

Study Aids
Discussion Questions
For “What’s the Message?” Lessons

Lesson 123

Comment:

In this lesson the character of a merchant of Thessalonica was created to tell you of the background of the city and the fact that many charlatans roamed the countryside at that time, making the inhabitants suspicious of all newcomers with some idea to sell. Some people concluded that Paul was above such "snake oil" tactics, but Judaizers (Jews who insisted on keeping the Mosaic law), used this suspicion to convince mobs that Paul must be thrown out of town. So in the first three chapters of 1st Thessalonians Paul defends himself at some length. We chose to skip that part, and to focus on his responses to their questions.

Questions:

In the pagan morality of that day, with "sacred prostitutes" on duty in the major temples, the Christian teaching of sexual purity was radically opposite to the norm and culture of the Gentile world. Is it any different in our day and time? Is the standard that Paul preached in conflict with the secular culture in which we live? How can we best teach this standard to our children?

Some of the Thessalonians were so enthused with the idea that Jesus would return that they saw no need to work, because they thought the world would soon end. While that is not a currently held idea, we have people who choose not to work for other reasons. Does Paul's admonition to work and to be responsible for your own actions apply today? Even to the homeless "people on the street"?

Is Paul's admonition to *encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and with patience always do good to everyone*, a realistic and achievable standard of behavior? Should we even try?