

# Salvation Past Present and Future

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[0:00] Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and the word from our Lord through the Apostle Paul! Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace to you.

We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.

You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord. In spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia.

[1:22] Your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us.

They tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

The Lord's message.

The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait, made his eyes red and his thin lips blue, and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.

He carried his own low temperatures always about with him. He iced his office in the dog days and didn't thaw at one degree at Christmas.

[2:52] Children, do you know how Scrooge went from being a sinner to a saint? You remember, three ghosts visited Scrooge.

The ghost of Christmas past, the ghost of Christmas present, and Christmas future. And these three together conspired and they changed Scrooge.

Old Scrooge. He went from a wrenching and grasping to sharing and to loving. And they saved him from a miserable life and a miserable death.

Well, Scrooge needed all three of those ghosts to change him. And we need all of God's salvation to change us, to rescue us.

And this evening, Paul is going to tell us about salvation past, salvation present, and salvation future. And how God takes old, nasty Scrooges like us and changes us into saints.

[4:01] God saves sinners from a miserable life and a miserable death. So we're going to look at those three things. Salvation past, salvation present, and salvation future.

We're going to look first at salvation past. If you have your Bibles open, look with me to 1 Thessalonians 1 and verse 4. It says, For we know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you.

He has chosen you. Kids, when you go to the beach, what do you see there? You see sand and you see water. You see a lot of people. But you see someone very important.

Probably the most important person on the beach. The lifeguard. What is the lifeguard's job? His job is to save anyone who is drowning. Whether he knows that person or not.

Whether they've known each other for a long time or not. No matter how he feels about it. How he feels about that person. His job is to save them. To rescue them.

[5:09] When they're going down, he is to jump in the water and provide salvation. God is not like that lifeguard. He doesn't have to rescue anyone at all.

He doesn't have to rescue everyone, no matter what. When God saves someone, Paul tells us here, it's because he really, really loves them. Paul says, we know, brothers, loved by God. Loved by God. It's his loved ones. It's the ones that he cares for.

That he loves. That he saves. And we're not talking about a generic love. Just a sort of general love. God is benevolent. He loves all of his creatures.

And he loves everyone in a certain sense. But he saves and he chooses those he especially loves. Now, you might love dogs in general.

[6:13] Probably some of you just love dogs in general. But you love your dog specifically, don't you? And you love children in general. Hopefully most of you.

But you love your children specifically, especially. So you stay up at night and you worry about your teenager. Are they okay?

And you're thinking about them. You go through your house and you check the windows and the doors. You make sure all the right lights are on. Why? Because you want to protect your children. You watch over them constantly. That's what you do when you love your children. This is what God does when he loves his children. He chooses them.

He elects them. Paul says, knowing brothers. Or this we know. Brothers, love by God that he has chosen you. So electing love.

[7:08] Remember, we're talking about salvation past. Electing love. This is the foundation of salvation. In love, he predestines us. Paul writes to the Ephesians.

So before we had done anything good or anything bad, so that God's purpose and election might stand, he chooses those he is going to save. And this is salvation past.

And this is really part of our salvation. Because his election of us, his choosing of us, his picking us out, ensures that no matter what, no matter where we go, no matter what happens to us, that God is going to save us.

It ensures that God is going to love us persistently, no matter where we go. His election ensures that at some point in our life, he will reach in and he will give us the gospel and we will believe it and we will be saved.

That is electing love. I read this week in the World Magazine that just came out recently of a young lady, her name was Harmony. And as a child, she was abused and later raped.

[8:24] And as a teenager, she bounced around in the foster care system. She made it to college. And as you can imagine, she had really no support to make ends meet.

She started dancing. And we're not talking about ballet. For three years, she danced at night to make money, to just make ends meet at daytime, in the daytime, and to go to college.

Then one day, a friend of hers brought her to church. She heard the gospel. Well, as it is probably for most of you, it didn't happen right away for her.

