

L. Traveling Route 66: The Bible in Biblical Perspective
The Journey with Christ, the Promised One
“I & II Thessalonians—The Book of Salvation All the Way to Glory”
Book of I & II Thessalonians
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In this study we'll cover I and II Thessalonians. Let's start by looking at I Thessalonians 1:1 which says *[1] Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.* Before we dig there was a moment where I was deeply concerned that I would be able to pass the night in safety. My wife and I were going through some things to try and tidy up some things and we came to a box that contained some letters that she had written to me while she was at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. I rescued her from that den of iniquity but she wrote me while we were dating and through our engagement. As we were going through those letters I was hoping that every one of them had been opened and read. Can you imagine getting to one that you didn't read?? I was glad all had been opened and read. Periodically I would get a second letter the same day which she basically would say something like “I forgot to tell you something in the previous letter. I need to say something else I didn't cover before.”

That's kind of where we are in that wonderful human element of I and II Thessalonians. The Apostle Paul wrote I Thessalonians and probably days or at the most a couple of months later, wrote II Thessalonians. These letters are of inestimable value. One of the reasons we can cover them together is not only were they written to the same church within a couple of months of each other, but they are also highly focused upon the same issue and that is some practical exhortations to the Thessalonians with a specific reference to the issues of what happens when you die if Christ hasn't come back. They also cover things about Christ's return. That's what I and II Thessalonians are consumed with. Other than Matthew 24 and 25 there is no collection of holy writ more focused upon clarity concerning the second coming of Christ than I and II Thessalonians. The interesting thing about these two books is how they are developed and where we get it from. We will go through both epistles but you will see some big overlap here.

Who wrote I Thessalonians? It is obviously Paul with his team of Silas and Timothy and this also gives us an idea of when he wrote it. Where did he write from? He wrote it from Corinth. When did he write it? He wrote it sometime in the years of 49 to 51 A.D. I want to take you back to the setting of how this occurs. Let's look at Acts 17. Acts 17 deals with the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul. In other words, he went on his first missionary journey, came back and gave his report to Antioch. Then there was the first 'general assembly' in Acts 15 and then the commissioners went back with the messages of the theological issues that had been addressed and give reports. Paul and Barnabas have an argument and Barnabas goes off with John Mark and Paul goes off with Silas on a second missionary journey and will later pick up Timothy.

He gets through all the places he went through on the first missionary journey and arrives at Asia Minor and wants to go south. The Holy Spirit says 'no.' He wants to go north and the Holy Spirit says 'no.' Then comes the Macedonian vision and the Gospel will now jump from Asia Minor west into Europe. Then Paul will get on this significant

highway that runs from Macedonia down into Greece and all the way into Corinth. It is called the Egnatian Way. I've been on that highway and it runs about twenty yards from the Philippian jailer's place. It runs right by the river where Paul led Lydia to Christ. After Paul had gone to Neapolis and Philippi he arrived at a place called Thessalonica. That arrival produced one of the most encouraging statements for me in the Bible.

Let's look at Acts 17 that documents his founding of the church at Thessalonica. Acts 17:1-4 says [1] *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. [2] And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, [3] explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." [4] And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.*

Paul is bearing fruit here. We know he is there at least three weeks (three Sabbaths) and probably a little bit longer. He takes the Gospel to the Jew first and then to the Greeks. There is a response that is coming not only from the Jewish people but Gentiles and men and women. Thessalonica has approximately a hundred thousand plus people. It is the capital of Macedonia. It is a free city and it contains a Roman cohort that is there to guard it. As they are there they are also inundated with paganism. There were Greek pagan cults, Roman pagan cults, and Egyptian pagan cults. There was a little enclave of a Jewish colony there. Paul goes to the Jewish colony first and reasons with them from the Scriptures and some come to Christ. That provides for him a foundation for him to go out to the Gentiles and they are coming to Christ.

What happens after this initial response? Acts 17:5-10 says [5] *But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. [6] And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting (These 13 words are my favorite words in the Bible and it happened less than 25 years after the ascension of Jesus), "**These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,** (That is not a paid for endorsement by a friend. That is the frustrated epithets of an adversary.) [7] *and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."* [8] *And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. [9] And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. [10] The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.**

Paul has a concern for them so he sends Timothy and Silas back because the Thessalonian new Christians are under persecution. Thessalonica is the first local state supported persecution of believers. Paul then goes on to Athens where he gives this great presentation of the Gospel at Areopagus. Now let's look at Acts 18:1-5 which says [1] *After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. [2] And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, [3] and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. [4] And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. [5] When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia...* Now

they join Paul at Corinth and that becomes the occasion for the letter of I Thessalonians. Silas and Timothy bring the concerns, questions and report of what is happening in Thessalonica.

