Lesson One
The Fear of End Times

Even though Christians look forward, through faith, to Christ's second coming, at the end times, there is a general sense of apprehension. Strong fears of unbelievers means the topic doesn't get much discussion. The end of one's own life is a topic a person prefers not to discuss. Yet it is worth studying and is appropriate to address at this time in the church year.

This three-part Bible study will lead you through a study of the end times and apply those facts to your daily life. We pray that you grow from this study, and your faith is strengthened.

Prayer

Dear Almighty God, we know that You hold all power and can do marvelous things. We praise Your name for your strength, justice, wisdom, and love. We pray that this study leads us to a clearer understanding of Your word and a faith that gives us confidence in Your promises. Amen.

Open His Word [2 Thessalonians 1:5-10]

The Apostle Paul wrote a great deal about the end times to the Thessalonians. Let's take a look at one short section of his first letter to the believers in that city.

Read verses 5-7

1) Paul wrote in verse 5, “. . . and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.” What assurance do you have that this promise applies to you?

2) What is promised to those who are troubled?

3) What troubles do you suffer now that you think will be relieved? What kind of troubles do you expect to still come into your life?

4) Job said to his wife [who told him to curse God and die because of his suffering]: “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:10).

Paul wrote, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

Based on these two quotes and others passages like them, what can you conclude about our earthly suffering?
Read verses 8-9

1) As a child did you ever hear the dreaded words, “Just wait until your father comes home!”? You knew that your father’s justice would be firm and sure. You probably also knew that the punishment was earned and deserved. According to verse 8, who is going to be punished?

2) Why is this a great comfort for believers and a terrible fear for unbelievers?

3) Verse 9 states that the unbelievers are going to be “punished with everlasting destruction.” It gives two clear examples of being shut out. What are those two examples?

4) According to the verse 10, why are you included among those who will marvel?

These verses make it clear that salvation is determined solely by faith in Jesus Christ. It is also clear that unbelievers are going to suffer the most by being separated from God.

Apply His Word

1) This section of 2 Thessalonians makes it clear that a person’s actions are not as important as his or her faith. Since that is the case, why do people determine that the elderly and disabled should have the “right to die”?

2) How can a person who is disabled or dying still give glory to God?

3) How can one person’s suffering help someone else demonstrate their Christian faith?

As much as you might want to see an enemy suffer and die in eternal condemnation, your Christian love leads you to feel compassion for them. What steps can you take to demonstrate your Christian faith and love to those who are unbelievers in your life?

Conclusions from His Word

The end of our lives, like the end of time, holds elements of fear. God’s Word makes it clear that we don’t need to be afraid. We do, however, need to trust Him. When working with people who are approaching death, keep in mind the one thing that is needed – faith. Although other obstacles can interfere, stay focused on the will of God, and provide the spiritual guidance and assurance that is needed. God’s Word makes it very clear that a believer’s faithfulness is well worth it in the end.
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Read verses 5-7

1) Paul wrote in verse 5, “... and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.”
   What assurance do you have that this promise applies to you?
   Because God’s judgement is right and Christ has won our salvation.

2) What is promised to those who are troubled?
   God is just and He will give relief to you who are troubled.

3) What troubles do you suffer now that you think will be relieved? What kind of troubles do you expect to still come into your life?
   Answers will vary but could include issues like health, financial stability, relationships

4) Job said to his wife [who told him to curse God and die because of his suffering]: “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:10).

   Paul wrote, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

   Based on these two quotes and others passages like them, what can you conclude about our earthly suffering?
   Although there is suffering, it is minimal when compared to the joy of heaven

Prayer

Dear Almighty God, we know that You hold all power and can do marvelous things. We praise Your name for your strength, justice, wisdom, and love. We pray that this study leads us to a clearer understanding of Your word and a faith that gives us confidence in Your promises. Amen.

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Read verses 8-9

1) As a child did you ever hear the dreaded words, “Just wait until your father comes home!”? You knew that your father's justice would be firm and sure. You probably also knew that the punishment was earned and deserved. According to verse 8, who is going to be punished?
   *Those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

2) Why is this a great comfort for believers and a terrible fear for unbelievers?
   *Christ has already won salvation; the unbelievers actions won't overcome unbelief.*

3) Verse 9 states that the unbelievers are going to be “punished with everlasting destruction.” It gives two clear examples of being shut out. What are those two examples?
   1) Shut out from the presence of the Lord and (2) from the majesty of his power.

