

I THESSALONIANS 1:10

NEXT 2:1-20

HISTORY:

Paul was personally acquainted with the City of Thessalonica and its inhabitants since he founded the Church of Thessalonica in his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1). The great city was the capital and the largest city of Macedonia. This city had been founded by Cassander, the top military officer of Alexander the Great, after Alexander had died. Under the Romans, the city had been made free because of its loyalty to Rome. As a free city it was allowed its own government and local laws. Because of the city's strategic location and commercial importance, the gospel was bound to spread out beyond to the world rather rapidly. The great city of Thessalonica was the second great European city to be evangelized. Paul had been evangelizing in Philippi when he entered Thessalonica. This letter offers an intimate view into Paul's concern for a young and under attack community of faith.

To understand how the church at Thessalonica began, we must read the first ten verses of Acts 17.

Acts 17:1-10 ...they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and {saying,} "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. And when they did not find them, they {began} dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea... (NAS)

From the Scriptures, Paul reasoned in the synagogue for three Sabbaths. This means he was in Thessalonica between just 15 and 22 days. Some of the Jews and many of the Greeks became believers. So, from Berea, to Athens in Achaia, the southern part of Greece to the seaport city of Corinth (Acts 18); less than a year later, Paul sits down to write this letter. Every city established a local church, and then Paul would write them, visit them, and send messengers to them to build them up in their faith and maturity in Jesus Christ. This was not a small task when one considers that the oldest believer at the church of Thessalonica would have been saved for no more than three months. Not only that, but each of these churches was located in a city where they would have had to endure tremendous persecution.

1ST—1:1a Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ:— ¹Paul's letter, to the Thessalonian body of Christ, begins in a customary way. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are introduced as the people that the epistle is from. Paul is the specific author. He has the

¹ <http://www.bridgewaybiblechurch.com/index.php/sermons/1-thessalonians-study/133-1-thessalonians-1-1>
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apostolic calling and authority. He also places his name first, which is typically a custom of signifying importance. As we look at this introduction, and we see these three men, we need to become more acquainted with them.

- We know **Paul** once known as Saul persecuted the Christians, but was changed, saved and transformed on the Road to Damascus.
- He became part of the body of Christ, a Christian and an apostle commissioned and sent forth by God to the Gentiles with the Good News of Christ.
- On his missionary journeys he would have a small apostolic crew of men with him. Silvanus and Timothy were two such men. Paul and Silvanus ended up in Philippi where God first saved His people out of Europe. God's harvest is not without hardship.
- In Philippi, Paul and Silvanus were persecuted, jailed, and beaten severely. Though they met a lot of opposition, many people came to Christ.
 - It started with Lydia, and then others, like
 - The jailer who watched over Paul and Silvanus (Silas) when they were imprisoned. This was when the Philippian church was birthed and established.
- But because of the increasing pressure, Paul and Silvanus left Philippi. Silas and Silvanus are the same. Silvanus is the Gentile spelling. Silas, in Acts, is called Silvanus in 1 Thessalonians.

Silvanus was probably an Israelite by birth. What this means is that he received the promised Messiah that he had learned about from childhood from the ancient scriptures, and He received the Messiah as the sacrifice for his sins by grace through faith, and now he serves Messiah as his King who is promised to sit on the throne of David forever.

- The Scriptures indicate that Silvanus was a gifted prophet. He was highly esteemed among the Jerusalem Christians.
- As a worker in the founding of the Thessalonian church, Silvanus endured cruel beatings, and imprisonment. In respect to what Silvanus went through, he is always depicted as being faithful and bold about the gospel--even though he experienced physical hurt in his persecution, and his life was at risk.
- Like Paul, Silvanus was relentless in his witness of the Good News of Christ. Paul and Silvanus introduce us to the powerful work of God's grace in saving men out of the bondage of sin, and placing them in the peace of Christ. The same goes for Timothy.

Timothy is mentioned in every one of Paul's epistles except for Galatians and Ephesians. Timothy's natural father was a Roman, and his mother and grandmother were Israelites.

- Timothy was taught the Old Testament scriptures by his mother (*Eunice*) and grandmother (*Lois*) as he was growing up.
- Paul referred to Timothy as his "*true child in the faith*." Consequently, Paul was Timothy's spiritual father in the realm, the doctrines, and precepts of Christianity.
- Timothy served as Paul's special helper during Paul's missions.
- Eventually Timothy became the Pastor over the church of Ephesus (1Tim.1:3), and first Bishop; an ordainer of overseers.
- Timothy had been with Paul later in the planting and development of the Thessalonian congregation.

Now, after leaving Philippi, Paul and Silvanus went to the Thessalonians, and when they arrived in Thessalonica, the gospel of Christ was unknown to them. Paul's typical practice when entering a city was to begin ministering and preaching the gospel of the grace and peace of God in Christ Jesus in the local Jewish synagogue in the Gentile towns they were in. Paul did this in Thessalonica for three weeks, on the Sabbath days. He first began reasoning with Jews and God fearing Gentiles who would attend the synagogue—the Old Testament Scriptures--particularly the amazing prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus, how the prophecies explained in detail the

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rejection of the Messiah, His suffering, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. Paul went from the Old Testament and directed people to the New Covenant in Christ's blood. The Scriptures explained:

- First comes conversion, and then comes the more intense discipleship, where people are taught line upon line and precept upon precept.
- First comes the essential milk of the word, and then comes more solid food.
- First comes the introduction into the grace and peace of God, and then comes growth in grace and peace.

And God saved many people from among the Jews, God fearing Gentiles, and pagan idol worshippers in Thessalonica as Paul ministered. People who came from all of these groups made up the body of Christ, which is the church. By the time Paul sends this letter back to the church of the Thessalonians, those whom he had led to Christ, the most seasoned Christians there had only been saved less than a year—some conservative estimates say only about three months. Think about that. So this letter was written about three to six months after Paul left Thessalonica. And we must understand that Paul is writing to babes in Christ. But this does not matter. They will grow. What is important now, is that they are God's church. This means they are in **God the Father and In the Lord Jesus Christ**. They are the body of Christ. Once the body, always the body, and so now it is time to grow, and so Paul writes this letter. How many churches lack strength because their ministers have not remained faithful in exhorting them; building them up?

Without people who are committed to the Lord, there is no church. The letter was not addressed to a particular group of leaders, but to all the people of the church. Every believer was important, and it took every one of them to make up the church. Several things will always weaken the church:

- Building the church upon a few people or leaders.
- Ignoring and neglecting the needs of some members.
- Failing to involve them and use the gifts of some members.

1ST-1:1b ...Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Of the 27 books that make up the New Testament, 17 of them contain this greeting - and it is never "*peace and grace*." Why does grace always come first?

Grace refers to God's unmerited favor. We were sinners, deserving of hell, certainly not salvation. We weren't on our way to being better people. We weren't showing signs of turning good. We weren't doing great works that made us attractive to God. He simply saved us because He loved us - He did it purely out of grace. Both grace and peace, are blessings that are married together in the holy matrimony of salvation. The order of these two as presented by Paul is important when it comes to our spiritual salvation. There can be no true peace until we recognize that God has bestowed His grace upon us in completely forgiving us of all our sins in Christ Jesus. It is like a prayer request. And when Paul wishes grace and peace upon the Thessalonian Christians, it is the same. Paul is wishing God's extra favor upon them first because he knows that those whom Christ will touch He is also able to give peace. It is a **peace** that also surpasses their understanding in the midst of persecution.

1ST-1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; — It is God's will that you and I thank Him for real Christians. When it comes to salvation, we give all the thanks to Him, and glorify Him for His spiritual power and His right, wise, and perfect decision in doing what He does. One of the primary ways for you and me to do this is by making mention of the people God has saved, in our prayers. Paul says that he does this always. Whenever we take the other members of the body for granted, then we will either seldom thank God for them, or we will quit thanking God for them. Whenever we are being carnal, and sin because we are perturbed with a brother or sister to the point of treating them in contempt, then we quit having thanks for them. But think about what is going on when we do this. We are not appreciating them, and when we don't appreciate them, we are not appreciating God's work in making them for His glory. And so we are not glorifying God.

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"Thanks" is a manifestation of love. We always seem to thank God for people we like. It is not unusual to thank God for people we get along with. We are so grateful for the ones that want to be around us. It is so easy to thank God for people that He puts in our lives that we can get something from; or we respect a whole lot. But God wants us to thank Him, with love in action, for what He thinks is of the greater eternal value than all of that. The fact of the matter is that we should be thanking God for all the Christians that we know, and the reason that God is telling us to do it, is because God saved them! Paul wasn't getting anything from the Thessalonians that merited his thanks, and he wasn't leaving anybody out.

1ST—1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope In our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;— Paul bears in mind in His thanks to God concerning the truly saved of Thessalonica is their labor of love. He remembers their labor; their hard effort, that is, their self sacrificing works and actions that comes from the manifestation of the Law of love that the Holy Spirit placed in the hearts of true believers of the Thessalonians. Paul is not talking about labor for personal gain, like someone who becomes a workaholic for the sole purpose of making a lot of money. This labor is out of godly generated love, patience, and hope which is labor that comes because of God's Spirit convicting His true children. It is consistent and keeps on going, even to the point of fatigue.

1ST—1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. First, we notice that Paul calls the Thessalonians, brothers. This is family language. It has to do with God sovereignly adopting those whom He has elected out of the domain of darkness. When God saves us, He makes us a part of the family of God through this adoption, which is also part of the miracle power of being born again into the first born heir who is Jesus. Paul says that he knows that those he is writing to were elected. God elected all who will be saved in the person, and work of Christ Jesus, and God did this before He created the world. It is almost too deep to understand that God's election unto salvation is from the beginning, before the foundation of the world, but it is. God ordained the end, which is salvation at the beginning. He also ordains the means to that end through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. Jesus had to come! And the Holy Spirit is the key to draw us to the Word. The Holy Spirit sets apart those who have been elected to certainly have faith in the truth of the gospel when it is preached. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes, and the Holy Spirit changes us.

The word "**election**" (*eklogen*) means that the church has been selected and chosen by God. A strong church is seen when the proof comes forth:

1. The members act like the **beloved people of God**. God has called believers out of the world and away from the old life which the world offered—the old life of sin and death. He has called believers to be separated and set apart to Himself, and the new life He offers is the new life of righteousness and eternity.
2. The members treat each other as **beloved brothers**. They are called to hold one another ever so closely to their hearts and to count one another as precious and deeply loved.

However, people can show that election as being only a false *profession* when...

- a. they act like they are not the beloved of God—living in sin and shame, dirt and pollution, worldliness and greed.
- b. they treat one another as anything but beloved brothers: being critical and divisive, prideful and arrogant, angry, and hurtful, envious, and prejudiced, superior and super-spiritual.

1ST—1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. The gospel is brought to the elect who are effectually called and saved in power, but the power actually effects the heart of the hearer in such a way that the elect are effectually called, convicted, and are saved through the miracle of regeneration. In other words,

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the gospel is more than just mere words to the elect. The word "**gospel**" (*Gr euangelion*) means "Good News."

The phrase, "**In word only**" refers to not in regular speech of mere human words. The words contained a mysterious power, the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives. The model church had ministers who preached the gospel as it should be preached.