For some time, she went to church and she was dancing at the same time. But then one time, God stopped her in her tracks. He stopped her in her tracks and he turned her life around.

She married a man named John. And when they got married, they decided to both change their name and they changed it to dust. Why? Because we, God made men from dust.

[9:28] And God was totally remaking them. So now she is a totally different person. She has a ministry to those who are in the same situation that she was in and God is working through her.

Now, why did that beautiful story happen? That beautiful, true story happen? Because God loved harmony before the foundation of the earth and he chose her to be saved, to be conformed to Jesus Christ.

And he set his love on her that no matter where she went, no matter what she did, what trouble she got into, he was going to rescue her.

He was going to save her life. And we all have similar stories. That's my life in some way. And that's your life in some way.

Maybe it's not so explicit, but still, every single one of us is mired in sin. Yet, God chose you.

[10:37] You went so far in your sin, didn't you? He let you go so far. But then there was a point where he said no further. And he took you, and he loved you, and he grabbed you, and he's planned something totally better than what you had planned.

You were going your own way. And he snatched you out. Why? Because he loved you, and he chose you. Well, election.

God's choosing. It takes place before creation. Before you, before you, before me, before anyone was there. So, Paul, how do you know that these Thessalonians, how do you know that they were chosen?

Because the gospel came to them with power. With power. And that brings us to salvation present. So we go from salvation past, and now we're talking about salvation present.

All those who God chooses, he effectually calls. That means they're brought in. They're drawn in. So there's a general invitation.

[11:45] When we preach the gospel, there's a general invitation to come in. To come to Christ. But then, there's another kind of call. A call that comes with power.

And God sends the gospel message, and it comes with power. The Holy Spirit, and full assurance, or full conviction. And the sinner is grabbed, and he's drawn in.

So many of you have sat under preaching for a long time. And you were like men in a rowboat. And you're out in the ocean. And the gospel message went over you, wave after wave.

But you traveled up, and you went down. You went up, and you went down. And you went nowhere. The gospel message never penetrated into your life. Then what happened?

You were sitting there in your seat, wherever you were, and something happened. God sent a wave into your heart, into your life, that you couldn't hold off.

[12:48] That you couldn't ride. And the wave got into your boat, and it sunk it. And he had you. He had you. And it came with power. It came with effective power.

And you bowed before it. You gave in before it. You had refused at one point to bow to God. You were going your own way.

You wanted to do what you wanted to do. But now the gospel came in, and down you went. Down you went. And it wasn't compulsion. It wasn't that he forced you, that you didn't want to bow, but he made you.

When God brings gospel power into someone's life, he makes them willing. He makes them want to obey. They have the desire to obey. So what's the difference between a dictator and a true king?

A dictator and a true king. Men have to obey both. Men do obey both. And men will die for both. If a dictator says go to battle, the people have to go to battle, and they'll die for them.

[13:53] But a true king has a different kind of power. And Jesus is a true king. And he has a different kind of power. It isn't compulsion. Jesus never says obey or die to the believer or to the person he's calling.

A king has real power because his saints, the ones he is calling, Jesus is calling, they love him. And they obey him out of love.

So David is outside the town of Bethlehem. Do you remember this story? And he's outside the town of Bethlehem and the Philistine army is all around it, surrounding it, and inside of it.

And David is outside and he's thirsty and he's depressed and he's thinking to himself, God has promised me this kingdom and I can't even get a drink from the well in my own hometown.

Well, three of his mighty men overheard David's sigh. And Jocheb said to Eleazar, did you hear what David said?

[15:05] He's thirsty. And Eleazar went over to Shema and Shema said, or Eleazar said, did you hear what David wanted? He wants a drink.

Do you want to go with us? David's thirsty. So what were they going to do? They were going to go get water from David's hometown, from the well in his own town.

You got to understand, that was like getting a Coke from the cooler, from Osama bin Laden's cooler in the middle of Afghanistan. You don't just go in and get it.

