



**Old Testament Reading – Isaiah 43:1-13 – New Testament Reading –
Titus 2:1-13**

**“A Description of an Exemplary Church”
1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:20**

The two words that best describe the evangelical church today are:

- Apathy – a callous indifference towards the work of the Lord in the world today or where we are regarding the timeline of prophetic events.
- Apostasy – a deliberate and intentional turning away from the truth of God’s word and embracing Satan’s lies.

According to recent surveys, while the majority of Christians still believe in the future return of Jesus Christ to this earth, they don’t think He will return in their lifetime, and that casual attitude is reflected in their worship of God and in their way of life.

- Less than one-third of today’s pastors believe in the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church, and another third does not accept the rapture as a literal event at all, or they connect it with the return of Christ.
- About half of today’s pastors are premillennial, another third of pastors do not believe in the millennial reign of Christ, and about 10% of today’s pastors are postmillennial.
- The Western church appears to be living in the Laodicean period of the church age, with those who claim to be Christians looking inward rather than upward and outward, and in effect, they

have become lukewarm toward the imminent rapture of the Church.

While the Apostle Paul is credited with giving us the details of eschatology, in Revelation 1:1-3, 19:10, Jesus Himself said the preaching about His return was the solution to the apathy and apostasy of the Laodicean church age.

- In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul assured Timothy, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and the Greek word translated as “inspiration” means “God-breathed.”
- In 2 Peter 1:20-21, Peter said, “No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”
- Certainly, Paul wrote with a level of divine authority on every subject he addressed, and the imminent rapture of the Church and the return of Jesus Christ are to be included.
- Once “Saul” became “Paul,” at his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul abandoned himself to the divine assignment that the Lord Jesus gave to him, which was to get the gospel to the Gentiles.
- Paul believed his mission and his message were from God, and that included the absolute truth regarding the rapture of the Church and the return of Christ to this earth.
- In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul commended the Christians at Thessalonica because they “received from us the word of God’s message, and accepted it, not as the words of men, but for what it really is, the word of God.”
- Therefore, the biblical material we are about to study is nothing less than the Word of God.
- While it was written to address a particular problem in the church at Thessalonica in Paul’s day, it has been preserved by the Holy Spirit to address the same, or similar issue in every church of every age, that through the study of the Scriptures, we might remain steadfast in our faith in light of the imminent rapture of the Church and the soon return of Jesus Christ to this earth.”

“Steadfastness in believing doth not exclude all temptations from without. When we say a tree is firmly rooted, we do not say the wind never blows upon it.”

John Owen

Thessalonica was originally named “Thermaï,” meaning the place of the “hot springs.”

- With over 200,000 citizens, Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, and since it was on the Egnatia Way, it was an important city for the spread of the gospel.
- Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica in response to a letter from a man from Macedonia who asked for their help.
- Paul remained there for some time, teaching those who would come to the synagogue to hear him, and many Jews and Greeks accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- As normal, such evangelism angered a group of the Jews, and to avoid conflict, Paul left Thessalonica and traveled to Berea.
- However, the same mob who threatened Paul in Thessalonica also stirred up trouble in Berea, and Paul moved on to Athens.
- Paul sent Silas to check on the church at Philippi and Timothy to check on the church at Thessalonica.
- Timothy’s report back to Paul that caused him to write his first letter.

- While some of the new Christians had forsaken their faith in Christ and returned to their former habits, Paul encouraged the few Christians who had remained steadfast in their faith.
 - Paul wanted to review and explain what he had taught them about the two comings of the Lord Jesus.
 - Paul wanted to give them some additional instruction as to how they could continue to grow spiritually.
- A few months later, after hearing Timothy's second report, Paul wrote a second letter to the Christians at Thessalonica:
 - Urging them to remain faithful to Christ, even though they were incurring severe persecution.
 - Correcting the false teaching they had heard regarding the rapture of the Church, the return of Christ, and the Day of the Lord.
 - These two letters present the first literary evidence for the Parousia – the imminent rapture of the Church.
 - Paul referred to it six times – not as an escape hatch from the wicked world, but as a warning for Christians to remain steadfast in their faith until that glorious day.