So the Apostle Paul sits down and writes what is the earliest letter we have as he writes back to the church that months before he had planted and that he had sent Silas and Timothy to nurture. In this letter that he writes he is dealing with their concerns.

Now why does he write it? He is responding to the questions of the Thessalonian Christians they gave to Paul through Timothy in light of the local sponsored persecution and death of believers prior to Christ's return. Therefore I Thessalonians is utterly inundated with information about what happens to a believer when they die and the second coming of Christ. All five chapters have something to say about the second coming of Christ.

I Thessalonians 1:10 says *[10] and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.* I Thessalonians 2:19-20 says *[19] For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? [20] For you are our glory and joy.* I Thessalonians 3:13 says *[13] so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.* I Thessalonians 4:13-18 says *[13] But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. [14] For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. [15] For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

I Thessalonians 5:1-11, 23-24 says *[1] Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. [2] For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3] While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. [4] But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. [5] For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. [6] So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. [7] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. [8] But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. [9] For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. [11] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. [23] Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.* There is that constant theme of Christ's second coming all through I Thessalonians.

Now I want to set this up for you and here's what has happened. The Apostle Paul was there and preached of the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Because of this Jews and Gentiles are coming to Christ. Also while he was there he told them that Jesus was coming back, coming soon. So they then enter into this relationship with Christ. Then when Paul leaves this persecution that had been initiated against him went even further against them and some of them either by natural causes or under persecution die. When Timothy comes back they're saying "Timothy, Paul said that Jesus is coming back but He hasn't come back. Some of our brothers and sisters in the Lord now have died. What has happened to them?"

Now the Apostle Paul begins to explain to them that Christ is coming back and then explains to them in great detail what happens to them when they die before He comes back. He says "I do not want you to be agnostic or ignorant about those who have fallen asleep in Jesus (found in I Thessalonians 4)." Paul is not teaching soul sleep. He is intentionally taking the stark, radical word for death, *thanatos* – meaning separation which is a very unnatural thing where God made you body and soul and the two threads are woven into one for all eternity, but because of sin there is a physical death of separation. There is a spiritual death of separation from God and there is an eternal death of separation from God for all eternity. When those who are in Christ die, they have gone to be with the Lord. They have fallen asleep in Christ. Paul has purposefully taken the word death and changing it to speak of the death of a believer as a euphemism using asleep in Christ.

The illustration I like to use here is when I would talk my father into staying awake to watch the "Late Show" when I was in high school. On Friday nights I would do this and my dad would say "Okay son." At 11:15pm the Late Show would come on and I can still hear the introduction. I never saw it through to its completion because I always fell asleep but I never woke up in front of the television. My dad knew what was going to happen. So after I had fallen asleep my dad would pick me up and put me in my bed. That's the picture Paul is giving that when you die, you don't meet death, you meet the shadow of death. He takes you through the valley of the shadow of death for He has defeated death. So He takes you through what He has defeated. This is Paul's way to take Psalm 23 where it talks of the valley of the shadow of death and tells them Christ is with them as he uses a euphemism of sleeping to get the same point across.

Then what does he say? When Jesus comes back those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, come with Him. How can they come with Him if they're not with Him? Then Paul says the dead in Christ shall rise. He is talking about their bodies. Paul is teaching that when you die you go into what we theologians call the intermediate state. You are with the Lord but it is not your final state. The final state awaits the resurrection of the body and it will be translated into the corruptible into the incorruptible, the new body and it will be designed for you to function in the new heavens and the new earth.

It's very much like what God is going to do with the creation. God is going to take this creation, roll it up and then roll out a new heavens and a new earth. He is going to take your old body and roll it up. He will then roll out a new body for the new heavens and the new earth. When will Jesus come back? He will come back at the last trumpet. What will happen? Those who are in Christ will come with Him and their bodies will be raised and they will be given a new body for the new heavens and the new earth. What

about those who are alive? They will be caught up to be with the Lord and be translated into their new bodies, even at the same time.