It was going to take some work. There's army inside and outside, but it didn't matter. David wants a drink. And so they strap on their swords, they tighten their belts, and they head out.

And you know the rest. They cut between the lines, they get the water out, they cut back, and they give it to David. They risked their lives. They were willing to die just to make David smile.

[16:06] David had power over his mighty men. And he made them willing in the day of battle. And that's the kind of power that the gospel comes with.

It makes people who might have begrudgingly obeyed at one point risk everything to obey. The gospel comes with power and it changes our disposition towards God.

We don't want to obey Him. We want to go our own way. And now, whatever it takes to please Him. Well, the gospel came with the Holy Spirit to the Thessalonians.

So who gives the gospel power? It's not my words. It's not Pastor John or Aaron's words. It's not Charles Spurgeon's words. It's not even Jesus' words.

If the Holy Spirit doesn't come, then there is no power. But when the gospel comes with power and the Holy Spirit, it comes with full conviction.

[17:07] With full conviction. And we know it's true. We're sitting there and we used to not think it was true, but now the light is turned on.

The light is switched on. And there's no great argument at the end. We're not trying to figure it out. Is this true or is this not? The Holy Spirit comes and all argument is over. The light pours into our minds and we can't help but see it.

If our eyes are open and they're working properly, we can't help but see the light. And the Holy Spirit comes with light. With full assurance. So it's true.

It's obviously true. The sky is blue. My feet are on the ground. I'm a sinner. And Jesus is the only Savior. It's all that obvious when it comes with power and full assurance.

It was obviously clearly true. Here's a true story. The year is 1929. The place is England. And here's a man named Clive Staples Lewis.

[18:10] And his friends call him Jack. Jack gets into a car to go to the zoo. And Jack getting into the car is a theist.

And children, a theist means he believes in God of some sort, but he doesn't believe in Jesus Christ. He doesn't believe that Jesus is God's Son in that whole, the message of the gospel.

Well, Jack gets in the car theist. Jack rides to the zoo and Jack gets out of the car a Christian. Well, what happened?

He's a new man. What happened? Well, if you looked from the outside, nothing happened. There was no big argument. There was no accident. He rode to the zoo to see the wall of ease and that's part of the true story.

But something happened on the inside of Jack. What happened? Well, the gospel that he had heard for years and years and he knew, it finally came with power.

[19:15] And he was, he was a new man. There was no doubt he was a sinner. There was no doubt that Jesus was the Son of God and he was sent to save sinners.

And Jack, from that point on, was a Christian, a real born-again Christian. And he was convinced of its truth. And he would argue with anyone if you argued against him. The gospel came in power with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

And it latched onto him. Just like it latched onto the Thessalonians and just like it latched onto many of you and it wouldn't let him go. Well, when the gospel comes, it bends our ear and our heart to obey it and to believe it.

And it bends our will to accept it. We know it's true. And it says, you're a sinner. And before, I would say, aren't you being a little rough?

Yeah, I do some bad things. But now it says, you're a sinner. And I say, I see. I am a sinner. I am a sinner. I used to think I was an alright person who tried pretty hard, but now I see I am guilty and I'm a sinner.

[20:23] And it says, you know, for that sin, you deserve everlasting punishment. Before I thought, hell, that's pretty extreme.

It's sin that bad. That seems really unfair. But now, when the gospel comes with power, I see, hell is completely fair. Hell is completely reasonable.

And hell is right and I should be there. I own what I am and what I deserve. And the gospel says, Jesus is the only Savior. And I say, yes, yes, I see it.

It's true. I used to think I could do it on my own, but now, I have to have Jesus. I need Jesus and He's the only way. Well, the gospel came with that kind of radical power to the Thessalonians and it changed them.

It sanctified them. And that was all part of their salvation. Well, how did it change them? Well, let's look at our text. It tells us how God changed them.