4) According the verse 10, why are you included among those who will marvel?
   *Because you believe.*

These verses make it clear that salvation is determined solely by faith in Jesus Christ. It is also clear that unbelievers are going to suffer the most by being separated from God.

### Apply His Word

1) This section of 2 Thessalonians makes it clear that a person's actions are not as important as his or her faith. Since that is the case, why do people determine that the elderly and disabled should have the “right to die”?
   *Answer can vary, but might include: selfishness, lack of faith, quality of life issues.*

2) How can a person who is disabled or dying still give glory to God?
   *Examples include prayer, reading the Bible, making godly decisions, showing love.*

3) How can one person's suffering help someone else demonstrate their Christian faith?
   *Like the Good Samaritan, the suffering of others can be an outlet for Christian faith.*

As much as you might want to see an enemy suffer and die in eternal condemnation, your Christian love leads you to feel compassion for them. What steps can you take to demonstrate your Christian faith and love to those who are unbelievers in your life?

*Take time to visit the sick and shut-ins whether at home or institutionalized.*

*Realize the fear of dying is strong in unbelievers, and use the Gospel to offer strength.*

*Remember those people in your prayers and let them know you are praying for them.*

### Conclusions from His Word

The end of our lives, like the end of time, holds elements of fear. God's Word makes it clear that we don't need to be afraid. We do, however, need to trust Him. When working with people who are approaching death, keep in mind the one thing that is needed – faith. Although other obstacles can interfere, stay focused on the will of God, and provide the spiritual guidance and assurance that is needed. God's Word makes it very clear that a believer's faithfulness is well worth it in the end.
Lesson Two  
*The Joy of End Times*

Reaching home after a long vacation is always filled with mixed feelings. People experience sadness in facing the end of a good thing, yet experience the joy of being back home in comfortable surroundings.

Life on earth can be like vacation. We are on a journey which embraces many experiences, but we are not home. For believers, our home is heaven. At the end of the vacation we go home, and at the end of our lives we go to our heavenly home. Let’s look at the joys that go along with the journey that is leading us home.

**Prayer**

Dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we thank You for winning salvation for us. Your sacrifice means we can spend eternity in heaven. We praise Your name for such a wonderful gift. Help us to see the joy of the end times and rejoice in the blessings that You have prepared for us. Amen.

**Open His Word | Hebrews 9:24-28**

This time of year can be very exciting, yet very difficult, for young children. They realize that Christmas is approaching, but the time seems to pass so slowly. Every day seems to last forever, and too many days pass before Christmas finally arrives.

Each one of us can understand the enthusiasm of the children. The time might be long, but the reward at Christmas makes the wait all worth it.

For Christians, the end times can be like Christmas. The wait seems unending at times, but we have the sure promise of God that the reward is going to be worth it!

**Read verse 24**

1) After Jesus went to heaven, before whom did He appear?

**Read verses 25-26**

In the Old Testament, the High Priest was required to offer a special sacrifice every year on the Day of Atonement. The sacrifice was effective, but temporary. Each year the Israelites were accustomed to their High Priest making that annual offering. In addition, each family made regular sacrifices for their daily sins.

1) Why would it be hard for those Israelites to accept a Savior who would sacrifice only once?

2) After studying all three verses, we know that Christ did not go to heaven to continue making sacrifices. What is He doing in heaven?
Read verses 27-28

1) Have you ever noticed the desire of some unbelievers to find immortality? From this section, how do we know that all people are going to face death?

2) God makes it very clear that He controls life and death. Since that is true, how should we respond when people debate physician-assisted suicide?

3) Jesus appeared twice. The first time was to make the sacrifice, once and for all. What is the purpose of His second appearance?

Apply His Word

This section states very clearly that Christ won salvation for us. That means we don't have to do anything else for eternity in heaven. In fact, we can't do anything more than what Christ already did. We also see that Jesus is in heaven, waiting to welcome us home. What a reason to rejoice!