1. Paul **did not preach in word only**. He did not stand before people using nothing but his own words to reach people. His preaching was not dependent upon his eloquence, his ability, his wisdom, or his appearance. When Paul stood before people and preached, he was not concerned with words and eloquence. He was concerned with only one thing: sharing the Word of God, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Paul **preached in power and in the Holy Spirit** and in much assurance.
 - a. Preaching in "**power**" (*dunamis*) means preaching in the power and energy of God Himself. The gospel itself is the power of God operating, working, stirring, convicting, and energizing a person to believe and accept the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - i. This is the reason it is so important for the preacher to be completely surrendered to God—living ever so closely to Him—living and moving and having his being in the Lord.
 - ii. The preacher must be under the control of God so that the power of God can rest upon and flow through his life.
 - iii. The preacher must become nothing but an instrument in the hands of God.
 - b. Preaching in the "**Holy Spirit**" means First, Without the Holy Spirit, there is no power. Secondly, the Holy Spirit is more than just a power; the Holy Spirit is a person. The "power" is the result of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of people. He is doing what God had sent Him to earth to do: convict the hearts of the hearers and convince them of the truth of the gospel:
 - i. That Jesus Christ did die for their sins.
 - ii. That Jesus Christ does provide righteousness for men. **His** righteousness does stand for the righteousness of men.
 - iii. That Jesus Christ did bear the judgment and punishment of sin for men.
 - c. Preaching in assurance (*conviction*) is a critical point. The answer is found in point 3.
3. Paul lived what he preached. He showed what manner of man he was. He lived a life that was completely surrendered to Christ. He lived and moved and had his being in Christ, walking and living ever so closely to Him. "**Assurance**" and confidence come from obedience—knowing that we are doing what we should be doing. It comes from knowing that we please God—that we are living pure and clean lives, praying and studying God's Word every day and witnessing to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. Obedience is the secret to assurance.
 - b. Obedience is the secret to the presence and power of God upon our lives when preaching.
 - c. Obedience is the secret to bearing fruit through preaching. This was the secret of Paul. Paul obeyed God; therefore, Paul was convinced that his preaching would be in power and in the Holy Spirit.

1ST—1:6 **And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.** It was because of their "**reception**" (*Gr dechomai*) of the Word (which means to receive in a respectful obedient and favorable way) that they became followers. They received the Word (the gospel) despite opposition and persecution. Remember, unbelieving Jews had opposed Paul and aroused some of the city troublemakers against him. The persecution became so threatening that Paul had been forced to flee the city. However, his absence did not stop the persecution. In fact, it seems that the attack upon the church and its young believers became even fiercer. The Jews had convinced some of the Gentile citizens—some countryman of the believers—to join them in trying to stop the gospel and destroy the church. But Paul says the gospel still bore fruit

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and the Holy Spirit rewarded the believers' commitment to Christ. One fact is important: the believers became followers of Paul and Christ. The word "**follow**" (*mimetai*) means to **imitate**. A. T. Robertson says:

"It is a daring thing to expect people to 'imitate' the preacher, but Paul adds 'and of the Lord,' for he only expected or desired imitation 'as he himself imitated the Lord Jesus, as he expressly says in 1Corth.11:1. The peril of it all is that people so easily and so readily imitate the preacher when he does not imitate the Lord."

(A.T. Robertson. Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol.4. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931, p11.)

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" 1Corth.11:1.

He stirred joy in their hearts and lives, giving them full assurance of their eternal salvation and deliverance from death. It was with joy in the Holy Ghost they received the message. Someone who loves God, and realizes the grace of God for them, and has truly been regenerated, will be joyous concerning their experience in receiving the Word of the Gospel which gave them life. Even in the midst of persecution, they had joy at the overwhelming weight of glory that outweighs any persecution they experienced. In the midst of the tribulation, they had the kind of joy that is not of the flesh. It is the joy of the Holy Spirit that He produces in true Christians, and so once again, it is His power.

1ST—1:7 **So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.** Paul says that the Thessalonian church was a "*pattern*." He says that they were examples not only to the heathen, but also to believers. This is what we want to be: examples of those who believe through our speech, our conduct, our love, our faith, and our purity. Their example is primarily found in their strong conversion and in their thundering forth the Word of the Lord. The loyalty of the model church became examples to other believers. This shows that:

1. Nothing, absolutely nothing, should keep a person from receiving the Word of the Gospel—not even opposition and persecution.
2. Believers—preachers and laymen alike—must guard their lives ever so closely and make sure they are living for Christ and living ever so diligently for Him. Why? Because others are watching and following us—some child, some adult, some neighbor, some friend. There are people who look up to us and follow after us, whether or not we like the fact, they are. Therefore, it behooves us to follow Christ as perfectly as we can.

1ST—1:8 **For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.** This young church was so committed to the Lord that their testimony spread all over the world. When Rome had conquered Greece, it had divided the country into two provinces: the Northern Province being Macedonia, and the Southern Province being Achaia. Paul clearly says that the testimony of the church had spread all over Greece, both northern Greece and southern Greece. Then he adds that their faith had spread out beyond the borders of Greece. This must mean all over the world. Their excitement and enthusiasm for Christ and the opposition and persecution against them must have been the talk of the city and world.

1ST—1:9 **For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;**— The Thessalonians had talked about the way Paul and others had come to them and what happened next. The only way he knew how the young church and its believers were holding up was from others who had been to Thessalonica to visit or conduct business. He learns that they had turned from idols to serve the living and true God. The subject of idols came up. Very simply, every man has an idea of what God is like and what God allows and does not allow. Some men take their ideas and make images of them by carving wood or melting and molding metal or porcelain. Other men just hold the images in their mind and picture God as being like this or like that. Either image is as much an idol as the other. An idol is merely an image of some god created by the mind of man—an image other than the God revealed by the scripture (Rom.1:21).

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Note the sharp contrast made between these images of man's mind and God: God is the living and true God; the images are only the lifeless and false notions of men. What he had heard about the Thessalonians thrilled his heart: the believers were standing fast in the gospel he had preached. There were three things in particular that struck him about their testimony—a new loyalty.

1. The believers had turned to God from idols.
 - a. They turned to God first, then with God's help and strength, they repented and turned away from idols.
 - b. They did not seek to clean up their lives by themselves. They did not try to reform themselves by turning away from idols and then turning to God.

1ST—1:10 **And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.** A second thing that struck Paul about their testimony was...

2. The believers had turned to God because of the promise of Christ's return. It was God's Son who was returning to earth, the Person who had died for them so that they might be acceptable to God and live with Him forever. They believed with all their hearts that they were to live with God forever. This was the reason they were waiting for the return of Christ. The word "**wait**" is in the present tense. This means that their hope for the return of Christ was alive. They expected Christ to return at any moment and eagerly looked for Him to rent the skies. Their expectation was a daily expectation.

Note one other significant fact; how do we know that Christ is going to return to earth and take believers to live with God forever? Because God raised up Christ from the dead. By resurrecting Christ, God...

- Proved that He is the God of all power.
 - Proved that He has the power to raise the dead.
 - Proved that He is going to do just as Christ taught: raise all men, some to eternal life, and some to eternal death, that is, to be eternally separated from God.
3. Third, the believers had turned to God to escape the wrath of God. A day of wrath is coming. It has to come, for man and his universe is corruptible and imperfect and is in rebellion against God. The world is already condemned; the day of wrath is already set. But this is the glorious news of the gospel: we can be delivered from the wrath to come. The word "**delivered**" (*ruomenon*) means to rescue; to deliver us right out of the wrath. The picture is that of God rescuing and lifting us up out of the wrath.

SUMMARY:

The Apostle Paul and his associates write a letter to the believers in Thessalonica with prayers of thanksgiving for they are remembering them in their labor of love and patient hope in the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1-3). He's letting them know that whenever they bring the Good News, it's not in their own powerful words. It was not merely the human strength of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy that moved them to minister and see fruits of harvest for the kingdom. It was the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit which worked within them. They also manifested the same joy that the apostles expressed in the same Holy Spirit (1:4-6). This is the example of imitation we are given by God. The Thessalonians became a sounding-board from which the gospel would echo across the world. The Thessalonians had talked about the way Paul and others had come to them and what happened. One of the fruits of the Spirit is that we recognize that God has called and anointed us. All of us should respond to the Good News as the Thessalonian believers did: turn from sin, serve the living and true God, and look forward to Jesus' return. This is part of the proof of true conversion. Christ is coming back! (1:7-10).

APPLICATION:

Are you really thanking God for every Christian? Are we seeking to imitate Paul by praying like Paul prayed? or Are we seeking to imitate Jesus by praying as Jesus did? Witness by being examples daily! [TOP](#)

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I THESSALONIANS 2:1-20

NEXT 3:1-13

HISTORY:

Paul had spent just three Sabbaths in Thessalonica preaching the gospel and planting the church. Now, less than a year later, he is writing to them. The book has three basic divisions: Paul is first reviewing their past, then he will encourage and exhort their present walk, and finally remind them of their blessed future - the rapture of the church and the return of Christ.

Paul and His Motives:

1ST—2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:— Part of the purpose of the letter was to show that allegations made against Paul and his associates that tried to discourage them were far from the truth. This was important not just for Paul personally, but for their growth and development of the Thessalonians themselves. If they had begun to believe that Paul's gospel was just another philosophical dream, and that Paul was just "*in it for the money*", they could not have continued to grow in Christ.

²Point: Paul's visit to them was "not in vain"—Here Paul declares that, despite the suffering they had experienced "in Philippi" (Acts 16:19-24, 35-39), their ministry to the Thessalonians was indeed fruitful.

The word "**vain**" means empty, ineffective, and fruitless. By having a full and fruitful ministry, not a vain (*gegonen*) ministry pleases God. Paul reminds the believers that his ministry among them was not an empty and fruitless ministry. People had been ministered to and some had even accepted Christ and experienced a genuine conversion. They were now living for Christ—living for Him through the most difficult of times, even persecution. Therefore, the charge that his ministry was empty and fruitless was false. God had His hand upon him and God was blessing his ministry.

Mistreated In Philippi

1ST—2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi,— The Thessalonians knew that Paul had been imprisoned in Philippi just prior to coming to Thessalonica (Acts 16:11—17:-1). There had been slanderous accusations against his work and motives. This is what happened. In Acts 16:13-15 they landed in Philippi and not finding a synagogue to teach in, they found an assembly of women by the river to share the gospel with, in which Lydia was saved. While walking they passed a slave-girl who was possessed with a demon. Paul commanded the demon to come out of her which caused them to be stripped and beaten with rods and thrown into jail and their feet fastened in stocks (Acts 16:19-24). In Acts 16:25 about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; Suddenly, an earthquake rocked the prison, opening the doors and unfastening the chains. But instead of escaping, Paul stayed and led the jailer to Christ (Acts 16:30-31). Paul did not give up the ministry because he had been persecuted in Philippi. He boldly preached even when there was opposition in Thessalonica.

You can imagine what shape they were in when they met the Thessalonians. Backs still scabbed and scarred from their beating. It would have been very easy to lay low, to simply look for a job making tents or looking for an occasional opportunity to quietly share Christ with one or two people. But they didn't shy away from preaching publicly - they proclaimed the gospel boldly. Acts 17:2-3 says "*And according to Paul's custom, he*

² <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/ss/0909.htm>
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went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead," and {saying,} "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." The Jews became jealous and rounded up wicked men from the market place to form a mob. They went to Jason's house where Paul was staying, and, not finding Paul and Silas, grabbed Jason and some other believers before the city authorities. Opposition had followed them even to Thessalonica, even though they had moved on to another city, they faced persecution—the same mistreatment and attacks in Philippi. Did this discourage and cause him to give up the ministry? No!

1ST-2:2b ...we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. Paul's bold preaching of the gospel was one of the strongest answers to his critics. The pulpit was not the place to deal with critics; it was the place for preaching the gospel of God—the place where the unsearchable riches of Christ are to be proclaimed. This is exactly what Paul and Silas did, despite the critics of the gospel who opposed him. The word "**bold**" (*eparresiasametha*) means to speak bravely and freely; to speak out and to speak publicly without fear. There are too many that fail to witness for Christ because they fear ridicule, embarrassment, mockery, and persecution. They are called secret believers of Christ instead of bold witnesses for Christ. Bold preaching is proof of knowing that God had called them and he knows why—to preach the gospel!

Not With A Pretext For Greed

1ST-2:3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: — Paul speaks of how we are (1.) Not to exhort the message of God: not of deceit, (2.) Not of uncleanness, and (3.) Not of guile. The word "**deceit**" (*planes*) means error. When a minister does not deceive people, it pleases God. Paul's motives weren't to get rich. Paul first demonstrates his sincerity of his motives by showing that he and Silas suffered for sharing the gospel in Philippi. Paul didn't deceive with a watered-down gospel. He didn't try to be a people pleasing feel-good preacher. Paul had no right to change the message. He had nothing to do with formulating the gospel of Christ. Therefore, he preached the gospel exactly as God had given it. His exhortation was not of error. There was no deception about him at all. Paul did not deceive people by the life he lived. He didn't seek money, fame, or popularity by sharing the Good News. He did not preach one thing and live another. Secondly, he was not unclean, or immoral when exhorting others.

