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End-Time Lessons from 1st Thessalonians



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #188 ~

Two questions come to mind when I think about the end-times – what's going to happen, and how are we to live. 1 Thessalonians answers both these questions, for the truths of this epistle are given in the context of Christ's 2nd coming. Written in the 1st century, this epistle is instructive to Christians during the entire church age, but it's especially important for those living in the 21st century. That's because we now live in the end-times which means Jesus Christ will soon return to rapture the church. As you go over these lessons from 1 Thessalonians, think of how they apply to you at this time, but also if you happen to be alive during Daniel's 70th week, in those last few difficult years before the coming of Christ.

1. Be filled with God's grace (1 Thess. 1:1, 5:28). Every day of your life on earth you need grace, that Spirit-given ability and strength to be

and do all that God wants. You need God's grace in every situation, every relationship, and every trial. You need His grace to love others, to work at a job, to share the gospel, to serve the saints, to suffer for the Lord, and to endure to the end – and God will give you all the grace you need. 2 Cor. 9:8, Heb. 4:16, James 4:6

2. Share the gospel (1 Thess. 1:4-7). The gospel message, that everlasting truth of God's mercy and love, that Christ died and rose again to pay for all your sins, must be fixed in your mind and heart, for it is a spiritual spring bringing forth living water, enabling you to live fully for Him. As you are transformed by the power of the Spirit, you will be a witness for Christ to the world around you, even in times of tribulation. Matt. 24:9-14, 28:19-20

3. Work for God (1 Thess. 1:9, 4:11-12). Don't be lazy, but use the abilities God has given you to meet your needs and help meet the needs of others. As a member of the church, you have a special gift that you are to employ in serving one another, and in carrying out God's plans on earth. He has work for you to do, whether it relates to a secular job, doing your part in the church, sharing the gospel, or just praying. *"Do business with this until I come back."* Luke 19:13, Eph. 2:10, 1 Peter 4:10-11

4. Wait for Jesus. Hope is an essential ingredient for spiritual growth, and perseverance, especially in the end-times. What is hope? It's looking forward to the future blessings God has in store for you. Four aspects of your hope are described in this epistle: being with Jesus (1 Thess. 1:9, 4:17), being with loved ones who are Christians (1 Thess. 2:19-20, 4:13-17), being delivered from wrath (1 Thess. 5:8-9), and being glorified (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

5. Learn from believers (1 Thess. 2:1-14, 5:12-13, 5:25). God has lovingly and sovereignly placed Christians in your life so as to help you *"walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own*

kingdom and glory." You can't make it on your own! You need to learn from the words and examples of others, in areas of love, faith, holiness, gentleness, and suffering. Don't forget to show your appreciation to those who are leading you, and pray for them.

6. Suffer for God (1 Thess. 1:6, 2:14, 3:1-5). Jesus Christ suffered for you, and what a privilege that you can now suffer for Him. Your suffering may relate to trials, conflicts, sharing the word, work situations, persecution, or health issues. In those last few years before Christ's return, Christians will experience great tribulation, but this will last only a short time, and then your Savior will return to take you to Himself and then on to heaven. Acts 14:2, 2 Thess. 1:5-10

7. Have faith (1 Thess. 2:13, 3:1-10, 5:8). True faith is not trusting your own wisdom or feelings, but trusting the Lord and His word, depending on Him and His promises. To fulfill God's will and live successfully for Him, you have to have faith, for it's the means of grace, growth, and godliness. As times get harder, as you go through tribulation, your faith will be tested, but God will help you to keep trusting Him. Luke 18:8, 2 Cor. 5:7, Heb. 11:6

8. Love God and one another (1 Thess. 1:3, 2:7-8, 3:6, 3:12, 4:9-10, 5:8). The divine love God puts in your heart keeps you laboring for Him, enables you to be close to others, and motivates you to share the gospel. This agape love for others is seen when you are giving, forgiving, forbearing, patient, kind, compassionate, and committed. *"May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another."* John 15:17, Col. 3:12-13, 1 John 4:19

9. Be holy (1 Thess. 4:1-8). *"This is the will of God, your sanctification."* Now that you are saved from the penalty of sin, might you be saved from the power of sin, and soon enough, by death or by rapture, you will be saved from the presence of sin. By faith and by grace, fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Live holy and

wholly for the Lord, and then you will *"see"* Jesus and be a powerful witness for Him. Heb. 11:24-27, James 4:1-10, 1 Peter 1:16

