

FIRST AND SECOND

THESSALONIANS

Living in Light of Christ's Return

THE CHURCH

BIG IDEA: The church is God's called out community in the world.

DATE: Wednesday, September 30 and Sunday, October 4, 2026

SCRIPTURE: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 (CSB)

OPENING QUESTION

Did you grow up in church? If so, what was it like? Was it an important part of your week? What do you remember about it? What are you thankful for about your home church?

SETTING THE STAGE

The two major themes in 1 and 2 Thessalonians are the return of Jesus Christ and the ministry of the local church. First Thessalonians is a letter from a spiritual father to his children. Paul pictured the church as a family, and he reminded the Thessalonians of what God did for them through his ministry. The second letter was written to correct certain wrong ideas – and wrong practices – relating to the doctrine of the Lord's return. In these two letters, Paul balances the prophetic and the practical. He insists that the doctrine of the return of Jesus Christ be more than a doctrine – that it be a dynamic in our lives and in the ministry of our churches.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 (CSB)

We always thank God for all of you, making mention of you constantly in our prayers. ³ We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work produced by faith, your labor motivated by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance. You know how we lived among you for your benefit, ⁶ and you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit. ⁷ As a result, you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸ For the word of the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith in God has gone out. Therefore, we don't need to say anything, ⁹ for they themselves report what kind of reception we had from you: 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 rescues us from the coming wrath.

DISCUSSION

READ: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

Paul opens his letter with thankfulness. What does it look like today for a pastor to be thankful for a church? What are some reasons to be thankful? How does thankfulness translate into a stronger church?

What does it mean, in practical terms, to be a “called-out people”?

How do you know if a church is serving God or itself? What kinds of letters might Paul write to the churches in America today?

READ: 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

We often speak in terms of “finding God,” but the reality is that God came looking for us and is always seeking us. What does that teach us about God’s attitude toward us?

What kinds of persecution did the church face? Why is faith always tested? What does that testing bring? How has *your* faith been tested? What did that testing bring?

When is the last time you shared your faith with a friend or relative? When is the last time you personally invited someone to church?

READ: 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

What is the ultimate result of worshipping idols? Where is hope for those who worship idols? What kind of hope did the Thessalonians find when they trusted “the living God”?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TIME:

- What do you picture when you hear “the second coming of Christ?” What did you learn about this growing up? Does it evoke fear, excitement or worry? Why is that? When is the last time you thought about Christ’s return?
- Why might some of the church members have been tempted to stop working in anticipation of Jesus’ return? What’s the difference between being anxious about Jesus’ return and living expectantly? What are some ways you are living expectantly?
- What do you imagine to be God’s attitude when we discuss Jesus’ return to the point of disagreeing over the exact order of events involved?
- Do you ever become frustrated with Jesus’ timing? What prompts those moments? How can waiting actually help your faith grow? What are some of the things that make waiting for Jesus’ return difficult?

GOING FORWARD

What every church should be is what every Christian should be: *evangelized* (born again), *exemplary* (imitating the right people), *enthusiastic* (sharing the gospel with others), and *expectant* (daily looking for Jesus Christ to return). Take an inventory of your life looking at these four elements. Going forward, where is God calling you to make a change?