[21:31] How the gospel changed them. They found new models. when you're saved, you find new models, new people to imitate. Look at verse 5.

You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord. You became imitators of us and the Lord.

The world had been their model just like it had been your model. The world said do this and you did it. The world was going this way and you said, okay, we're going that way.

And we followed Satan ways. The ruler of the kingdom of the air, we followed that way. And they followed and they didn't know any other way of living.

And that changed. That changed when the gospel came to them. Paul, Silas, and Timothy came and they lived according to chapter 2 holy and blameless and righteous lives before them.

[22 : 29] And so they looked at Paul and Silas and Timothy and they saw them not lying anymore. And so when Paul, Timothy, and Silas they don't lie well we don't lie either.

And they saw Paul and the rest worshipping God alone. And they saw that and they turned away from their idols and they started serving or worshipping God alone.

So life took on a radical turn when the gospel came with power. It saved them from their old way of life. They were going with the world. They were following the world. Now they are following different models.

They're walking in holiness and blamelessness and righteousness. And so the gospel, it saved them and it saves us from the worthless ways that we used to live in.

And they were in a sad state. They were living for sin and sin is a horrible, horrible taskmaster and it was destroying them.

[23 : 34] So they were addicts to their lust. They were addicts to their own desires and their own desires and greed and lust were devouring them.

They were like scrooges. They were grasping and clutching after whatever they could get desiring and thinking that what they wanted was good and meanwhile what they wanted was killing them, was ruining them.

And you've seen it. You've seen it. Even you teenagers know what I'm talking about. Sin makes people do really stupid, destructive things.

It never makes your life better. It never makes your life better. So that kid you know in your class that he's into drugs and alcohol and that girl who shamelessly pursues boys and all that business, is their life better because of their sin?

Well, what about that arrogant, beautiful, super popular girl? Does she escape the ravages of sin? The answer is no. When you play with sin, no matter who you are, it ruins you.

[24 : 45] Sin destroys and we were all following that path. We were all walking down the path to destruction. But then the gospel came. The gospel came and our eyes were opened and we found new models, new people to imitate.

Suddenly, mom and her righteous life, that's something that's worth imitating. And dad and his holy, serious life, that's how I want to live now.

The gospel changes who we imitate. The gospel also makes us into new kinds of models. So, not only are we pursuing or following other models, imitating other models, we ourselves become a different kind of model.

See, we were all following each other down the road to hell. I mean, I was blind and you were blind and they were blind and I was following you and you were following me and we were following him. And we're all blind. Well, the light came. Our blindness was recovered. Our sight was recovered and we became new kinds of models.

[25 : 57] Look at verse 7. And you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you. Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, your faith in God has become known everywhere.

The Thessalonians response to the gospel, their fervent love, their fervent first love, like we talked about last week, their hope and their work of love and their endurance and their joyful acceptance. You know, when they believed the gospel, it brought persecution. And when they accepted that joyfully, the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit, it made them into new kinds of people, new kinds of models.

And so, people could look at them and say, this is what it means to be a believer. This is what it is. Well, you've got to remember that Thessalonica, it was on one of the big east-west roads, remember?

And so, you've got a lot of travelers, and it was on one of the main north-south roads, and it has one of the biggest ports. And so, people are going in and out and in and out and going to and fro Thessalonica all the time.

[27:14] And so, you're walking along and you're on a road and you stay at an inn for one night and you hear some people talking over there in the corner, and what are they talking about? They're saying, can you believe those Christians in Thessalonica?

Their lives are totally different now. They were following Zeus and all those other gods, and now they're not following them anymore. They were following lusts and their greed and all that, and now they're different kinds of people.

They've completely turned around. And Paul says, you've become models for all the believers. For all the believers.

They were baby Christians. They hadn't been in the faith for over a year, but they were living such holy lives that Paul could say to any Christian, now look at them and see what it means to be a believer.

This is how the believers live. And so younger Christians, younger Christians, there's no reason that you can't model the faith to the older Christians, the older believers.

