too need integrity ([1 Thess. 2:1–16](#)). We too need love ([1 Thess. 2:17–3:13](#)). We too need challenge ([1 Thess. 4:1–12](#)). We too need hope ([1 Thess. 4:13–5:11](#)). We too need virtue ([1 Thess. 5:12–28](#)). We too need assurance ([2 Thess. 1:1–12](#)). We too need correction ([2 Thess. 2:1–12](#)). We too need prayer ([2 Thess. 2:13–3:5](#)). We too need prodding ([2 Thess. 3:6–15](#)). We too need peace ([2 Thess. 3:16](#)). And from beginning to end, we too need grace ([1 Thess. 1:1; 5:28; 2 Thess. 1:2; 3:18](#)).

First and Second Thessalonians are among the earliest documents we possess from the inception of the New Testament church. (Only James and Galatians were written earlier.) Yet despite a two-millennia gap, these letters ring with relevance for today. The Thessalonians faced intense opposition for their faith ([2 Thess. 1:1–12](#)); many believers worldwide have long experienced the same, and those of us in the West are increasingly catching up. The Thessalonians had grown slack in pursuing holiness ([1 Thess. 4:1–7](#)); many of us have too. The Thessalonians were unsettled because they had misunderstood their future hope ([1 Thess. 4:13–5:11; 2 Thess. 2:1–17](#)); many of us live with similar misunderstanding. Because we are so seldom heavenly minded, we are of little earthly good.

The world should not see its reflection when it peers into the church. Instead, it should see a kind of life available nowhere else. It should see the grace of Jesus, lavished on humble sinners, embodied in self-giving love. Our unbelieving friends and neighbors are clamoring after things that will never satisfy them. They know neither why they are here nor where they are going. What awaits them beyond the grave is terrifying, not beautiful. First and Second Thessalonians resound with the news that salvation—deliverance from God’s wrath through the blood of his Son—is available, for free, to all who will turn to, trust in, and treasure the Lord Jesus. These letters resound with the news that the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in the hearts of Christians, empowering us to walk in a manner worthy of God. And these letters resound with

the news that this world is not the way it always will be. One day, King Jesus will split the skies and return for his people, establishing justice and restoring all things.

Together, these two letters form an eight-chapter refutation to the idea that eschatology is impractical. It is not. To study eschatology is to be empowered and encouraged (1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11). Eschatology is also relevant to ethics: Christian virtue does not arise out of nowhere, but is driven by past mercy and is sustained by future hope. If you need “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,” 1–2 Thessalonians are a gift from God to you.

Gospel Glimpses

We have seen the good news of grace woven throughout 1–2 Thessalonians. Elected in eternity past (1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13) and secured for eternity future (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9–10), we owe everything to the one who loved us and gave himself for us. The thrilling news of God’s achievement in the life, death, resurrection, and promised return of Jesus is the heartbeat of Christian living—and the heartbeat of these letters.

How has 1–2 Thessalonians brought new clarity to your understanding of God’s grace? Were there any particular passages or themes in 1–2 Thessalonians that brought the gospel home to you in a fresh way?

Whole-Bible Connections

These letters have been rich in whole-Bible themes, even though Paul does not explicitly quote from the Old Testament as much as in some other letters (e.g., Romans or Galatians). With the Old Testament furnishing the backdrop, 1–2 Thessalonians yields fresh clarity on a number of themes that have been developing across the storyline of Scripture.

How has this study of 1–2 Thessalonians helped to fill out your understanding of the biblical storyline of redemption?

Are there any themes emphasized in 1–2 Thessalonians that have caused you to better grasp the Bible’s unity?

Have any passages or themes expanded your understanding of the wondrous redemption Jesus provides, which he began at his first coming and will consummate at his return? What connections between 1–2 Thessalonians and the Old Testament were new to you?

Theological Soundings

Our understanding of Christian theology is greatly enriched through 1–2 Thessalonians. Many doctrines and themes are developed, clarified, and reinforced in these divinely inspired letters. Reflect on the doctrinal themes we have encountered.

Has your theology been refined in any specific ways through this study of 1–2 Thessalonians? How so?

How has your understanding of the nature and character of God been developed or deepened throughout this study?

What unique contributions does 1–2 Thessalonians make toward your understanding of who Jesus is and what he has accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection?

What specifically does 1–2 Thessalonians teach us about the human condition and our need for redemption?

Personal Implications

God gave us 1–2 Thessalonians not simply to gratify our curiosity, but to transform our lives. If our study of these letters does not deepen our affection for God and our trust in him, we have been wasting our time. As you reflect on 1–2 Thessalonians as a whole, what implications do you see for your relationship with him?

What personal implications for your life emerge from your reflections on the questions already asked in this week’s study concerning Gospel Glimpses, Whole-Bible Connections, and Theological Soundings?

What have you learned as you have studied 1–2 Thessalonians that might lead you to praise God, turn away from sin, and trust more firmly in his promises?

As You Finish Studying 1–2 Thessalonians . . .

We rejoice with you as you finish studying the books of 1–2 Thessalonians! May this study become part of your Christian walk of faith, day by day and week by week throughout all your life. Now we would greatly encourage you to study the Word of God in an ongoing way.

Lastly, take a moment to look back through this study and reflect again on the key themes that the Lord has been teaching you about himself and about his Word. May these things become a treasure for you throughout your life—which we pray will be true for you, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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