The two key passages:

- 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 – “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”
- 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17 – “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”

Paul's description of an exemplary church:

1. The Role of the Pastor – Vs. 1 – 3, “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.

The first priority of a pastor of a church is intercessory prayer, bringing the needs of his people before the throne of God.

- 1 Thess. 3:10 – Paul prayed that he might see them in order to perfect that which was lacking in their faith.
- 1 Thess. 3:12 – Paul asked the Lord to make them “increase and abound I love toward one another and toward all men.”
- 1 Thess. 3:13 – Paul prayed that God would establish their hearts in holiness and righteousness.
- 1 Thess. 5:23 – Paul prayed that God would make them “wholly” in their spirit, soul, and body.
- 2 Thess. 1:11 – Paul prayed that God would count them worthy of His calling and bless them with all the good things He desired to do within them.

- 2 Thess. 3:16 – Paul prayed the Lord of peace would give them peace always and by all means.

I wonder how many congregations are spiritually anemic today, not because of their pastor's lack of theology but his "kneeology!"

**“What a man is on his knees before God,
that he is and nothing more.”
Robert Murry M'chyne**

The second priority of a pastor is the proclamation of the gospel.

- 1 Thess. 1:5 – “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost.”
- 1 Thess. 1:9 – “Those who heard it turned from their idols to serve the true and living God.”

The Third priority of a pastor is to be a pattern for his people.

- 1 Thess. 1:5-6 – “As you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake, and when you saw it, you became imitators of us and of the Lord.”
- Philippians 4:9 – “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put these things into practice, and the God of peace will be with you.”
- 1 Corinthians 11:1 – “Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ.”

2. The Response of the People – 1 Thessalonians 1:3 – Paul said he remembered “their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience in hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- They were steadfast in their faith – Vs. 4 – “Knowing your election of God.”
 - Paul was convinced that these new believers were of the elect of God because of the radical change in their lives after hearing the gospel.
 - 6 – They had begun to imitate the lives of those who had shared the gospel with them.
 - 9 – They had turned from worshipping idols to worship the true and living God.
- They were steadfast in their labor of love.
 - 7 – they became examples to all who heard.
 - 8 – the testimony of their changed lives had become a witness to the power of the gospel.
- They were steadfast in their hope and patience with the Lord.
 - They were not waiting for an “event,” they were waiting for Jesus.
 - They were not looking for “signs,” they were looking for Jesus.

- They believed the rapture of the church was “imminent,” but not necessarily “immediate.”

“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

Titus 2:11-13

In 1 Thessalonians 2, the Apostle Paul described two groups of people.

- Those for whom Paul was glad – Vs. 1-14 –
 - His coming to them was not in vain.
 - God had entrusted him and his companions with the gospel.
 - They had shared the gospel with their lives and their lips.
 - The people had received the word of God with such passion it could only be explained by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1 Thess. 2:19 – “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.”
- Those for who Paul was sad – Vs. 14b-16 –
 - Paul referred to the previous generations of the Jews, as well as the present.
 - In Romans 3, Paul documented all the privileges God had given to the Israelites, including their adoption, the covenants, the promises, and the temple services.
 - They saw the Shekinah glory of God.
 - They heard the voice of the prophets of God.
 - They witnessed the very miracles of God.
 - In Romans 9, Paul said they rejected God, they rejected God’s word, they rejected God’s Messiah, and they were persecuting him, as well as those who expressed their faith in the finished work of Christ.
- The Thessalonians had less than a month to hear the gospel, but they received it and believed it, and they were rewarded with an eternal fellowship with God through their faith in Jesus Christ.
- The Jews had hundreds of years to get to know God, to learn His will and His ways, but rather than embrace Him, they built a religion around Him and rejected the One God had sent to be their Savior.