The word "**uncleanliness**" (*akatharsias*) has to do with moral uncleanness and impurity; impure motives of carnal self-gratification in gain. He lived a clean pure and righteous life, preaching a pure gospel, and was not deceptive before the people or God. Paul was being charged with immorality. However, such an accusation was not to be unexpected because of the immoral society of the day; a society so immoral that it had permeated some of the very religions of the day. He had not used the ministry or his position in the ministry to attract women. Paul clearly says that he was not guilty when he exhorted the gospel message to them. He had not lived in uncleanness. And there is no guile (tricks) in his exhortation of the gospel. it was straight-forward.

Point: Paul's message did not have its source in evil—Paul asserts that his "exhortation or preaching" did not originate from evil motives or intentions.

Two important lessons that we must always keep in mind as the followers and servants of God.

1. Some believers-ministers and laymen alike have rumors spread about them. Rumors, of course, damage and hurt and often destroy the testimony and ministry of people. But most tragic of all, rumors always affect the name of Christ and turn some people away from the gospel and from any chance of ever being reached for Christ. The persons who begin and spread rumors that destroy people shall face the wrath of God regardless of their profession to know God.

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2. Some believers-ministers and laymen alike fall and commit immorality. This, of course, stirs wild imaginations in those who are most hurt by the fall of the believer, wild imaginations of immoral behavior heaped upon immoral behavior. The hurt people shares his or her hurt with dear friends, and from this, rumors begin. Before long, rumor is built upon rumor. If the fallen person is a genuine believer, a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, one or two things will happen:

1. The fallen believer will repent and confess his sin to God, and God will forgive him. God will also begin to use him again, sometimes more effectively than ever before. Why? Because God is a God of restoration. If He were not, few if any of us would ever be serving Him.
2. God will take the fallen believer home to be with Him. Some genuine believers do slip into sin and enslavement—a point beyond which they are willing to return to Christ. Only God knows when a believer is unwilling to repent and when they have reached the point of no return where they will never repent. At that point, the believer is never again to be a witness for Christ. In fact his life and testimony are only doing damage, and cutting the heart of Christ beyond imagination. God has no choice but to take him from the earth.

1ST—2:4 **But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak;**— Twice in 2:4 Paul uses the word "**allowed**" (KJV) "**approved**" (NIV) (*Gr dokimazō*) by God, which means that God has "**checked them out**" by His own standards and had put His stamp of approval on them. Paul derived a great deal of personal confidence from the fact that God had "*put in trust*" (KJV) "*entrusted*" (NIV) (*Gr pisteuō*) him with the gospel.

1ST—2:4b **...not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.** The minister preaches and ministers to please God, not men. Most men do not want to hear:

- about sin and judgment— the necessity of men to depend upon the death of Christ in order to be saved;
- and about the demand that a person commit all he is and has to Christ in order to meet the needs of a desperate world.

The preaching of the truth is not always popular, not with carnal and unbelieving people. Therefore, when a minister is thrown in the midst of a people who are worldly, he can be tempted to tone down his message to please the people. Temptation can be especially strong if one's livelihood is at risk. There are two strong reasons why Paul sought to please God!

1. First, God was the Person who had entrusted him with the gospel, not men.
2. Second, God alone will be the One who will "**try**" and "**judge**" him. He will stand and give account for his ministry some day, and he will stand alone before God, not before men. Men might be able to cause some difficulty for him on earth, but God would cause difficulty for him through all eternity if he abused or opposed the gospel of Christ.

Point: Paul's goal was to please God, not men—Seeing himself as one who was both "approved" and "entrusted" by God to function as a conduit of "the gospel," Paul was determined to please his Lord and Master at all costs.

Paul and His Conduct:

1ST—2:5 **For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know,— In the first place, Paul did not employ deceptive measure.** The word "**flattery**" (*kolakeias*) always means the kind of flattery that is given in order to get something out of people. Flattery is a false cover-up for a person's real intentions, and Christian leaders should not practice it. Paul did not flatter people in order to secure their friendship, or their following, or their support. He of course commended people; and, his letters in the New Testament show that he commended them quite often. But he did it truthfully, always covering the weak areas that people needed to be strengthened in, as well as their strong and commendable areas. He and Silas completely focused their efforts on presenting God's message of

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salvation to the Thessalonians. This was important! The Thessalonian believers had their lives changed by God not Paul. Though they knew Paul spoke, it was Christ's message they believed. When the minister does not preach and minister for **flattery** or what he can get out of it, it pleases God.

1ST—2:5b ...nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:—None of their activities had been a **cloak of covetousness**. The word "**cloak**" (*Gr prophasis*) means an excuse, cover-up, or front for an impure motive of greed. Using covetousness would accuse and show that Paul was being in the ministry out of greed; that he had chosen the ministry to earn a livelihood and to make money. Emphatically, Paul denies this and says that his life style proves it. He declares that the church knows the fact and that God is witness to the truth. He preached the pure gospel, and he did it without deviating one iota from it.

1ST—2:6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. In the second place, Paul did not seek the glory of men nor abuse his apostolic privileges. Paul is also saying that they were not after man's "**glory**" (*Gr doxa*), which we get the word "**doxology**" (referring to conduct designed to elicit or extract praise). Paul couldn't have claimed that glory, in fact he had been a Pharisee before his own conversion. The thought of being **burdensome** might be translated, "*we might have made great demands, but didn't, as Apostles of Christ.*" Paul could have thrown his weight around as an "**apostle**" and demanded respect and glory. So they were saying, he could have claimed similar glory as an apostle (*Gr apostolos*), (a representative of Christ with a commission). They had a right to, but didn't because their motivation was to get the gospel out to others. When the minister does not preach or minister for glory; not for the prestige and authority of a position, it pleases God.

1ST—2:7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:— In the fourth place, Paul displayed motherly concern for the welfare of the Thessalonians. By preaching gently and lovingly, the minister pleases God. Paul was gentle toward them as a mother who nurses her children. The word "**nurse**" (*Gr prophas*) comes from the root meaning to "**feed**", "**nourish**", "**support**", and "**provide with food.**" The word "**cherisheth**" means to "**take warm and tender care of.**"

"A nursing child can become ill through reaction to something the mother has eaten.

*The Christian who is feeding others must be careful not to feed on the wrong things himself."*³

The portrait Paul intends to paint in this verse is that of a mother tenderly caring for all the needs of her own children. The idea is that the minister must minister to his people with tenderness, warmth, affection, care, intensity, and love. He must treat them as precious as his most beloved people, holding them ever so closely to his heart. Gentleness is not often a respected quality. Power and assertiveness gain more respect in our society, even though none of us likes to be bullied. Gentleness is love in action—being considerate, meeting the needs of others; allowing time for the other person to talk, and you being willing to listen.

*"A gospel messenger who stands detached from his audience has not yet been touched by the very gospel he proclaims."*⁴

Paul and His Personal Examples:

1ST—2:8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. Finally, Paul exemplified authentic Christian love. Paul's affection for his people was so strong that he preached the gospel to them in the midst of adversity and great opposition. He was willing to pour out his soul for them; to sacrifice his very life to make sure that they came to

³ 48Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Ready*, p. 40.

⁴ Martin, p. 81. Cf. Mal. 2:6-8.

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know Christ and the eternal salvation that was in Him. Why? – Because they were "**dear**" (*agapetpoi*) to him. The word dear means "**beloved**". They were his beloved people.

1ST–2:9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. They were to remember how Paul worked hard. The two words "**labor**" and "**travail**" denote work which is very tiring and very difficult. These two words denote manual labor and spiritual labor. It is clear from Paul's letters that he slept and rested only as he needed. Why? - Because he did spiritual labor preaching the gospel of God for the souls of mankind. Every ministry and message that he was willing to give, they could be saved from death and receive eternal life. Paul and his companions worked hard with their own hands to support themselves while they were in Thessalonica so that they might not be a burden or charge the people. Paul didn't have a five day nor a forty hour week job. He didn't work until four or five o'clock nor until dark and then have the rest of the day for himself. It was customary in Palestine for rabbis to have a secular trade with which they supported themselves. Therefore, he found employment outside the ministry. Acts 18:3 shows Paul's trade as tentmaking.

*Paul was a tentmaker by trade. As he traveled from city to city, he'd work his job making tents to support himself. Then when the day's work was over, he'd do his ministry. Sometimes he would receive financial support from some of the churches, but sometimes he didn't. While in Thessalonica, Paul actually received two financial gifts from the church in Philippi (Phi. 4:16), but apparently it was still not enough as Paul had to still work at making tents.*⁵

That was manual labor, but how could he rest and relax when people in every city and community were dying every day?

1ST–2:10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holly and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:—They were to remember how Paul served God with integrity. By preaching and ministering with a clean life, an impeccable life, the minister pleases God. This verse parallels with verse 3. He saying you (*Thessalonians*) and God are witnesses by means of three special attributes of Paul and associates:

- They lived a **holy** life before God; a life separated from the world and set apart totally to God.
- They lived a **just** and righteous life before men: a life that lived and treated men just as God said and just as God wanted them to be treated.
- They lived an **unblameable** life before both God and man. He and his helpers behaved in such a way that "*neither God nor the Thessalonians could reproach their conduct*" (Wanamaker, 105).

Paul is still talking about what he and his associates did, for they were witnesses.

1ST–2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,— They were to remember how Paul provided stimulating encouragement. Ministry isn't just about being a "*mom*", but being a "*dad*" too. By preaching as a father, tenderly giving direction,

- The minister **exhorts** just like a father: directs, guides, and teaches.
- The minister **comforts** just like a father: encourages, consoles, supports, sustains, holds up, lifts up, relieves and eases pain.
- The minister **charges** just like a father: testifies, witnesses, protects, and warns. And sometimes as a parent, there is a need for discipline.

When you're in ministry, there's a time to be tender, but there's a time to be firm too. Also note how he

⁵ <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/52%201Th/2000/521Th01-03.htm>
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emphasized his ministry to the Thessalonians as individual believers—"every one of you."

1ST-2:12 **That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.** By preaching and ministering with one objective—to lead his people to walk worthy of the Lord, the minister pleases God. God has given us the most glorious promise imaginable: the wonderful privilege of living forever in His kingdom and glory. Therefore we must walk worthy of the promise. We must live excellent lives—walk day by day just as we should walk—honoring and building up the name of God. He gave them such personal spiritual leadership and encouragement insisting on "*a certain standard of behavior*".

Reception of the Word

1ST-2:13 **For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God,—** Paul and the others began to thank God without ceasing for the Thessalonians for the simple reason of them receiving the Word of God when they heard it.

Some people come into a church and there will be some little thing that will turn them off, and they won't be back again. There will be people who will listen to the studies and be able to receive from the Lord. You see the excitement and anticipation in their eyes. There are those who once got something out of the studies, but someone in church hurts their feelings, or something happens that slowly draws them away from the Lord and they no longer can receive.

God is the One who draws the sinner to Himself and the Word! Part of the success of the process lies in the heart of the hearer. They "**received**" (*Gr paralambanō*) which means to "**take to oneself**." In this context it means to listen to and apply the words that were spoken. It also means (*Gr dechomai*) primarily "**to receive**" in the sense of receiving a guest, entertaining someone; much more commitment. This is the word that shows the responsive attitude of all true believers. The people not only recognized this message as something more than a merely human message (*word of men*), but welcomed it for what it really was, the Word of God. These people realized that when Paul was with them, it wasn't just Paul that was speaking, but God was speaking through Paul.

1ST-2:13b **...which effectually worketh also in you that believe. "Effectually worketh"** (*Gr emergeō*) means simply to be "**effective**." Jesus Christ Himself is that "*Word*" (Jh.1:1). He's working effectively in those that believe. What is it that we believe? God has loved us and has given us His Word—the very Word of Himself; the Holy Scriptures that makes us aware of the truth that we need a Savior to save us.

1ST-2:14 **For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:—**Paul calls them brethren because they became followers of the churches of God. The Thessalonians had a kinship with the church back in Judaea. They had both believed in the Lord Jesus and suffered for it. Just as the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were persecuted by their own people, so the Gentile Christians in Thessalonica were persecuted by their fellow Gentiles. It is discouraging to face persecution especially when it comes from your own people. But when we take a stand for Christ, we may face opposition, disapproval, ridicule, and persecution from our neighbors, friends, and even family members. They stood fast in Christ despite trials, even when facing severe persecution. Note that it was their own countrymen who were persecuting them; both Jews and Gentile, but the instigators were the Jews.