That's why Paul will later say to the Corinthians, we shall not all sleep meaning not all of us will have our bodies put in the grave but we shall all be changed. We all will receive a new body for the new heavens and the new earth. So here is this glorious promise of the second coming of Christ in which he brings to fruition from an intermediate state to a final state, those who have died before His coming who are with Him in the intermediate state and then they will be given the final state of a new body for the new heavens and the new earth. Then those who are alive when He comes will be caught up to be with the Lord as well and now the Lord will roll out a new heavens and a new earth in which will be glory forever.

Paul also makes another comment. He says when Christ comes it will be like a thief in the night, concerning unbelievers. Paul is picking up on the language of Christ from Matthew 24 here. Believers will have seen and experienced the birth pangs and the signs of His coming. Therefore they will be ready like the parable of the ten virgins. Five were religious but unconverted and we're not ready which is the evidence they are not converted. The believers are ready and they're anticipating and looking. Let me use the language of Peter, the unbeliever is saying all is as it always was. All continues as it always has been. Peter says has it escaped their notice that everything hasn't continued as it was and it will not continue as it has been. Did the Lord not bring judgment in the days of Noah? Peter goes on to explain we haven't just marched along in the circumstances of life. God has been engaged and God will send His Son. Then the same earth that was judged with water will then be judged by fire and it will be melted away and refabricated into a new heavens and a new earth.

Paul says they will be saying peace and safety. Jesus says they will be eating, drinking and giving in marriage, business as usual and then sudden destruction. There will be the coming of the Lord and the day of grace, but you won't be that way. If you're alive when Jesus comes back you'll be looking for we are not like those in the night. We are like those who live in the day. We see the light of what He is doing and we anticipate what He is doing. There is even an awareness that He is getting closer and closer and closer. That's what the Apostle Paul is teaching. Not only has Christ in His first advent made you ready for eternity through His death, burial and resurrection but He is now indwelling you by the Holy Spirit so that you are putting on the breast plate of righteousness. You are walking by faith. You are looking to the Lord anticipating His coming so that when He comes it doesn't overtake you. You are ready. The lamps are trimmed. You are looking and waiting for Him but for the unbeliever it is sudden destruction. It is like the dawn that breaks upon the night and it shall find them out and the Day of Judgment has come. The Day of grace has been closed.

Thessalonians is not only answering that question but it's also something else but first I'd like to give you the outline of I Thessalonians. The introduction is found in I Thessalonians 1:1. Then there is Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians in I Thessalonians 1:2 to 3:13. Then you have his equipping of the Thessalonians in light of death and the second coming of Christ in I Thessalonians 4:1 to 5:22 and then his conclusion in I Thessalonians 5:23-28. Now, I'd like to go to the first section which is his encouragement to the Thessalonians.

Here is Paul's thanksgiving prayer that is an unbelievable encouragement to the Thessalonians who have sent these questions to him. I Thessalonians 1:2-3 says [2] *We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, [3] remembering before our God and Father your work of **faith** and labor of **love** and steadfastness of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ.* When you study the letters of the Apostle Paul he uses these Christian triad virtues of faith, hope and love. In almost each case of his letters he weaves them in. Here he acknowledges that God's grace has been manifested in them through the work of faith, the labor of love and the steadfastness of hope.

I Thessalonians 1:4-5 says [4] *For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen (elected) you, [5] because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.* Paul makes this astounding statement. Paul says he knows the electing grace of God is upon you. How? Was he there in the counsel of the Trinity when the eternal covenant is established in the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and the decrees of predestination and election have taken place? No he wasn't there but he knows what electing grace does and he sees the evidence, because the Gospel didn't come in Word only. It came in Word because you would not have been able to become a Christian if it hadn't come in Word. Faith comes by hearing but it didn't come just in Word. It also came in power. Paul gives three evidences of how it came – power, the Holy Spirit and full conviction.

What did they do? These Thessalonians became like their teachers. I Thessalonians 1:6-10 says [6] *And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, (They are being killed for Christ. I have often wondered if it was crime to worship the Triune God and you'd be put in jail and how many would actually show up on the Lord's Day? After they took you to jail, like the Thessalonians, you might get killed. Paul said he has seen it.) [7] so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. [8] For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. [9] For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, [10] and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

As Paul goes on to instruct them he first gives this encouragement when he says "I see electing grace because the Gospel didn't come just in Word even though it had to come in Word but it didn't come in Word only. It also came in power, the Holy Spirit and full conviction. I can see that because you remain steadfast in Christ with faith, hope and love, even under affliction. We go other places to preach and we don't even have to say a word. The report of your love for Christ in the midst of affliction has given us a field of harvest. Your love for Christ gives us all the platform we need and many times we don't have to say anything. They start telling us what we said to you because of what you did and how it affected your life." So this evangelism has been propelled forth by their suffering and steadfastness in the Lord. From that encouragement Paul then gives the instructions concerning the second coming of Christ and also what happens to the believer who is with the Lord, not in the final state but the intermediate state.