10. Know the truth of the rapture (1 Thess. 4:14-17 – 5:1-7). God wants you to know some of the details about Christ's coming, and what happens when Christians are raptured. Here is what you learn: a) The rapture occurs at Christ's coming. b) Christ will bring with Him the believers who have already died. c) Just before the rapture, you will hear the shout of the Lord, the voice of the archangel, and the sound of the trumpet. d) The dead in Christ, believers who have already died, will be glorified a split second before the raptured saints are glorified. e) The raptured saints will be caught up with the dead in Christ, and together, they will meet the Lord in the air. f) Believers who are alert and sober won't be surprised by Christ's coming, but unbelievers will be completely caught off guard. g) The rapture takes place just before the day of the Lord, which is the outpouring of God's wrath upon the unbelievers. Matt. 24:29-31

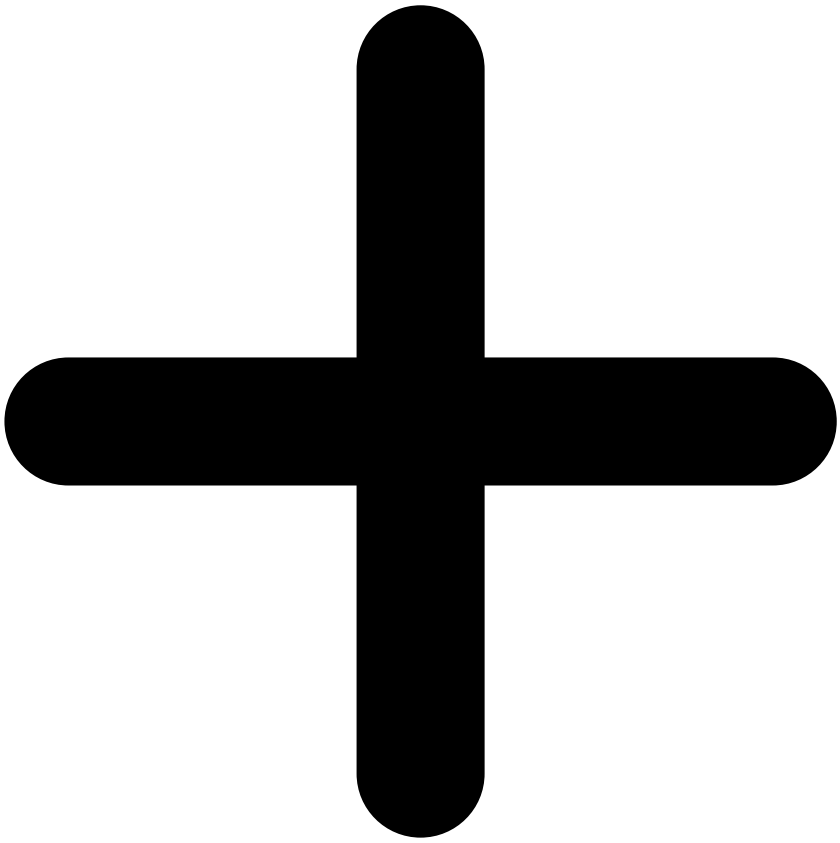
11. Rejoice, pray, and give thanks (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Being glad in the Lord, asking for help, and being grateful in all things, proves that you really know Him and His character, and are trusting Him. These godly qualities, essential for your own peace of mind, your witness, and the Lord's work, should be in your life today and for the rest of your life on earth, and especially when the Antichrist is ruling this world. Phil. 4:4-7, Rom. 5:3, Rev. 13

12. Know that God is faithful. This means you are confident that God is with you and will keep you going for Him, and then at the end of this age, will rescue you from this world, glorify you, bring you to Himself, and then take you to heaven. *"Faithful Is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."* 1 Thess. 5:23-24, 1 Cor. 1:8-9, Jude 24-25

I love this epistle, for it tells us how we are to be living for the Lord now, and at all times, and especially if we are on earth during Daniel's 70th

week, those last few years before the coming of Christ and the rapture of the church. If you are not living according to the truths in 1st Thessalonians, you won't be a strong soldier for Christ – you'll be weak, sad, selfish, proud, tired, fearful, angry, discouraged, and ineffective. Remember, you are in training so you can be a good servant and soldier for Christ, your Commander in Chief. *"Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness... since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come"* (1 Tim. 4:7-8). Might you please the One who enlisted you in His service. 2 Timothy 2:4

P.S. My desire is to do all I can to make sure you are ready to live for the Lord at all times, but especially in the end-times, and in particular, during the time of great tribulation and suffering. Here are two detailed articles that give you lots of good instruction about how to be living for the Lord. "Your Spiritual Service: A Member of the Special Forces" and "Spiritual Survival Food for the Coming Tough Times."



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