1ST-2:15 **Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:—**Why were so many Jews opposed to Christianity?

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- *First*, although the Jewish religion was declared legal by the Roman government, it still had shaky relationships with the government. At this time, Christianity was viewed as a sect of Judaism. The Jews were afraid that reprisals leveled against the Christians might be stretched to include them.
- *Second*, the Jewish leaders thought Jesus was a false prophet and they didn't want His teachings to spread.
- *Third*, they feared that if many Jews were drawn away, their own political position might be weakened.

The Jewish persecutors stood in opposition to Christ, and therefore, in opposition to God's very own Son. And remember they were religionists—a body of religious people who were set on destroying the Christian church in the name of religion. The Scripture says:

- They killed the Lord Jesus (2:15).
- They persecuted Christian believers (2:15).
- They were contrary to all men (2:15).
- They killed their own prophets (2:15).
- They did not please God (2:15).

But the Thessalonian church and its believers stood in support of Christ; therefore, escaping whatever guilt that hung over a person's head for opposing God's Son.

1ST—2:16 **Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.** Continuing of why many Jews opposed Christianity:

- *Fourth*, they were proud of their special status as "*God's chosen people*" and they resented the fact that Gentiles were full members within the church.

They tried to stamp out the Word of God lest some person be saved. They piled up their sins to the limit, but the wrath of God has overtaken them to destroy them. Think for a moment: if Jesus Christ is truly God's Son, then the judgment of God upon the Jewish unbelievers is inevitable.

Longing to See

1ST—2:17 **But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.** The fellowship of the Thessalonians was so strong that Paul just longed to return to them. Remember, he had been forced to flee the city because his life was being threatened by the persecution that had risen against the gospel. The ache of Paul's heart for the Thessalonians and their fellowship is seen as he emphasized it:

- He had been *taken from them in presence*, but "**not in heart.**"
- He "**endeavored**" (*spoudazo*) *to return*; to make a serious, concentrated effort to return.
- He "**abundantly**" or exceedingly *sought to see their face* "**with great desire**": with zeal, with intense longing, and with strong passion.

What a fellowship they must have had—even in the face of persecution.

1ST—2:18 **Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.** Despite Paul's intentions, the apostle declared that he would have come, but "**Satan hindered us.**" The word "**hindered**" them. This means "*to cut in a road*"; to make a road impassable; to put up a roadblock for the purpose of stopping an expedition. Satan is bound to do all he can to weaken it and stop its growth. One of the primary ways to weaken a church is to attack the minister of the church. This was the strategy in Thessalonica. What was the roadblock that Satan threw against Paul? Just what the hindrance was is not known. Paul never downplayed the work and activity of Satan. He recognized the existence and activity of some terrible force of evil.

1ST—2:19 **For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord**

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Jesus Christ at his coming?— Here, Paul makes use of three descriptive terms that depict his righteous sense of pride in his spiritual children. Paul clearly says that the Thessalonian believers were his hope and joy and crown of rejoicing. Note that each of the three words is qualified by the phrase "***In the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming.***" When? - In the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will return. They will all stand in His presence. The picture is that we are in a contest, a spiritual struggle against Satan for the souls of men. Therefore, we must stand and struggle and fight for the souls of men. A crown awaits us, also known as the "**victor's crown**". Have you ever won a soul to Christ? Well the crown of rejoicing awaits the person who will be able to present souls to the Lord in that day. Paul lets them know that it will be them standing in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming.

1ST-2:20 **For ye are our glory and joy.** The ultimate reward for Paul's ministry was not money, prestige, or fame, but new believers whose lives had been changed by God through the preaching of the gospel. Saved people are the fruit and reward of faithful evangelism. Seeing people saved is the joy and glory of those who faithfully witness.

SUMMARY:

Paul lets the Thessalonians know that when he had visited them, it was not to be in vain. Though they had previously suffered and were treated shamefully at Philippi, they were bold in their speaking the gospel with great opposition. Their appeal was not with wrong motives or deceit. They spoke as messengers of God who was trusted with the gospel, not as man-pleasers, but those to please God (**2:1-4**).

They didn't use flattering words at any time or pretext of greed, nor seek the glory of men. They could have made it burdensome for them as being apostles of Christ having authority, but Paul was gentle as a mother or nurse caring for her children. He desired and was willing to impart into them the gospel of God because they were dear to them. Paul and his companions worked hard night and day because they didn't want to charge them or be burdensome as they preached the gospel. The people witnessed their holy, just, and unblameable lives, and how they exhorted, comforted, and charged everyone as a father would do his children, so they would walk in a manner worthy of God, who called them unto His kingdom and glory (**2:5-12**).

Paul and his companions thanked God unceasingly, for the Thessalonians received the Word of God readily when they heard it from them, and accepted it as truth, not as men's words, but as the Word of God which inwardly effect those that believe. Paul calls them brethren because they became followers of the churches of God; also suffering like the others, even from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets. They persecuted Paul and the others, thereby displeasing God, and showing themselves foes to all men, and forbidding them to speak salvation to the Gentiles. They piled up their sins to the limit, but the wrath of God has overtaken them to destroy them. Since Paul was not with the Thessalonians; out of their presence, but not in heart, he endeavored to return to see their face again. However, despite his intentions, he declared that Satan hindered them. But Paul asked the questions, "*For what is our hope, or joy or crown of rejoicing? Is it not you?*" Then at the end of this letter, he tells them that they are their glory and joy. Seeing people saved is the joy and glory of those who faithfully witness (**2:13-20**).

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Timothy's Service There:

1ST-3:1 **Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;**— This passage has to do with the faith of the Thessalonians. Their faith was strong and Paul wanted to make sure that it remained strong. The believers were suffering fierce persecution by both the Jewish and Gentile citizens of the city. Paul had fled to Athens, but his heart was in Thessalonica, longing for the believers who were suffering the fierce attacks of persecution. As the Thessalonians were a little new at being Christians, Paul says he had reached a point when he could no longer bear it or stand it, for it was good for him to be left in Athens alone.

1ST-3:2 **And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:**—Paul was powerless to contain his anxiety any longer, so he decided to send Timothy to help the Thessalonians while he himself continued the work in Athens. Had they cracked under the savage attacks of persecution? Or were they standing fast? Timothy was a dependable brother and minister/servant of the Lord. If anyone could help the believers, he could. Paul sent Timothy to establish and comfort them in their faith.

- **"establish"** (*Gr stērizō*) means to stabilize or to support an already existing structure—establishing stability and soundness.
- **"comfort"** (*Gr paraklēō*) means to encourage. It is the word from which we get the name the Holy Spirit in John, namely the *"Comforter."* Timothy would come alongside of his brothers and sisters in Christ for the purpose of providing them with continual comfort and assurance.

Thus, Timothy's essential task was to ensure that the Thessalonians would stand sound in their faith, and be comforted; that they would not be **"cajoled** (persuaded) **with smooth talk when they were in the midst of persecution and difficulties"** (Morris, 63).

1ST-3:3 **That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.** There is an appointed time for everything; also affliction. So, don't be moved when it happens.

"Moved" (*gr sainō*) means usually **"wave"**, **"wag the tail."** Perhaps here it means **"wobble"** and thus **"collapse."** Paul says no man should be moved by these afflictions. Thus, despite the shameful treatment and savage attacks, the believer is not to be moved away from Christ. Timothy would continue to help them.

1ST-3:4 **For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.** The Thessalonians were already told about what they would have to endure. But when the attacks are so severe and savage, **how can the believer keep from being moved?**

1. The believer must know that he is appointed to persecution; and that is, he will suffer.
 - a. *Believers are persecuted because they are not of this world.* [They are *"the called out"* of the world].
 - b. *Believers are persecuted because they strip away the world's cloak of sin.* [They live and demonstrate a life of righteousness].
 - c. *Believers are persecuted because the world does not want to know God nor Christ.* [The world wants no God other than themselves and their own imaginations. They want to do just what they want]. However, believers want God!

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- d. *Believers are persecuted because the world is deceived in its concept and belief of God.* [The world conceives God to be the One who fulfills their earthly desires and lusts (Jh.16:2-3). However, the true believer teaches against their concept of God].

⁶How a person gets through difficult times will often tell about just where their relationship with the Lord really is. If a person has no deep root in the Lord, they will be blown away by difficult times. They will walk away from the Lord and join those people who say, **“Well, I tried Christianity, but it didn’t work for me.”** The problem isn’t that Christianity didn’t work; it’s that a person wasn’t clinging to Jesus in the difficult times. We often want to keep people from having to go through trials. We’d like to rescue them from their hard times, like a parent that constantly holds the child’s hand to keep them from falling. But sooner or later you need to let them walk on their own. Sooner or later they will need to experience a scraped knee or two. It’s the trials that refine our faith, that make us stronger. Keep these reasons in mind. They will help us to stand against persecution when it is launched against us.

1ST–3:5 **For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. “For this cause”,** Paul again states his reasons for sending Timothy:

1. Paul had to know that the Thessalonians were surviving the temptations of Satan
2. And that Paul’s work in them had not been in vain.
2. The believer must know that the temptation to cave in to persecution is of the tempter, of Satan himself. This is the very reason Satan had launched the persecution: to strike fear in the believer and silence them. Satan wants the believer to hush up about Christ and to desert Christ.
3. The believer must know that the labor and message of the minister is not empty.

Christ died for our sins that we might not perish. Christ gives us eternal life—gives us the privileges of living forever and ever in the new heavens and earth that He creates.

The work of the minister and of those who have taught us will have been useless if we give up and desert Christ. We must stand fast in afflictions, no matter how severe and savage. Standing fast in persecution is the sign of a strong faith.

Response to Timothy’s Report:

1ST–3:6 **But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:—** Timothy met Paul in Corinth and as soon as he had told Paul and the others about the faith of the Thessalonians, the news brought them comfort and much joy because they had been so anxious and worried for the Thessalonians. The report of Timothy pleased them so much because it was "good news." This good news was of their faith and charity (love) and their fondness or remembrance toward Paul. Three things were noted: faith, love, and remembrance.

1. The believers were standing fast in their faith in Christ. They were not buckling under persecution nor to the temptation to be silent about Christ. They were not forsaking their worship of Christ. In practical terms, they were continuing to study the scriptures, pray and worship together. And when possible, when it would not arouse opposition, they were sharing Christ and the promise of eternal life with all who would listen.
2. The believers were standing fast in love—love for Christ, each other, and their fellow men. They were ministering and meeting the needs of all those who would receive their help. And they were doing all they could to demonstrate love and care and good citizenship toward all.
3. The believers also remembered their pastor, Paul, with the deepest of affection. They longed to see him just as he longed to see them. What a dynamic testimony!

⁶ <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/52%201Th/2000/521Th01-03.htm>
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1ST—3:7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:—

To hear this news of the faith of the Thessalonians stirred the heart of their pastor Paul and his fellow associates and he began to write this letter. Note four significant points of the faith of the Thessalonians:

1. The faith of the Thessalonians believers meant a lot and stirred strength in Paul and the others, for they desperately needed comforting themselves. The word "**comforted**" (*paraklethemen*) means encouraged and strengthened. Why did Paul need encouragement and strengthening? It was not because of the Thessalonians, for Timothy's report had already comforted Paul's concern over them. But, Paul says, that he was in some affliction and distress. "**Affliction**" (*ananke*) means choking, intense pressure, and stress. "**Distress**" (*thlipsis*) means crushing trouble. The point is this: the testimony of the Thessalonians was strong, and God used it to help Paul in his time of need. What a lesson for us! Our faith is used by God to strengthen and encourage others in their time of need. Therefore, we must stand strong and grow stronger in faith.

1ST—3:8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

2. The faith of the Thessalonians stirred renewed life and purpose in Paul and the others. Paul had been discouraged, not defeated, but discouraged because of the difficulties confronting him in Corinth. The news of the Thessalonian believers ignited a renewed burst of life and purpose in them. He was stirred to minister and share Christ as never before. The Thessalonians were a testimony to all of them. They were suffering terrible persecution and remaining steadfast. Therefore, their steadfastness stirred Paul to bear the affliction and distress launched against them. Because the Thessalonians were standing fast in the Lord, life was worth living. for Paul and the others. Their faithfulness was stirring him in one of those times when he needed encouragement.