This truth also means that we have work to do here on earth. For the believers, we need to support and encourage them with God’s Word to remain faithful. It doesn't mean we should try to improve their situation by ending their life prematurely. For the unbelievers, we need to share our faith and joy in ways that reach their hearts. It doesn't mean we celebrate the fact that without repentance and faith they will suffer eternal damnation.

Conclusions from His Word

The end – many emotions can be raised by the thought of something coming to an end. Even though we are considering the end times, we should also remember that the end of life on earth means the beginning of eternal life. For Christians, there is no greater joy that can be imagined.

When working with a loved one who is facing end-of-life issues, be reminded that great joy is prepared for them. It doesn't mean that we can decide for God when that time will come. Paul said that he would prefer going to heaven which would be better by far, but that he would stay and carry out God’s will for Him on earth. Regardless of a person's quality of life, the goal is always to serve the Lord and glorify His name. Let God decide the time when He brings a loved one home. Until then, use every opportunity to serve Him.
Lesson Two

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   He appeared before God on our behalf.

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1) Why would it be hard for those Israelites to accept a Savior who would sacrifice only once?

   Their tradition demanded a yearly sacrifice.

2) After studying all three verses, we know that Christ did not go to heaven to continue making sacrifices. What is He doing in heaven?

   He is our advocate working on behalf of His church on earth.
Read verses 27-28

1) Have you ever noticed the desire of some unbelievers to find immortality? From this section, how do we know that all people are going to face death?
   
   God stated that man is destined to die once and then face the judgement.

2) God makes it very clear that He controls life and death. Since that is true, how should we respond when people debate physician-assisted suicide?
   
   The end of a person's life is in God's hands; we don't have the right to take that role.

3) Jesus appeared twice. The first time was to make the sacrifice, once and for all. What is the purpose of His second appearance?
   
   Not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those whoa are waiting for Him.

Apply His Word

This section states very clearly that Christ won salvation for us. That means we don't have to do anything else for eternity in heaven. In fact, we can't do anything more than what Christ already did. We also see that Jesus is in heaven, waiting to welcome us home. What a reason to rejoice!

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Lesson Three

How to Live in the End Times

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Have you ever considered what your reaction would be if you heard the doctor's words, “You have three months to live”? You could:

- spend time with family
- try to accomplish many lifetime goals as yet unfulfilled
- live in anger that things are out of your control

In a sense, we are living with a similar prognosis. The only differences are that: 1) the time is undefined and, 2) the words are from God – not an earthly physician.

This third lesson builds on the first two. This, you could argue, is the one that counts because it leads you to make changes in your daily life.

We’ll take a look at 1 Thessalonians 5 as a short outline for our study.

Prayer

Almighty King, Creator of all things, You alone know the day of Your return. Guide us through Your Word to use each day to glorify Your name. Strengthen our faith through this study and send Your Holy Spirit to be with us. Amen.

Open His Word | 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

Compare and contrast the believers and unbelievers regarding the end times.

1) What is similar about believers and unbelievers?

2) What will be different about believers and unbelievers on the last day?

Read verses 4-8

1) Paul talks about those who are in the darkness versus those who are in the light. Those in the darkness (unbelievers) are filled with actions like evil and laziness. What are the sons of light and sons of the day (believers) supposed to do?

2) Christians put on faith and love as a breastplate and wear the hope of salvation as a helmet. Give some reasons why Paul explains the life of a Christian in this way.
Read verses 9-11

1) Verse 9 says that God did not appoint us to suffer. Yet we suffer every day. If that is not God’s desire, then why do we have so much suffering?

2) Because our world is filled with pain and so many people are troubled, how can you share the comfort of the Gospel through your life?

Apply His Word

Quite often in this world, people focus on their own lives and the comforts that they have or don’t have. When we focus on ourselves we lose the focus of God’s will. As Christians living in the end times, we cannot afford to lose that focus.

Paul gave a wonderful example when he wrote about the day and the night. It is now day for Christians. Consider how you use this time to share your faith in words and actions.

