

Getting Ready for His Return

What are you waiting for today?

Are you waiting for a paycheck, a package, a promotion?

Or are you waiting for the Lord's return?

Today, we're beginning a sermon series that I believe has the potential to shake us up, sharpen our focus, and reshape the way we live. It's a study through the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians: **Getting Ready for His Return.**

Are we waiting and ready for the Lord's return?

The church at Thessalonica was, and that made them a church worth modelling after. Chapter 1 teaches us:

LIVING IN EXPECATATION OF THE LORD'S RETURN PRODUCES A FAITH WORTH FOLLOWING.

What does that kind of life actually look like?

In chapter 1, Paul highlights **four characteristics** of a church living in expectation of the Lord's return.

Characteristic #1 — Transformative Power: They were changed by the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:1–5)

Romans 1 tells us that the gospel is “*the power of God unto salvation.*” The gospel has transformative power, but **you will never be ready for the Lord’s return if you do not understand the simple message of the gospel of the grace of God and believe it.**

When Paul, Silas, and Timothy first came to Thessalonica, they had a very clear objective. They opened the Scriptures. They preached the gospel of grace. They called people to believe in Jesus, and they trusted the Spirit of God to convict hearts. And then they watched God save people.

The Book of Acts tells us exactly what Paul preached. He proclaimed that **Jesus is the Christ** who came to save sinners like you and me from the wrath of God (Acts 17:3; 17:31; 16:31). Jesus died on a cross to pay for our sins. He was buried in a tomb, and on the third day, He rose again, proving that God will justify any sinner who simply believes in Jesus for eternal life (Acts 13:38).

You are saved by grace through faith in Him. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. Faith in Jesus.

But when you believe, God begins to change you from the inside out. When you hear the gospel, the Spirit of God convicts your heart, you believe in Jesus, and He saves you. And He doesn't just give you eternal life; **He begins transforming your life.** He changes what you love, what you hope in, what you live for. That's what characterized the church at Thessalonica.

Characteristic #2 — Joyful Hearts: They remained steady in affliction (1 Thessalonians 1:6)

Life comes with difficulties, especially when you step out in faith.

As God transforms you, you begin to serve Him. And as you serve Him, sooner or later, you find yourself suffering for Him. What do you do when obedience to Christ brings affliction instead of relief?

You follow godly examples, and you hold on to the Word.

Characteristic #3 — Evangelistic Voices. They had a story worth telling (1 Thessalonians 1:8-9a)

We get to share the greatest news the world has ever heard. Paul says, “*The word of the Lord sounded forth from you.*”

They had a story to tell... how God the Father sent His Son to rescue them, how Jesus sent someone to tell them, how they heard it, believed it, and were forever changed. And once they believed, they wanted to become *that someone* Jesus would use in the lives of others.

Characteristic #4 — Directional Focus: They turned from idols to serve the living and true God. (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10)

We live in a world full of distractions. Everywhere you turn, something is campaigning for your attention, your affection, and your allegiance. How do you stay focused on the Lord in a world like that?

The Thessalonian church did not accidentally become directionally focused—they **intentionally made a turn.**

But how did they stay focused on that new direction of serving God? It was **the constant reminder that Jesus could return at any moment.**

This world and the people of this world are headed to the wrath of God, but we Christians have a savior who left the splendor of heaven to pay the price of our sins, and has promised that someday he will leave the splendor of heaven once again to rescue us out of a world that's moving toward wrath.

So why should we devote our lives to things of this world, when our hope is that Jesus will rescue us out of this world?

Living in expectation of the Lord's return produces a faith worth following.

You can become an example worth following. You can set the tone in your home, your workplace, and your friendships by living today ready and waiting for Christ's return.

What are you waiting for?

Message #1

1st & 2nd Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10