1ST—3:9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;—

3. The faith of the Thessalonians stirred thanks and joy in Paul. Paul just burst forth praising and thanking God and wondering what else could he do for them for they were joyful for their sakes before **our** God.

1ST—3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? —

4. The faith of the Thessalonians believers stirred continuous prayer in Paul. He said night and day that they prayed to see their face, and to pray for their fellowship and growth in Christ. Paul longed to be with them to fellowship so that he could continue to build up what's lacking in their faith; whatever weaknesses they might have. What a pastoral heart! That's a heart to always proclaim and teach Christ until we are all perfected into the image of Christ.

This is Paul's great prayer for the Thessalonian church and its believers.

1ST—3:11a Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ,— Paul invokes and petitions help from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the beginning of his prayer and reminds us of John 10:30 which says "**I and my Father are one.**" This was the time to fix their eyes on the One they spoke of and the One Paul taught about. Prayer is not always to get something from God, but prayer will humble and mature the one praying. It did not happen at this time. Paul prays both to God and Christ, and in so doing, he reveals who God is and who Christ is. The point is this: Relationship allows one to ask the Almighty God and Christ for help; the only power who can help when no one else can. The Father and Son co-existed eternally, having equal power. Paul revealed that God Himself is our Father and that Jesus Christ Himself is our Lord God from heaven—that both the Father and Son have the God nature. For this reason, Paul prayed for his answer.

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- to God Himself: the Supreme and Majestic Being of the universe, the Supreme Intelligence, the Creator and Maker of all things, the Giver and Sustainer of life and of everything else; the Person who dwells everywhere in perfect and supreme power, knowledge, and being.
- to God our Father. God is a Father to all of us, intimately involved in our lives. He is not just in outer space ruling and reigning and being far removed from us. No, God our father is right here with us. He is actively participating in our lives just as an earthly father participates in the lives of his children. Therefore, Paul, as a child, approaches God our Father, and asks Him for certain things and when he asks, he knows that his Father will hear and answer. He knows because God is not only able to answer, but God is his Father that hears. And that's what the Father does.
- to our Lord Jesus Christ. The word "**Lord**" means "**Master**" (guardian; trustee); Adonai' and also the title "**Lord**" is used for God the Father and God the Son. He is Lord over all that receive Him. The word "**Christ**" means "**Messiah**" and "**Savior**", the Anointed One; our way to the Father. The title Christ identifies Jesus as the Anointed One who deserves respect.

1ST-3:11b ...direct our way unto you. Paul asked the Father and the Lord Jesus to direct and guide his way to the Thessalonians. He wanted both God and the Lord Jesus working to open the door for him to return to the dear believers at Thessalonica. Remember Satan had created some terrible problems and obstacles to keep Paul from returning to the church (1Thess.2:18; 3:7). But Paul longed to return, therefore, he wanted both the Father and the Son working on the matter. Hence, he addressed their equal power.

1ST-3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:—The great need for which Paul prayed is the supreme need of every believer—the need for love, and to grow in love more and more. The word "**Increase**" (*pleonasai*) means to abound, to multiply over and over. The word "**abound**" (*perisseuai*) means to excel and overflow. But note the crucial point: the love being spoken about is not what the world means by love. This is seen in two significant points.

- The love that we must grow in is the love that makes us love *all men*, not just one another. The love we are to have is the love that reaches out and overflows and multiplies toward everyone. This means...
 - the unattractive
 - the ugly
 - the orphan
 - the sick
 - the hateful
 - the enemy
 - the murderer
 - the unclean
 - the homeless
 - the prisoner
 - the diseased
 - the spiteful
 - the oppressor
 - the poor
 - the unclothed
 - the widow and widower
 - the sinner
 - the opponent
 - the dictator

How is it possible to love those who do evil to us and who treat us as enemies? How can we increase and abound in love for them? Is it even practical to ask us to love all men? Is it even humanly possible? No! It is not possible for us to love those who hate us and who stand as enemies against us—not humanly possible. But there is a way. However, there is only one way. That's why Paul prayed to our Father and our Lord. This is the subject of the next point.

The source of love is the Lord. There is no other source, not for the kind of love that can love all men. This is the reason Paul went before the Lord and requested such a love. Paul knew that it was impossible for him or the Thessalonians to work up the kind of love that could reach out and abound toward all men. A love that could love those who could ignore, neglect, abuse, and shamefully mistreat us, could only come from God. There are **four kinds of love**:

1. There is passionate love or **eros** love. This is the physical love between sexes.
2. There is affectionate love or **storge** love. This kind of love that exists between parent and child.
3. There is endearing love or **phileo** love. This is the love of a husband and wife for each other.
4. There is selfless and sacrificial love or **agape** love. This is the love of the will rather than emotions.
 - a. It loves a person even if he does not deserve to be loved.
 - b. It actually loves the person who is utterly unworthy of being loved.

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1ST-3:13 To the end he may **stablish** your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. The great result of love is to be presented unblameable before God when Christ returns to earth. This is the most glorious result imaginable. The word "**stablish**" (*sterixaí*) means to prop, support, confirm, fix, make, fast, set. It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who stablishes our hearts before God. No one else has the right or power to set us before God. No one else can make us acceptable to God. The word "**heart**" here refers to the whole person or personality of man. The word "**unblameable**" (*amemptous*) means to be free from fault and blame; to be free from all charges. The word "**holiness**" (*hagiosune*) means to be set apart and be separated to God. He alone can free us from the faults and charges of sin. He alone can present us unblameable and holy before God. Just think about it: who else has such power? Do you know such a person? Man's only hope is Christ—that He truthfully has the righteousness and power to set us unblameable and holy before God.

When is this glorious presentation to God going to take place? - When Christ returns with all His saints; that is with all the holy and glorified people of God; He will present all believers—every single one of us, to God:

- All the believers who have died and gone to be with the Lord; who are raptured when He returns.

What a coronation, the glorious day of our presentation before God—meeting Him face to face and being presented to Him unblameable and holy—to be with Him forever and ever! It is the promise of God Himself and therefore it cannot be stopped! And no man should want to stop it. On the contrary, all men should prepare and welcome it.

SUMMARY:

The apostle Paul calls to remembrance events both during and after his previous visit to Thessalonica. The action during his visit: Paul warned the church that they could expect future persecution because of their faith in Christ; this soon came to pass. The action after his visit: In Athens, he experiences great concerns over the spiritual welfare of the church in Thessalonica. Therefore, he sent Timothy to minister to them. Timothy brings back the joyous news that the Thessalonians are growing in faith and love. Paul is greatly comforted by this news.

The one thing needed by Christians is faith: a faith that honestly knows Christ and knows what it is to walk in Him day by day, and trusting Him. He stressed their faith five times in the first ten verses. Paul...

- wanted to comfort—that is, strengthen their **faith** so he send Timothy (3:2).
- wanted to know if their **faith** was standing against the tempter's temptation (3:5).
- received word that their **faith** and love were strong from Timothy (3:6).
- was comforted over their **faith** (3:7).
- received renewed life as the Thessalonians stood fast in the Lord (in faith) (3:8).
- wished to perfect their **faith** (3:10).

Paul then knew all that was done for the Thessalonian believers was not done in vain as he continued to pray for them. He now lifts up a twofold prayer request. Paul asks God for himself to permit him to go visit the church again. And a prayer for the church—that their love will both increase and overflow—that their hearts would be strengthened and be unblameable in matters of holiness before God (3:11-13).

APPLICATION:

Strength comes to you while you're strengthening someone else. Keep the Word of God before you when going through the challenges of life. An encouraging word is always comforting to those you haven't seen in awhile and those you see everyday! Begin to make that a priority! You'll never know who needs it!

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I THESSALONIANS 4:1-18

NEXT 5:1-11, 25-28

HISTORY:

In chapters two and three, he reminded them of their past - how he had come to Thessalonica and shared the gospel with them, and how they responded to it; how he rejoiced in the Thessalonians' persisting faith and love, and beseeches God to strengthen them in holiness. He ends with (3:11-13) Paul now knowing that all that was done for the Thessalonian believers was not done in vain as he continued to pray for them. He now lifts up a twofold prayer request. Paul asks God for himself to permit him to go visit the church again. And a prayer for the church—that their love will both increase and overflow—that their hearts would be strengthened and be unblameable in matters of holiness before God.

1ST-4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren,— The word "*beseech*" (*erotomen*) means to ask or **request**. By calling the believers, brothers, Paul was expressing deep affection and care for them. Paul was tenderly requesting his dear brothers to continue to please God in their daily walk, but with an urgent request. It was a necessity that carried with it great blessings for obedience and terrible judgment for disobedience (the displeasure of God).

1ST-4:1b ...and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. This begins a major new discussion in this Book (First Thessalonians 4).

1. The exhortation was based upon the Lord Jesus. It was what the Lord Himself had taught. There is no greater authority than the Lord. He is the supreme Majestic Being of the Universe. Therefore, the exhortation is urged by the highest authority—the Lord Jesus.
2. The believers had been taught by Paul and his companions how they ought to walk and please God. They had sat under the teachers and preachers of the Word. Therefore, they were without excuse, for they knew exactly how to live and to please God. The word "*ought*" (*dei*) means **must**; meaning it is an imperative, a necessity. Once the believers had heard and been taught how they should live to please God, they were responsible to live a new way of life. Pleasing God was not an option—it was a duty!

The emphasis is on now on purity. Immorality is the rampaging monster that destroys more lives, families, and nations than any other single evil. The Christian life is often described as a "**walk**." Walking is a picture of moving (action) forward and progressing step by step and day by day. The exhortation is seen in the following facts:

1ST-4:2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3. The exhortation involves the actual commandments of the Lord Jesus. This is a repeat of verse one: keeping commandments of the Lord Jesus is not an option. In addition, it has been given by the Lord Himself. Therefore, it must be kept, regardless. We must walk; we must grow day by day more and more to please God.

Note in verse 1 that Paul acknowledges the fact that his readers are already living according to Christian standards, he is merely encouraging them to continue to grow as they already have.

1ST-4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:— Paul lets them know this is truly the "*Will of God...*" There is no higher "*Will*" than the "*Will of God*." The word "*sanctification*" means to be set apart and separated. Therefore, as it relates specifically to sexual purity, keep oneself entirely away

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from fornication. The **Will of God** is moral purity. This letter is intended for the Thessalonians as well as us today.

- Set yourself apart to God and His "**Will**", and abstain from fornication.

1. **Sanctification** in this new way of life means abstaining from fornication.

The word "**fornication**" (*porneias*) means sexual intercourse between two people who are not married. The believer's body belongs to Christ, which means that we are to honor Christ with our bodies. We are to take the sexual drive and energy of our bodies and use it as He has instructed. The major commandment is sanctification, that is, moral purity.

1ST—4:4 **That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;**— Paul lets the believers know what they should know—"**how**" to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour (the word "**how**" is not in the Greek text). Leon Morris points out that the word "**vessel**" (*skeuos*) can refer either to a person's own body or to a person's spouse (The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p.75).

- Know how to have power over your body in consecration and respect.

2. **Sanctification** in this new way of life means that a person knows how to control his body and his spouse.

Now, the Word says, they "**should know**." There is no excuse for disobedience or ignorance. The believer is to know that it is his duty to keep his body pure and their spouse body pure. The word vessel is used of the wife as the weaker vessel (1Pt.3:7). Neglecting, ignoring or abusing one's spouse can bring about temptation and can contribute significantly to the spouse becoming unfaithful and impure. **The point is:** the believing husband and wife are to know that they must keep themselves and each other in sanctification and honor by keeping clear of all sexual sin. They must not set themselves away from each other to dishonorable and immoral situations.

1ST—4:5 **Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God;**— Paul simply lets the believers know what they should already know—This was especially important for the Thessalonians as Gentiles. Sanctification in marriage was something brand new for the Thessalonians who had come from obviously corrupt Gentile culture. They grew up not knowing God, and now that they had turned to God they needed to know and conform to Christian standards.

- Know not to behave like the Gentiles who didn't know God having a strong passion of lust.

3. **Sanctification** means resisting the passion of lust.

