

# A Scared World Needs a FEARLESS CHURCH

## Peoples Church Wednesday Evening Study

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### First Section

*1Thessalonians 2:17-20* But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. <sup>18</sup> For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. <sup>19</sup> For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? <sup>20</sup> Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

**But Satan blocked our way (v. 18)** Historically we are not sure what were the circumstances that kept Paul from returning to the Thessalonians, yet, it was likely, based on 3::3-4, that it was the threat of persecution that deterred him. At other times he sensed that the Holy Spirit was keeping him from going to where he wished.

*Acts 16:6* Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

One situation was that of resistance from the devil and the second was God directing Paul through circumstances. It takes mature discernment and prudence to be able to differentiate between the two. In short, it takes a renewed “Christian” mind.

*Romans 12:2* Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**You are our glory and joy (v. 20):** it is obvious that Paul had his mind set upon the things above looking forward to the “Age to Come” when he would receive his heavenly reward for his faithful service for the Lord.

*1 Corinthians 3:11-15* For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup> their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. <sup>14</sup> If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Salvation is given through grace  
Rewards are earned through “work”

*Ephesians 2:8-10* For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

### Second Section

*1Thessalonians 3:1-5* So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. <sup>2</sup> We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God’s service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, <sup>3</sup> so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. <sup>4</sup> In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. <sup>5</sup> For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

**To strengthen and encourage you in your faith** (v.2): we should note that Paul did not send Timothy to the Thessalonians to encourage and strengthen them in their “self-esteem” or “vibrant personal identity.” He sent Timothy to encourage and strengthen them in their faith (i.e. their beliefs grounded in God’s Word known as sound doctrine).

*2 Timothy 4:1- In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:<sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful **instruction**.<sup>3</sup> For the time will come when people will not put up **with sound doctrine**. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.<sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

**Trials...we are destined for them...we would be persecuted (vv.3-4)** Paul was not writing about the ordinary and typical trials of life that we all must face. He was referring to the fact that Christians are destined by A) God’s plan; and B) Satan’s hateful resistance to face persecution in every age.

A Christianity that receives the acceptance and approval of the world is not true Christianity.

**Tempter had tempted you** (v. 5) Paul likely feared that the Thessalonians had given into fear generated by persecution and found a way to soft-pedal, disguise or abandon their faith.

### **Key Ways Christianity is Counter-Cultural to the “Post-Modern World” and Destines it for Persecution**

1. Christianity adheres to timeless moral truths for which God holds men accountable.
2. Christianity asserts that there is only one mediator between God and mankind.
3. Christianity presents a God that is no respector of persons.
4. Christianity is opposed to envy and class jealously.
5. Christianity is the source of the unique American principle of unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which cannot be taken away by governments.