[28:24] So strive, strive to model it by your violent mortification of sin, that you are going to kill sin, by your hot pursuit of Jesus Christ, and your faith, and your hope, and your love.

Show us what it means to be a Christian. Show us. That's what the Thessalonians did, and you do it too. There's no reason that you cannot.

The Holy Spirit is the same in you as it was in them. Well, that's the kind of power that the gospel brings. It completely makes a person different. It turns them around.

And so they go from enslaved to sin, to be models of how to live a holy life. And that's God's powerful work in salvation in our present lives.

That's salvation present. Why does He free us from sin? Why does He do that? Why does He give us new models and a new way to live?

[29:25] Because He loves us. Remember, that's where this all started. Brothers, love by God. He loves us and He wants to save us from our sin.

And so love is driving salvation. Love is moving God to call you away from sin and to give you a whole new way of thinking and living.

God loves you and through the Holy Spirit He's given you a new and a better way to live. Salvation begins before the creation of the world.

and it comes into our lives in the present through the preaching of the gospel and the gospel coming with power. In love, He chooses men to be saved.

In love, He sends the gospel to them and He radically sanctifies them. But salvation is future as well. We talked about salvation past and present, salvation future.

[30:24] Peter. The Thessalonians had hope for more than this life. They had hope for an end of the struggle.

They didn't just want to overcome sin for now. They wanted to get rid of sin completely. They wanted to end persecution in the presence of sin. And verse 10 says that they were waiting for the Son of God to appear from heaven.

They were waiting for that because when He appears, the persecution is going to be over. And the sin is going to be over when Jesus Christ comes. And so they're waiting. They believed and we believe that Jesus Christ is coming.

We don't just have a Savior from 2,000 years ago. We have a Savior for the future. And this life, this world, is not a jail cell that we can't get out of because He is going to break in and rescue us.

He's coming to renew all things. We started to taste God's salvation. We have just started to taste it. But when Jesus comes back, He's going to make all things new.

[31:41] So the creation now is groaning in expectation. And we ourselves, we're groaning. We groan for the redemption of our bodies when we can be made new.

And it will happen when the Son, who was raised from the dead, comes back. So He has resurrection power. And He is going to bring that resurrection power to bear in our lives.

And so we wait for this. We wait for it. We long for this. our salvation isn't just here and now. It's going to be forever and ever in the future.

And so we wait patiently. And we have hope. And that hope gives us endurance. Like we talked about last week. That hope gives us endurance. Well, our salvation is not complete.

We are waiting for the returning Son. But that's not the only aspect of our future salvation. Look at verse 10. It ends with this.

[32:52] Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. The coming wrath. What is that?

The coming wrath is the final punishment of this world and Satan. It is God unleashing His anger and jealousy against all those who have ignored and rebelled against Him.

It is coming. And it is horrible. The prophet Zephaniah had a lot to say about the coming day of wrath.

So if you picture you're walking in a hallway. It's a dark hallway. And at the very end, there's a door. And at the door, it says the day of wrath. We don't really know what that's going to be like.

But Zephaniah opens the door a little bit and lets us peek in so that we can understand what the coming day of wrath is. And as you listen to what Zephaniah says, thank Jesus Christ that He rescues you from the coming day of wrath.

[34:07] Listen to what Zephaniah wrote. The word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah. I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth, declares the Lord.

I will sweep away both men and animals, and I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. The wicked will only have heaps of rubble when I cut off man from the face of the earth, declares the Lord.

The great day of the Lord is near. near and coming quickly. Listen, the cry of the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there.

That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.

Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them in the day of the Lord's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy, the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth.

[35:18] Who will, who can rescue us from that coming wrath when God sweeps away everything, birds, animals, fish, and his jealousy that burns like a fire comes to this earth.

Jesus alone can rescue us from that day. It says, neither silver nor gold will save them from God's jealousy, but Jesus Christ will save.