Note the double emphasis, that is, the wording, "**lust of concupiscence**." It means a strong passion of lust, the enslaving power of lust. When a person begins to lust, he can soon become enslaved to lust; he can be held by the grip to such a degree that it is almost impossible to break the bondage. This is true with the.....

- | | |
|--|--|
| i. passion for sex. | v. passion for sexual conquest. |
| ii. passion for pornographic films and literature. | vi. passion for touching. |
| iii. passion for manipulation. | vii. passion for romantic and immoral reading. |
| iv. passion for exposure. | |

The passion of lust is the way of the world. It is not the way of God. It is the lifestyle of those who do not know God. It does not mean that they do not know that sexual immorality is wrong, but it means they have rejected God and His commandments. They have chosen to live in the passion of their lusts. The believer is commanded to please God and to keep the commandments of the Lord Jesus. Therefore we are to sustain from fornication—from all forms of immoral sex (Read: Rom.1:18-32).

1ST—4:6 **That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.** Several words need explanation here. *First, "go beyond"*

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(*Gr hyperbainō*) means quite literally to overstep or break laws. Second, "defraud (*Gr pleonekteō*) his brother", denotes taking advantage of, robbing or cheating someone through greed. Third, "in any matter", that is specially the matter which has just been mentioned—unethical sexual activity. **An example:** when a man does not live with his own wife as he should, but instead commits adultery with someone else's, he must know that he has violated, or robbed his brother by so doing, and that he deserves the vengeance of God. There are four reasons why we are to live pure lives, and the reasons stand as a severe warning to us.

- Don't in any matter wrong and defraud your brother.
- 1. Live pure lives because **Immorality** defrauds and cheats a bother, Fornication steals from a person. The person who seduces the unmarried steals from the person seduced and from the future spouse—steals the person's:
 - i. heart
 - ii. affection
 - iii. thoughts
 - iv. purity
 - v. body
 - vi. innocence
 - vii. trust & trustworthiness

That's what the enemy does, he comes to steal, kill, and destroy. It's that simple—that tragic—that terrible. It steals one of the two major partners of a family. The pain and hurt always linger to some degree and the commitment and ability to totally surrender to the other/spouse always suffers to some degree.

- Know that you are not to avenge your brother.
- 2. Live pure lives because **Immorality** shall be avenged by God. Society does not make the rules for man's behavior; God makes the rules. He has given the intimacy and preciousness of sex for marriage and only for marriage. And He has made it perfectly clear that any sex outside of marriage will not only be judged, but He will personally avenge the guilty party. Why? Because the guilty party...
 - a. stole the life of a person (spiritually speaking).
 - b. broke the person's trust and innocence for the rest of his life.

1ST–4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. God did not call us to uncleanness. "**Uncleanness**" means defiled, impure, or polluted. This kind of conduct is the opposite of holiness. This still is referencing to sexual immorality.

- Know that you are not called to be impure, but to be holy.
- 3. Live pure lives because **Immorality** is not God's call; holiness is. Uncleanness and holiness cannot go together. Fornication cannot go with holiness in the new life. When God called us to salvation, He does not call us to live unclean lives, giving us the license to go from person to person. Such immorality...
 - i. destroys genuine love for self, and for others.
 - ii. destroys trust and trustworthiness of self, and of others.
 - iii. destroys discipline and control of self, and of others.
 - iv. destroys true care and concern for self, and for others.
 - v. destroys ego and esteem of self, and of others.
 - vi. destroys confidence and assurance in self, and in others.
 - vii. destroys loyalty and commitment within self, and within others.
 - viii. destroys freedom and will within self, and within others.
 - ix. destroys justice and fair treatment of others, and lastly.
 - x. destroys family and even a nation.

God never calls a person to do such terrible things. He calls us to holiness—to live lives that are set apart to Him and to purity, to our spouses and families. God calls us to build strong character and communities, strong families and nations. God calls us to holiness so that we can be strong enough to reach out to a world that reels under the awful weight of suffering and death. Uncleanness disintegrates (breaks down) character and society. Holiness is total devotion to God; you're being set apart unto God. Holiness builds character in society to look and live like Christ. Al the things the enemy wants to steal, we are to keep holy—our heart, affection, thoughts, bodies, innocence, trust and trustworthiness, and purity.

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1ST—4:8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

The word "*despiseth*" means to reject. Most persons reject this commandment of God as being *old fashioned* and *unacceptable* in an intellectual and enlightened society. This is similar to Lk.10:16, where Jesus gives authority to the apostles, and literally explains, "**Whoever listens to you, listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me; the person who rejects me, rejects the one who sent me.**" *Listens* refers to (*obeys*). And "*despise*" and "*reject*" translate the same Greek word.

- Know that the man you're despising is not him, but it's God who has given us the Holy Spirit.
- 4. Live pure lives because **Immorality** is a sin against God. "*The one who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God...*" The idea is that the preacher or teacher may be able to do little to us if we disregard the commandment, but God can take vengeance, and He will. Every human being who ever breaks the commandment shall receive the vengeance of God—unless he has repented and sought the forgiveness of God.

Every believer should be ambitious to please God. This passage gives four practical ways that we should be mindful of that pleases God.

1. Grow in love more and more (4:9-10).
2. Study to be quiet (4:11).
3. Do your own business (4:11).
4. Work with your own hands (4:11).

1ST—4:9 **But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.** Paul continues to encourage the Thessalonians in their Christian walk letting them know that he really didn't need to touch on their brotherly love, because they have already been taught by God to love one another. In the Greek the word love is not the word that is usually used for love. The word that is usually used for Christian love is "*agape*", but here it is "*philladelphla*", a very special kind of love, brotherly love, that exists between the brothers and sisters within a loving family, brothers and sisters who truly cherish each other. The kind of love...

- i. that binds each other together as a family, as a brotherly clan.
- ii. that binds each in an unbreakable union. That holds each other ever so deeply within the heart.
- iii. that knows deep affection for each other.
- iv. that nourishes and nurtures each other.
- v. that shows concern and looks after the welfare of each other.
- vi. that joins hands with each other in a common purpose under one father (*The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,* p.80).

Note: Paul says there is no need for him to exhort the Thessalonians to love each other as brothers. Nevertheless, he does. Why? If there is no need, why does he encourage them to love each other? There are two reasons:

1. Therefore, as God's servant, Paul was driven to follow God; to stir the people of God to continue to love each other as brothers. This was and still is an absolute essential for the church.
 - a. Christian believers need each other in order to make it through life. Living for Christ is not easy in a corrupt world that offers the bright lights of pleasure but ends up in suffering death. We all face temptation. We need the love of each other in order to stand against the temptations and to walk through the sufferings of life.
 - b. The greatest threat to the church is that of internal strife and divisiveness. Nothing destroys the ministry of a church any quicker than criticism, grumbling, murmuring, gossiping, selfishness, cliquishness, and ambitiousness-- to have one's own way or to secure some position.

The point is this: God actually teaches believers to love each other as brothers qualifying God's works within our hearts to stir us to love each other. He arouses the thoughts within our minds—flashes the thought across our minds—the thought that we should love each other as brothers. Therefore, we are to grab hold of that thought stirred up within our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and love each other.

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1ST-4:10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you,

brethren, that ye increase more and more;— For the Thessalonians, Macedonia was home. If we cannot love those at home, how can we love others far away? Therefore this leads Paul to definitely urge them to go beyond.

The Thessalonian believers were noted for their love, not only within their own church, but throughout all Macedonia. But they were not yet perfected in love. No person is! Therefore, there is always the need to grow and increase in love, more and more, because they were taught by God to do so.

1ST-4:11a And that ye study to be quiet,— What does that mean? The word "*study*" (*philotimeomai*) means to be ambitious; to strive eagerly; to seek with all the energy a person has. The very meaning of the word "**study**" shows the supreme importance of quietness. Remember the church at Thessalonica was facing two critical problems:

1. It was facing the problem of persecution.
2. And the problem of some criticism and divisiveness against Paul.

The point is this: we are to live a quiet and peaceable life before each other. We are not to be critical and divisive toward each other. We are to walk in a quiet and meek spirit out in the world. We are not to be abusive and arrogant in witnessing and in dealing with the world.

POINT:

- *Although a believer is hurting, he needs to be heard, and the only way he can be heard is for us to be quiet and listen to him.*
- *The world is hurting—everyone in the world has or have had some hurt. Therefore, we must be quiet and listen for the hurt so that we can do what Christ said: minister to them.*
- *Also, the world needs the gospel, but the gospel cannot be effectively proclaimed in the midst of noise—not effectively and not in an appealing way. Noise pierces the ear and distracts. There must be quietness of atmosphere and mind for the gospel to have its most effective impact.*
- *Believers must study to be quiet instead of studying to be critical and divisive. You can hardly be effective when you share your faith with others, and people don't respect you. Whatever you do, do it faithfully and be a positive force in society.*

1ST-4:11b ...and to do your own business,— What does that mean? It means "**mind your own business.**" Can you believe the Word of God says this? Why? Because too many are busybodies and meddle in the affairs of others. What is it that causes a person to meddle in the business of others?

- A person meddles because he is critical by nature.
- A person meddles because he fails to see his own shortcomings and failures.
- A person meddles because he does not have enough to do.

What the busybody needs is to become so occupied with the things of Christ; to undertaking the mission of Christ that he has no time to meddle in the affairs of others. This exhortation is strong.

1ST-4:11c ...and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;— The Thessalonian believers became so excited over the return of the Lord (His Second Coming) and the promise of being with Him forever that in their zeal, they abandoned their jobs. The result was catastrophic. They now had to sponge off the other believers in order to survive. Their action had been most unwise. Therefore, Paul commanded them: "**work with your own hands**"—quit sponging off others. Two reasons are given for labor:

- Man is to subdue and gain dominion over the earth in all its unregulated and catastrophic forces (Gen.1:28).
- Man is to work to provide the necessities of life for all men (Gen.2:15) and family (1 Tim.5:8).
- Man is to work in order to have enough to give to the needy of the world (Eph.4:28).

The exhortation is clear. The inactive, lazy, complacent—all are to hear the clear command of God: "**Work with**

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your own hands." The old expression says, "**Idle hands are the devil's workshop.**" When someone isn't busy, they're in prime location for sin.

1ST-4:12 **That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.** We are to set examples for the unbelievers. It would be wrong and harmful to their testimonies to depend upon the church to feed their families if they were able to work. The world is always looking at the actions of Christians. Therefore, their level of commitment will always show their true motivation for action.

1. We must labor in order to walk honestly before outsiders, that is, before the world of unbelievers. Of all people Christians must set a dynamic example of work. One of the very purposes for which man has been put on earth is to work.
2. We must labor in order to have no lack, not having to beg from others for the supply of their wants.

The Thessalonians had to suffer much from the people who did not believe in Christ, but we are always to remember that pleasing God will always be the right motivation for our actions to walk in holiness, love, and diligence; focusing on nothing else but God alone. And the right instructions will always come from God.

1ST-4:13 **But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.** The concern of the believers at Thessalonica involved believers that have fallen asleep. Remember, the church at Thessalonica had just been founded; it was brand new. It was also being bitterly persecuted and was under salvage attack. Some of the believers were dying; perhaps some were even being martyred and Christ had not yet returned. They were eagerly looking for the blessed hope; the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. They knew the gospel just as we know it. All kinds of concerns arose in their minds just as they do in the minds of believers in every generation. The Thessalonians were concerned and they were asking questions about the resurrection and the Lord's return out of concern, not out of curiosity.

- First, do not be ignorant about those that are asleep or have died. Sleep is a natural description of death because the body ceases its activity, and because there is an awakening in the Resurrection. It is as easy for Christ to awaken the dead as for us to awaken a sleeping person.
- Second, do not grieve excessively over loved ones who die before Christ returns especially those that die in the Lord. We are bound to experience some sorrow and grief, but we are not to suffer grief like unbelievers who have no hope. Their spirits remain alive. When we say good-bye to loved ones who are passing on, it is not good-bye forever, but for a little while. The unbeliever does not have this hope. He can only look forward to an accursed eternity.