Place a check mark before each of the statements that show ways to share your faith with others:

____ 1. Give glory to God for the blessings in your life.
____ 2. Accept the negative things in your life without complaining.
____ 3. Trust in God when life is going good, but become negative when things go bad.
____ 4. Spend time with loved ones who are disabled, shut-in, or institutionalized.
____ 5. Show love to the elderly by ending their lives and putting them out of their misery.
____ 6. Let people know how tough your life is and how you manage to endure in spite of all the pain.
____ 7. Study God’s Word daily for strength, comfort, and direction in your life.
____ 8. Pray for people who are hospitalized, in nursing homes, or suffering with pain and loneliness in their sunset years.
____ 9. Evaluate people’s quality of life in determining whether they should continue living.
____10. Rank people into two categories: those worth helping and those not worth your effort.

Conclusions from His Word

Our time on earth is limited, and a great deal needs to be done. These past three weeks involved the study of God’s Word as it applies to end-of-life issues. Just like our own lives, the world has a certain amount of time that God has ordained before it comes to an end. Rather than complain about the problems or blaming God for the suffering, use those opportunities to praise Him and lead others to a saving faith in their Savior. Remember that our suffering or unique situation just might be the situation that God gives us to reach others with the Gospel.

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Amen.

Open His Word 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

Compare and contrast the believers and unbelievers regarding the end times.

1) What is similar about believers and unbelievers?
   
   *Judgement Day will come suddenly and no one will escape.*

2) What will be different about believers and unbelievers on the last day?
   
   *Believers will not be shocked or scared; unbelievers will experience destruction.*

Read verses 4-8

1) Paul talks about those who are in the darkness versus those who are in the light. Those in the darkness (unbelievers) are filled with actions like evil and laziness. What are the sons of light and sons of the day (believers) supposed to do?
   
   *Be alert and self-controlled, and put on faith and love.*

2) Christians put on faith and love as a breastplate and wear the hope of salvation as a helmet. Give some reasons why Paul explains the life of a Christian in this way.
   
   *We are at war against the powers of evil these Christian attributes are our best defense.*
Read verses 9-11

1) Verse 9 says that God did not appoint us to suffer. Yet we suffer every day. If that is not God’s desire, then why do we have so much suffering?

*God did not appoint us to suffer His wrath; there is still earthly suffering due to sin.*

2) Because our world is filled with pain and so many people are troubled, how can you share the comfort of the Gospel through your life?

*Use your gifts to help others; pray for your neighbor; encourage others with the Gospel.*

## Apply His Word

Quite often in this world, people focus on their own lives and the comforts that they have or don’t have. When we focus on ourselves we lose the focus of God’s will. As Christians living in the end times, we cannot afford to lose that focus.

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- ✔ 5. Show love to the elderly by ending their lives and putting them out of their misery.
- ✔ 6. Let people know how tough your life is and how you manage to endure in spite of all the pain.
- ✔ 7. Study God’s Word daily for strength, comfort, and direction in your life.
- ✔ 8. Pray for people who are hospitalized, in nursing homes, or suffering with pain and loneliness in their sunset years.
- ✔ 9. Evaluate people’s quality of life in determining whether they should continue living.
- ✔ 10. Rank people into two categories: those worth helping and those not worth your effort.

Check:

1. Give glory to God for all things in your life; 2. Sometimes the strongest witness occurs during trials; 4. your actions will speak loudly as a wonderful witness for others; 7. God’s Word is your best tool and should be used daily; 8. remembering these people in your prayers should never be underestimated.

Don’t Check:

3. Consider Job and his attitude; 5. although “mercy killing” sounds compassionate, you are taking an action that only belongs to God (even when it doesn’t make sense to you); 6. people usually see your suffering without you telling about it; 9. this is commonly done by people today, but God doesn’t evaluate your worth based on a subjective “quality”; 10. your role is not to evaluate or rank, but rather to show love and support; everyone needs your help even if you don’t recognize it on the outside.

## Conclusions from His Word

Our time on earth is limited, and a great deal needs to be done. These past three weeks involved the study of God’s Word as it applies to end-of-life issues. Just like our own lives, the world has a certain amount of time that God has ordained before it comes to an end. Rather than complain about the problems or blaming God for the suffering, use those opportunities to praise Him and lead others to a saving faith in their Savior. Remember that our suffering or unique situation just might be the situation that God gives us to reach others with the Gospel.