Money can do a lot of things in this world. Money can do a lot of things. It will do all sorts of things for you. If you have a lot of money, you can almost guarantee that you can buy your innocence in the court of law, it will open the doors to the highest authorities.

know, William Buffett, he can talk to anyone he wants. He has lots of money. It will protect you from hunger. It will protect you from boredom.

But on the day of wrath, God doesn't want your money. He wants to have his honor back. So they belittle me they put me down.

[36:30] They choose this for me and they fought against me. They wouldn't obey me and now they will pay. They will die and I will devour them with fire and my jealousy will sweep them away.

So every belittling sin, every thoughtless word, every scornful thought of the gospel and of Jesus Christ, every unbelieving response, every time we pulled God down and said, I'm going my way, I don't care what you say, God will repay.

And this is the coming wrath. And we are all guilty. We are all guilty, but Jesus rescues us from that. Well, how does he do that? How does he do that?

God is too holy to say, you know what, it's not a big deal. God is too holy to let sin go unpunished. So what does Jesus Christ do?

He takes the cup of God's wrath and he drinks it. He absorbs all of God's wrath into himself at the cross. So at the cross we see the day of wrath breaking into time and being poured out on his force of God's righteous jealousy.

[37:58] It comes and it will destroy it will crush it will kill his own son and he was consumed at the cross for his people.

And so God didn't only turn away from his son it was his pleasure to crush him to pierce him and so the darkness that swept over Judea that day when the sun refused to shine what was that darkness it was God's wrath that was coming wrath came to Jesus on that day for his people and he suffered so they wouldn't have to suffer he suffered to save you from the day the coming wrath on the last day it will be a day of stark contrast men will be wailing and men will be covered in darkness and fire but you will not and you will stand in the light of Jesus presence and you will soak in his goodness and his mercy why why do you get to be over here and they're over here because he loved you he loved you and he chose you he loved you and he sent the word and power to your life

and the

Holy Spirit he loved you and he sent his son to die for you to take that wrath that you should be receiving well how should you respond how should you respond to salvation past and present and future well you should respond the same way the Thessalonians did remember the first two verses that we looked at last week you should burn with first love intensity for God and faith and hope and love should have full sway in your life you should be full of faith full of hope full of love and you should react the same way that Paul did to salvation past present and future this whole section of Thessalonians is God or as Paul saying we always thank God for all of you this is something to thank God for that you've been saved when was the last time you told

Jesus thank you for saving me from hell when was the last time you thanked God the father for choosing you he didn't have to choose you when was the last time you thanked so flee to the cross flee to the only one who can save from the coming wrath flee to the only place of safety because if you cry out for mercy there's mercy to be had now but if you cry out for mercy on that last day there's no mercy for you so come now

God will save he has promised that whosoever believes! in him would not perish but have eternal life how should you respond to salvation past present and future Jesus said the gate is narrow gate is narrow and there are few that find it get into the gate get into the gate while you can let's pray heavenly father we thank you again we thank you we thank you for Jesus Christ who saves us from the coming wrath who saves us from a meaningless pointless life of pursuing sin and self only to find ourselves landed damned in hell forever thank you for saving us Jesus God thank you for choosing and setting your love on your people that you wouldn't let us go so far that we would be lost forever but you call us to yourself that you ensure and guarantee your people salvation thank you that you chose and so it doesn't our sin can't separate us but your grace abounds more and more and I pray father that that grace would not lead us to sin but it would lead us to live a holy and blameless life

[ 42 : 49 ] I pray pray for the young people the young believers help them to be models to us of what it means to live a holy and righteous life what it really means to be a believer father I pray for the older saints that they would be models to the younger saints father I pray for the lost!

may the gospel be real for the very first time to them and give them the grace of repentance and faith that you would give Jesus Christ the people that he has died for that you would gain honor and glory for yourself and it's in Jesus name I pray!

Amen!