There is a glorious hope for believers, for they shall rise to meet God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1ST-4:14 **For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.** The concern of the believers is would their loved ones who have died share in the resurrection when Christ returned to earth? There are three proofs of the Lord's coming:

1. **Proof 1:** the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that the departed will return to earth with Him.⁷ This is the foundation of our Christian faith. It was the backbone of all apostolic preaching starting with Pentecost. The Resurrection proves that Jesus really is God's Son. If He did not rise, our faith is meaningless. His Resurrection is not just a comforting story but a historical fact and truth supported by the testimony of many credible eyewitnesses. Therefore, if we believe in Jesus Christ...
 - a. We never have to die because He has already died for us.
 - b. We shall arise from the dead even as He arose.

⁷ Jh.6:40; 1Corth.15:3-4 2Corth.4:14

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How?- By believing that Christ did die and rose from the dead for us. If we believe in Jesus Christ, then when we depart this world, we go to be with Him; and when He returns, we shall return with Him.

2. **Proof 2:** departed believers are with Christ; they are living with Him face to face.⁸ We do not have to wonder where they are. The word "*sleep*" is not teaching that death is a semi-conscious state, an existence somewhat like a deep sleep. The believer immediately goes to be with Christ when he departs from this world and he will rest with Christ throughout eternity. It is God in the Person of Jesus Christ who will return to earth and bring departed believers with Him. Christ has the power of God because He is God. As God, Jesus Christ ...
 - i. had the power to come to earth as a man.
 - ii. had the power to die and arise from the dead.
 - iii. had the power to ascend back into heaven.
 - iv. has the power to transfer a departed believer into heaven with Him.
 - v. has the power to return to earth
 - vi. has the power to bring all departed believers back to earth with Him.

1ST-4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

3. **Proof 3:** is in the Word of the Lord. Departed believers will return to earth with God.⁹ Their bodies will actually be raised from the dead before we that are alive are caught up. According to the Lord's Word those that are alive and remain will not precede those who have already fallen asleep. This is a strong point. Paul emphatically states that this revelation has come from the Lord. What is the revelation? We who are alive when the Lord returns shall not be caught up first. Again, how do we know this? How do we know that this is a fact, a real event that will actually take place? - By the Word of God.

1ST-4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:—

The events of the Lord's return and the resurrection are clearly spelled out in these verses.

1. **First event, the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven.** The very first event will be the appearance of the Lord God Himself. The supreme Majesty of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ will rent the skies and miraculously appear in all His spectacular glory. Three spectacular events will occur.
 - a. **The Lord God Himself will appear** with a "**shout**" (*en keleusmatij*). The word means a military command. The commander-in-chief of the universe will shout louder than any voice has ever shouted.¹⁰
 - b. **The voice of the archangel will cry out.**¹¹ What will they cry? His shout will probably be the rallying cry for all the armies of the heavenly angels to join in the praise of the glorious event. Christ taught that the heavenly angels would be with Him when He returned to earth.
 - c. **The trump of God shall sound.**¹² The trumpet has always been for the purpose of arousing attention and warning. The whole universe—both earth and heaven, believers, and angels—will be aroused; and all unbelievers will be warned. The Lord God Himself is now appearing and the events of the end time are now being launched upon earth.
2. **Second event, the dead in Christ shall rise first.** Why? Because of the Lord's great love and care. His first expression of love and care will be shown to those dear saints who had passed through the shadow of death.
 - a. Only departed believers (dead in Christ) will arise; no unbelievers will be resurrected, not at that point.
 - b. It will be the bodies of the departed believers that are resurrected. The believers themselves, that is,

⁸ 2Corth.5:6-8

⁹ 1Thess.2:13; 2Corth.4:14

¹⁰ Joel 2:11

¹¹ 1Thess.4:16

¹² Matt.24:31; 1Corth.15:52

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their spirits, are already with the Lord. Their bodies are being raised and transformed to live forever with God. The shout of the Lord will call together all the atoms of a person's body, no matter where the various parts of a person's body may lie. The atoms of a person's body will be transformed to structure an eternal and perfect body.

- c. The bodies of the departed believers will arise first—arise before we who are alive are caught up.

1ST-4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

3. **Third event, we who are alive will be caught up right after the dead have risen.** There will be a glorious transformation of our bodies just as there will be of those whose bodies have decayed in the earth. The nature of the believer's present body is corruptible and mortal; the nature of his new body will be incorruptible and immortal. *1Corth.15:53* says "*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*" The word "**must**" in *1Corth.15:54* show the absolute necessity for the change of man's body. If man is to live with God, his body must be changed. It is essential, a must, an absolute necessity if man is to live forever.
4. **Fourth event, the great union of the living with the dead will take place in the clouds.** We shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord. We shall be reunited with all our loved ones, even more, all believers—our loved ones and those whom we have never known—shall be united together with us into perfect and eternal beings. What a day of rejoicing and reunion that will be!

As wonderful as the reunion of believers will be, the most wonderful event will be the experience of seeing our Lord face to face for the very first time and living with Him. Everything will take place in the blink of an eye. Suddenly...

- a. we will be standing in mid-air and transformed into perfect men and women.
- b. we will be standing in the clouds in the midst of teeming millions.
- c. we will be transformed in the midst of the spectacular glory and majesty, dominion, and power of the Lord God Himself!

The great reunion with family and believers will not be the occupation of our thoughts. Christ will be! The Lord God Himself in all His majestic glory and sovereignty will consume our attention as we praise and adore Him. The whole jest of what Paul is saying is that Jesus Christ Himself will be the total focus of our attention.

1ST-4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Paul encourages them to "**comfort one another with these words.**" God does not reveal the events of the end time to satisfy curiosity. He tells us about the glorious events so that we can prepare and comfort one another. There is no need for discouragement on this earth; no need for extreme sorrow and grief; no need for hopelessness; and no need for ignorance. The Lord Himself has given us the most wonderful hope—the hope of living forever face to face with Him—of worshipping and serving Him forever in a new heaven and earth!

SUMMARY:

With this chapter Paul begins a series of practical exhortations related to the Christian's walk. Paul with urgency was tenderly requesting his dear brothers to continue to abound more and more. They knew the commandments of God which was the Will of God. They were to abstain from fornication (*all kinds of immoral sexual acts*); knowing how to control their body and resist lustful passions. A person is not to defraud his brother in any matter. The reason for purity is that immorality cheats and wrongs a brother, but it shall be avenged by God. God did not call us

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to uncleanness but to holiness. Immorality is not God's call, holiness is. Therefore, the person that refuses to live by this commandment is not disobeying man's rules but disobeying God who gave His Holy Spirit (**4:1-8**).

Paul knew of the Thessalonians brotherly love because they were taught to love one another by God. This leads Paul to urges them to increase more and more in love. In fact, they were loving all the believers even in Macedonia, but they were still to go beyond and increase more. They were to live a quiet life, mind their own business, work with their own hands, so that they might walk/live as honest examples lacking nothing before those that are outside the church (**4:9-12**).

In this section of the letter Paul replies to those who had lost loved ones in death. They wondered about the spiritual welfare of those who had died. And Paul did not want them to be ignorant of those that are asleep. They were not to grieve like those that have no hope. Those that believe in the resurrection are sleep in Jesus. God will bring back with Him the believers who have died. According to the Lord's Word those that are alive and remain will not precede those who have fallen asleep. The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, an archangel's voice, and a trumpet's blast. Then the dead in Christ shall rise first and we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. We are to encourage each other with these words (**4:13-18**).

APPLICATION:

Maybe you've hardened your heart against this Word. It's not up to me to convince you. If you're rejecting this, you're not rejecting me; you're rejecting the Holy Spirit who is gently calling you to repentance. Holiness (or sanctification) is not something that believers attempt to muster on their own, God brings it to pass! We are told to walk in holiness, walk in love, and walk in diligence which is demonstrated in action.

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1ST–5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. Now the focus shifts to the return of Christ to judge the earth. Paul is speaking to believers, calling them “**brothers.**” The Thessalonians have been well educated by Paul regarding future events. This does not mean that they knew everything, but evidently Paul felt that their understanding was adequate.

- “**Times**” (chronon) meant chronological time, the events that follow one another and roll in and away from one another.
- “**Seasons**” (kairon) meant the particular time and the nature of the events that are to take place.

There are two reasons why they didn’t need any more data. Jesus made it clear that no one knows the exact time when Jesus will return, therefore, Paul didn’t have to write about that. *Matthew 24:36* says “*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*” Therefore, there was no need to discuss or for Paul to write about the times and seasons. ¹³But they knew what to look for in the world – they were to recognize the season by looking around at the signs of the times:

- i. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and the Sadducees for being unable to discern the season by looking around. He told them in, *Matt. 16:2-3 ... “When it is evening, you say, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, there will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening. Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?”*
- ii. Another example to discern the signs of the times. The Bible has spelled it out for us. We can look at the mindset of man to determine if we are in the last days. *2Tim. 3:1-4 “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...”*
- iii. Another example to discern the sign of the times is that the church itself becomes corrupted: *2Tim. 4:3-4 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but {wanting} to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.”*

In our generation, sound doctrine and bible teaching isn’t what most people in the church want to hear. They want feel-good messages, seeker-sensitivity, and acceptance of all “*lifestyle choices.*” They want edification without rebuke. They want fellowship without accountability. Saints, look at the seasons, it is so clear: **We are in the last days!** The reason Paul would not need to write is introduced in 5:2

1ST–5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. They know perfectly well “**that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night**”, but do not know the date of Christ’s return to judge the world. The “**Day of the Lord**” is a phrase that is used many times in the Old Testament (Is.2:12; 13:6-9 etc.). The prophets used the term to describe God’s judgment on the pagan nations surrounding Israel.

“**The day of the Lord**” is a period of time in which God will deal with wicked men directly and dramatically in fearful judgment. Today a man may be a blasphemer of God; an atheist can denounce God and teach bad doctrine. Seemingly God does nothing about it. But the day designated in scripture as “*the day of the Lord*” is coming

¹³ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/52-1Thessalonians/1Thessalonians0501.html>
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when God will punish human sin, and He will deal in wrath and in judgment with a Christ-rejecting world. One thing we are sure of, that God in His own way will bring every soul into judgment (The Thessalonian Epistles, p.76).

Remember, that day, the day when God will bring every soul into judgment is what the Bible calls "**the day of the Lord.**" When is Christ returning? When the earth has reached such a depraved condition that it is hopelessly lost forever and ripe for the judgments of "**the day of the Lord.**" There are **three strong reasons** why the believer is not to be caught off guard by "**the Day of the Lord.**"

1. It will be **unexpected** (5:2b). "**The day of the Lord**" will come when the world of unbelievers feel a great sense of security (false security)—when they are saying "**peace and safety**" (5:3b). *Revelation 16:15*, Jesus says, "**Behold, I come like a thief!**" Just as a burglar does not announce his arrival, Jesus will come when He is least expected.

1ST—5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

2. It will be **destructive** (5:3a). "**The Day of the Lord**" comes when they are saying "**peace and safety**", a terrible destruction will be lying right over the horizon. **Peace** - they say "**everything's okay on the inside.**" **Safety** - they say, "**everything's okay on the outside.**" But it's not okay inside or out, and anyone who says it is either lying or deceived. The Lord is going to bring destruction to this world, and when it happens, people are going to be totally unaware. Not because they weren't warned, but because they didn't listen. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the great and terrible day of the Lord will fall upon the world.
3. It will be **inescapable** (5:3b). When the "**Day of the Lord**" finally comes and God's fury is poured out on the earth, there will be no place to run and no place to hide. He uses a fascinating analogy to make his point. He compares it to a woman who is having labor pains. It will be just like the travail that suddenly strikes a woman who is with child. The pain, suffering, and destruction will be relentless and inescapable for unbelievers. No one will escape! Believers won't be around anyway for the "**Day of the Lord**" because we will be Raptured before it begins.

Evidently "**they and them**" (5:3) refer to those left behind after the removal of the church, that is, ALL unbelievers.

1ST—5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Paul assures them and clears away any confusion and concern for the Thessalonians. ¹⁴But we're not going to be caught like this. We know that the signs of the times indicate that this is coming soon. We know that God has called us to holiness and righteousness, and steadfastness of hope. And we know that the wrath of God will be poured out on the ungodliness of this earth in that great and terrible "**Day of the Lord.**" So we are not in the dark.

1. The genuine believer **will not dwell in the darkness** of ignorance. Therefore, the believer's mind and thoughts should not be upon the world, but walking about, always praying and thinking about the things of God and the utter necessity to reach people for Christ, for the great and terrible day of the Lord is coming.