Paul sends the letter and a couple of months later he realizes there are some other things he needs to say. So he sends a 'p.s.' letter, a post script letter and it's II Thessalonians. So Paul writes I Thessalonians to encourage and equip the Thessalonians under persecution while addressing the issue of what happens to believers who die before Christ returns. Now let's go to II Thessalonians.

Who writes II Thessalonians? The Apostle Paul writes II Thessalonians. Where is this book written? It is written while Paul is still in Corinth. He will be in Corinth for eighteen months. It will be his second longest stay. There is only one other place where he planted and grew a church and stayed longer. It is at Ephesus where he stayed there three years. Here in Corinth he is working with Aquilla and Priscilla and making tents. This is where he writes I Thessalonians and within a couple of months he now writes II Thessalonians. II Thessalonians has the same theme but he decides in this book to get a little more pointed with them because he hears they are making some bad decisions.

Why does he write II Thessalonians? He writes this book as a further, more pointed response to the questions and actions of the Thessalonians conveyed to Paul through Timothy, in light of the local persecution and the death of believers prior to Christ's return. This book is even more pointed because they are making some decisions about how they are living in light of the persecution and the doctrine of the second coming that are wrong. So now he is not only going to do some encouragement but he is going to give some pastoral exhortation. It's like when I get to the back of the church and someone says "Preacher, thank you for the sermon, I think. You started stepping on my toes. You left preaching and started meddling." If I was a Baptist I would probably say to you "I haven't preached until I've meddled." Paul is about to start doing some meddling in II Thessalonians.

Let me give you the outline for this book. The introduction is found in II Thessalonians 1:1-2. He gives this marvelous, wonderful prayer of thanksgiving found in II Thessalonians 1:3-12. He gives further instructions about the second coming in II Thessalonians 2. Then he requests their prayers in II Thessalonians 3:1-5 and then he gives some final, pointed exhortations because of some ungodly decisions that people were making in light of persecution and the doctrine of the second coming of Christ in II Thessalonians 3:6-15. Then he gives the benediction in II Thessalonians 3:15-18.

Let's look at II Thessalonians 2. Here the Apostle Paul again goes to this matter concerning the second coming of Christ. II Thessalonians 2:1-4 *says [1] Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, [2] not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us* (someone is preaching something wrong and somebody has written a letter and put his name on it and it is teaching error. It is trying to tell them that Jesus has already come back and Paul is telling them this hasn't happened yet.), *to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. [3] Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, [4] who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.* What is Paul talking about here?

There are about three or four possibilities here but I'll tell you what I think. Paul is going to rise up and say this is the one true religion and you either obey or you die. He takes his place in the temple of God and I don't think he's talking about a rebuilt temple

in Jerusalem or the professing church. Some say the New Testament calls the local church the temple of God. He is going to get control of the church. I think he will impact the church but I don't think he is referring to the church. I think Paul is referring to God's temple being His dwelling place. God dwells in the heavens and upon the earth. In other words, it is a worldwide movement where only God should be exalted. He is exalting Himself. It is essentially a religious movement. In the book of Revelation there are two beasts at the end where one comes out of the land and one comes up from the sea. It is both a religious and a political movement. It convulses in one who raises himself up in the creation of God which He has made to dwell in for His glory. It moves throughout the world. That is its very intent and purpose.

So He raises Himself up, *proclaiming himself to be God*. II Thessalonians 2:5-8 says [5] *Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?* [6] *And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.* (It hasn't been revealed yet because God has been restraining it) [7] *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.* [8] *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.* There seems to be this evil that is intensifying prior to the coming of Christ and it will become more and more obvious, seemingly more and more successful and more and more expansive. Why? It is because He who restrains is taken away. I personally think that is speaking of the restraining work of the Holy Spirit in the life of His church. Salt and light – I think that is what it is referring to. A picture of it is given to you in Romans 1 with perhaps other than the words 'depart from Me' are the worst words in the Bible when it says "God gave them over to the desires of their heart."

