

“Is this all there is?”
2 Thessalonians 1-3
July 26, 2020

- I. The NEED for a second LETTER. (1:1-2:2)
 - A. Growing FAITH and increasing LOVE. (1:3-4)
 - B. Yet more PERSECUTION and SUFFERING. (1:5-10)
 - C. A question: Is THIS all THERE is? (2:1-2)

Scholars tell us that not long after Paul writes the first letter to the church at Thessalonica, he writes a second. The two letters are connected and deal with some of the same themes, but the main crisis is a rumour that Jesus has already come and that this might just be as good as it gets.

- 1. Kid’s question: Have you ever gotten a letter in the mail? Who from? What was that like?
- 2. Have you ever felt like “Is this really what the Christian life is supposed to look like?” What inspired that frustration?

- II. MISUNDERSTANDINGS about CHRIST’S return. (2:1-4; 3:6-14)

- A. Response #1 - UNSETTLED and ALARMED. (2:1-2)
- B. Response #2 - PASSIVE and UNENGAGED. (3:6-14)

Our theological ideas shape our lives, often in ways that we don’t even understand or notice. The misunderstanding about the return of Jesus and the “Day” of the Lord has prompted a couple of reactions in the church at Thessalonica, and Paul seeks to address both of them head on.

- 3. Which of the two responses would you be more likely to fall into?
- 4. On a scale of 1-10 how important is it to figure out the events of the return of Christ? Why do you choose that number?

- III. What PAUL has already TAUGHT them. (2:5-17)

- A. EVIL will INTENSIFY. (2:3-12; Rev. 20:1-3,7-10)
- B. The COMING of Jesus will DESTROY evil. (2:8; Rev. 19:11-21)
- C. STAND FIRM in what God HAS DONE. (2:13-17; Jn 19:30)

Paul refers back to what He has already taught them, some of that we find in the first letter, some we just don’t know about, and tells them to trust what they have been told. God will keep those who are his.

5. What questions about Christ's return does a reading of 2 Thessalonians inspire in you? How important is it to you to understand those fully?
6. What would help you right now to stand firm in what God has done? Is understanding or trust more important in helping you to do that?

IV. Paul's call BACK to the BASICS. (2:16-3:5)

- A. TRUST. don't FEAR. (3:3; Is. 41:10; Rom. 8:14-16)**
- B. ENGAGE, don't WITHDRAW. (3:4,13; Mt. 5:16)**
- C. Let your HEART be DIRECTED... (3:5; Ps. 86:11; Ezek. 11:19)**
 1. ...Into GOD'S LOVE. (I Thes. 3:12; I Jn 4:16)
 2. ...And CHRIST'S PERSEVERANCE. (Rom. 5:3-4; Rev. 1:9; 13:10;14:12)

So as we look towards applying this short letter to our own lives, there are several basic themes that Paul emphasizes that speak right into a pandemic filled world that is asking, "Is this all there is?"

7. Where do you see "fear" and "withdrawal" in your own life? How can you address that?
8. What is God showing you about your role in letting your heart be directed into His love and Christ's perseverance?