So in God's plan there is a removal of the restraining power of the Holy Spirit and as that happens this son of lawlessness expands in this political, economic, military, religiously framed power, proclaiming to be God. Why will people come to him? II Thessalonians 2:9-12 says [9] *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,* [10] *and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.* [11] *Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,* [12] *in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

In other words, what will pave the way? What did God send to affirm that the Apostles were giving us the Word of God? He gave signs, wonders and miracles. What is it that is going to be done? There will be false signs and wonders to support what is a lie and deceptive but done with power. People get upset with me because I don't run down the trail of the neo-charismatic movement that believes that the whole point of coming to Jesus is your miracle today. If you are living for miracles you are being set up for the deception of Satan. You need to live for the truth. It is only those who have a love for the truth that are not deceived. If the whole point of your life is going to the next big miracle moment or you are always revolving around the supernatural, you have just set yourself up for the deception of Satan. Satan can provide false signs, wonders and miracles with power. Go check the magicians in Egypt. That was not slight of hand. They had staffs that became snakes. There is a power beyond what is obvious that is evil

that is inexplicable and if you're living for that experience then Satan will provide it in order to get you away from the truth so that all you're looking for is the next miracle.

Do not tell people that I said God is not doing miracles because that's not what I'm saying. I praise God's name for His miracles but I don't live for the miracles. I live for and by the truth that brings me to Christ. God does the miracle when and how but that is not what we live for. We live for the truth of God's Word. That is exactly what Satan uses to divert, destroy and deceive even professing believers in the "evangelical conservative church" who are preoccupied with the miraculous, instead of studying to show yourself approved as a workman in the truth that need not be ashamed, having a love of the truth while grateful for every miracle that God gives. We are not as those who seek miracles. We are those who want to seek Christ through the truth of His Word, grateful for any and all miracles that He does. So there is the clear warning Paul gives to us. Then he tells them to stand firm.

After Paul requests prayer he then points out what happens when people misrepresent the second coming of Christ. II Thessalonians 3:6-10 says *[6] Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. [7] For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, [8] nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. [9] It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. [10] For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.*

Work is not punishment. Work is not part of the curse. Work is part of creation. It brings dignity and self-respect. What was happening? There are those in light of the persecution and the second coming of Christ that refuse to work. They were living off of other people. He is not talking about people who are incapable of work. That is called the ministry of mercy. He is talking about those who are capable but not willing to, not going to and they have shrouded it under the heading of 'I'm just focused on the second coming of Christ.'

Paul goes on to say in II Thessalonians 3:11-15, *[11] For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. [12] Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. [13] As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. [14] If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. [15] Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.*

That's pretty strong language, isn't it? We would probably tell Paul that he is a very insensitive pastor, but he wants them to be liberated from the false notion that I'm holy and focused upon Christ and the proof of it is all I do is sit around and read my Bible and I won't go dig a ditch. I won't flip a hamburger or sweep a driveway. I won't punch a clock. See how holy and godly I am. Paul is saying "No, look at us. We had a right to eat your bread but we wouldn't take it. We set an example for you. Work is Godly and holy."

I don't think it's any accident that Paul tells people this like me. He says in I Timothy 5:17, *[17] Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor*

(that is support), *especially those who labor in preaching and teaching*. Hard work is not a curse. It's a blessing. I'm not talking about work worship. Our life is not our work. Our life is Christ. We go to work for Christ. Do your work heartily as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23). Here are people who are shrouding their laziness under the doctrine of the second coming. Paul says to shame them so that you can talk to them, not as enemies but as brothers. Mark it out and then begin to minister to them. Do not reward their laziness. Give them work. Call them to work.

Whenever I see that I am reminded of the dignity of work and the blessing of the Lord that gives it to us. Work for the Lord. The day is coming when all this work will be done but until Christ comes, work for the Lord. Work hard, husbands. Work hard, wives. Rest and get renewed on the Lord's Day. Have your Sabbath week or two each year, but work unto the Lord. Do your work for the Lord that when He comes He will find us faithful. Harry, if you knew Jesus was coming tomorrow what would you do? I would do what I do every Sunday night and that is I go home, eat a bowl of popcorn which is my supper and then I repent of all of my inadequacies of preaching this day. Then I open my Bible and start on next week. If Jesus came on Monday that is what I would do because that is what God has called me to do. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in these wonderful epistles. Thank You for their glorious subject matter. Would You allow us Lord, to embrace the glory and majesty of the second coming and may it invigorate us to faithfulness, not come in as an excuse for idleness. Lord, help us not get caught up in fanciful things but love the truth, grateful for every miraculous work You do, but we seek the truth that we may know Christ and make Christ known. We look forward and wait while we work for His coming. Come quickly Lord Jesus, Amen.