1ST—5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Because of this, how a believer behaves while he is on earth matters greatly to God.

2. The believer **is a child of light**. This simply means that the believer is a child of God, for God is light (1Jh.1:5). He knows God; therefore, he is not to be caught off guard nor surprised when the Lord comes.
3. The believer **is a child of the day**. It means that the believer will escape the judgment of God. He is a child

¹⁴ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/52-1Thessalonians/1Thessalonians0501.html>
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who is accepted by God; therefore, he will be accepted in that **"Day of the Lord's"** return. He will not have to face the terrible **'Day of the Lord'** and suffer the judgment of God's wrath. He is a child of the day, of God's glorious salvation and deliverance.

Light and day represent God and His children while darkness and night represent the lost.

1ST—5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. Paul reminds us, as believers, that we need to be alert. The believer is not to sleep, but to watch and be sober. Sleep refers to spiritual sleep. When a person is asleep, naturally, he is not alert, nor involved in what is going on around him. When a believer is spiritually asleep, he is not alert, nor involved in the things of God. His mind and behavior are not concerned with the things of God. He slumbers, dozes, and sleeps. Therefore, he will be caught off guard when the Lord returns.

- To **"watch"** means to be alert and on guard for Christ.
- To be **"sober"** means to be rigid in discipline and in control for Christ; to live a strict life of righteousness and godliness, ever looking for the return of the Lord.

1ST—5:7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. Sleep and night refers to those that are unaware of the Lord's coming. In 5:2 it says ...**the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.** Paul is reminding us that we are not like the world. We are not to be **"asleep."** Those that sleep can be identified as fallen asleep spiritually.

- They no longer are alert to the things of God.
- They no longer are alive to God—thinking and keeping their thoughts upon God.
- They no longer are worshipping God, praying, and fellowshiping with God and His people.
- They no longer are anticipating the return of Christ.
- They no longer are active for God; serving and working for God.

The person who sleeps, sleeps in the night and the person who gets drunk gets drunk in the night. Some have identified with the night as with evil behavior. We are not to be drunkards, giving in to the flesh. Therefore, if a believer carouses around with those who are of the night, he is identifying himself with the sinners of the world.

1ST—5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. This is the believer's duty: to be sober to protect himself; that is, he must be mentally awake, alert, and watchful looking for Jesus' return. He must make sure that he stays spiritually sober and well protected. *Is.59:16-17* says **"For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head..."**

This poses two questions: How and Why.

1. **How** can the believer stay sober and protected?— By putting on the armor of God. What is the armor of God?
 - a. It is the **breastplate** of the Christian soldier—**faith and love**. The breastplate protects the heart of the soldier. It is the breastplate of faith and love that will protect our heart and keep it focused upon Christ and His cause.
 - i. **Faith protects our heart:** Knowing that Jesus Christ saved us from sin and death, and delivers us from the judgment of God, **We stay sober** (clear-headed; self-controlled) putting on the breastplate of faith. Our faith in Christ keeps us sober against temptations.
 - ii. **Love protects our heart:** Spiritually seeing the love Christ has for us—that He actually bore our sin and punishment on the cross, **We stay sober** (clear-headed; self-controlled) putting on the breastplate of love. His love keeps us sober yielding obedience toward Him. As we wear that protection of love we never have to die and we never have to bear the punishment of sin. His

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love for us floods back to us —then we are broken before Him, bowed in humble adoration as we stay obedient to Him—all because of His love!

- b. It is the **helmet** of the Christian soldier— **the hope of salvation**. We must keep our minds focused upon Christ. How can we do this? By protecting our minds with the helmet of God's armor—the hope of salvation, **We stay sober** (clear-headed; self-controlled). Knowing that Jesus has given us salvation as a gift voids the lies of the enemy. Our hope keeps us sober, for our salvation is guaranteed and nothing can take it away. This great hope gives us the guarantee of deliverance from this present evil world.

So, those of the day, living in the light choose the armor of faith, love and hope for they play an important part of being ready for Jesus' return.

1ST—5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,— We are saved from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But first and foremost, we are rescued by the grace of God from His wrath that we deserved. Our appointment to wrath was "**scheduled**" in two ways:

1. **First**, because of what Adam did to us and the whole human race, we are appointed to wrath (Rom. 5:14-19).
 2. **Second**, because of our own sin we are appointed to wrath. When Jesus died on the cross, He stood in our place in our appointment to wrath, and "**re-schedules**" us with an appointment to obtain salvation. God has designed for us as believers that we should "**obtain** (*Gr peripoiēsis*) **salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.**"
2. **Why** should the believer stay sober and protected?— Instead of wrath, we can be saved. There are two significant reasons.
1. God has not appointed us to wrath, but to salvation. The only way to escape the wrath of God is to stay sober and focused upon Jesus Christ. When God saved us, He appointed us to receive salvation from sin, death, and judgment to come. He did not appoint us to death and wrath. Therefore, there is no excuse for a believer to fall asleep and return to the world of darkness. A person who is not sober suffers the wrath of God. "**Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...**" Col.3:5a.

1ST—5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

2. Christ died for us. We have an invitation to live with Him. Note the words "**wake or sleep**":— they mean alive or departed. When Christ returns, whether we are still alive on the earth or departed, we shall live together with Him forever and ever. This is why He died; the very reason He went to the cross: that we might have the glorious privilege of living together with Him throughout all eternity.

1ST—5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. Paul repeats this from (4:18). The believer is to minister by comforting and edifying others. God has delivered us from the wrath to come and given us the glorious hope of living face to face with Him forever. Therefore, we are not to sleep, but we are to be sober, awake, alert, and watchful for that glorious day.

- We are to "**comfort**" (*parakaleite*) each other: exhort (urge), encourage, and admonish each other.
- We are to "**edify**" (*oikodomeite*) each other: strengthen and build each other up, just as they were already doing, which is one of the reasons for fellowship in the church.

These exhortations tell us how to behave toward the leaders of the church.

1ST—5:12 And we beseech you, brethren to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.

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1. **"Know them which labor among you..."** The word **"labor"** (kopiontas) means to labor to the point of exhaustion and then to keep on laboring: to continue laboring even if one has become weary; to arduously labor; to toil to the point of weariness; to work beyond what one is capable of doing. The minister of God is to do all of the above. His whole mind, body, and soul belong to the Lord and are to be poured out into the lives of God's dear people, into both the believers and the unbelievers of the world. The word **"know"** (eidenai), means to acknowledge, appreciate, respect, and know the value of. A committed minister labors and still has to manage his household.

- If he had to speak for thirty or more minutes—speak two or three times at a conference—speak every week, two or three times to the same people.
- If he had to attend several committee meetings—visit people in the hospital—visit people in their homes—visit all the newcomers and prospective members.
- If he had to conduct all the funerals—all the weddings.

The list could go on and on. Also look at the committed teacher of the Lord, who works all day at some job, and then, when he gets home, think of the time spent...

- In studying and preparing the lesson
- in praying
- in telephoning members
- in visiting their home or hospital
- in counseling and ministering to others' need
- in fellowshiping.

The hours are endless, and just think, the committed teacher or leader/minister does this every week because they take the calling of the Lord very seriously. **The point is this:** believers are to know their leaders—acknowledge, appreciate and respect them. They deserve it from you! They deserve to be lifted up in encouragement.

1ST–5:13a And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

2. **Believers are to "highly esteem" their leaders** in love: with affection, held ever so dear to a believer's heart.

- For their work's sake—the work that they do. They are ministers of the Lord and they serve Christ and the church and its believers. Believers owe much to them because of their sacrificial service. Praise God!

1ST–5:13b ...And be at peace among yourselves.

3. **"Be at peace among yourselves."** Note this exhortation is given to the leader as well as to the believer or follower. Believers are not to criticize, murmur, grumble, envy, or oppose their leaders. Differ, yes, but not oppose—unless, of course, he is acting contrary to scripture or to the love of God's Spirit. Leaders are not to act as lords over God's people, nor are they to lead for the sake of seeking position, boosting ego, securing recognition, receiving honor, or making a livelihood. A leader who leads for these reasons cannot feed the people of God. The exhortation is for believers to be at peace among themselves. And when both leader and believer are doing exactly what God has called them to do, both are so serving, then, they are at peace with each other and God.

These exhortations tell us how to behave toward the whole church family.

1ST–5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

1. **"We exhort you brethren, etc..."** It's like Paul is giving them permission to encourage and help their other brethren.

- **"Warn the unruly" (ataktous):** those who are out of line—the loafers, the disorderly, and the unruly. The word **"unruly"** is a military term that referred to the soldier who broke rank and did not stand in his place. Too many believers are not where they belong. They are out in the world doing their own thing, fulfilling their own desires and lusts. The unruly must be warned and admonished. They are treading on thin ice. They are damaging their own souls and hurting others through their unruly testimony.
- **"Comfort the feebleminded" (oligopsuchous):** the faint-hearted, timid, reserved, dispirited; those who lack courage and are cowardly; those who are easily discouraged and disappointed; those who fear difficult

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situations. The picture is that of a person who hesitates to serve or witness; a person who fails to live for Christ because of being faint-hearted. We are not to rebuke or despise them, but instead comfort, encourage, and assure them.

- *"Support the weak"*: the spiritually weak; those who yield so easily to temptation; those who are so easily burdened, discouraged, defeated, and led astray. These need to be **"supported"** (*anthechesthe*). The word means to cling and hold to. They need our support.
- *"Be patient (makrothumeo) toward all men."* Leon Morris points out that being patient is the opposite of being short-tempered (*The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. "Tyndale New Testament Commentaries", p.101*). We must bear and forbear; we must suffer a long, long time with persons, no matter the situation.

1ST—5:15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men.

2. **"None render evil for evil in any man."** **Note:** it is understood that throughout life some people will do evil against anyone of us. This verse clearly states that we are responsible for each other and responsible for how we respond to evil. See to it that none of us retaliates or mistreats those who mistreat us.
 - If we mistreat an unbeliever, we lose all chance of reaching him for Christ.
 - If we mistreat another believer, we lose all chance of reaching him and growing him in Christ.
- But we are to *"ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."* We must pursue what is good in our relationships to all men.

These exhortations tell us how to behave toward God—personal behavior.

1ST—5:16 Rejoice always.

1. **"Rejoice always"**; rejoice evermore: If we love God, God promises that He will take all the circumstances that attack us and work them out for good (Rom.8:28). And on top of this, He has given us eternal life, the glorious privilege of living face to face with Him and serving Him forever and ever. The believer who knows and keeps his mind upon these glorious facts can do nothing but rejoice.

1ST—5:17 Pray without ceasing.

2. **"Pray without ceasing."** Prayer is God's ordained way for man to receive things from Him. God moves, acts, and responds to prayer. Why? -Because prayer stirs fellowship and communion with Him and brings about a greater knowledge and understanding of God.

1ST—5:18 In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

3. **"In everything give thanks."** How can we thank God for terrible trials such as accidents and death and sin/evil? We don't! This is not what scripture means. Evil does not come from God, but, He allows it. Therefore, what it means is: to thank God for His presence and power as we walk through such trials. When evil strikes, we can still be thankful for **"Who"** God is and for the good He can bring through the distress. In Christ Jesus there is victory and triumph over all, no matter how terrible. Therefore, in everything (not for everything)—as we walk through all—thank God for the victory He has given us through Christ. **Note the statement: "this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."** What **"Will?"** All three exhortations that have just been given in verses 16-18.

1ST—5:19 Quench not the Spirit.

4. It goes on to say **"quench not the Spirit."** **"Quench"** (*Gr sbennymi*) means in this context to **"suppress."** Paul is saying, we should not ignore or toss aside the gift the Holy Spirit gives. For then he mentions prophesying in verse 20, a gift, not to be despised. Both proclamation and prediction are included in the gift. Sometimes

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spiritual gifts are controversial and cause division in a church. Rather than trying to solve the problems, some Christians prefer to smother the gifts. This impoverishes the church. We should not stifle the Holy Spirit's work in anyone's life, but encourage the full expression of these gifts in the body of Christ.

The four major sins against the Holy Spirit:

1. **Quench the Spirit** (1Thess.5:19). To quench means to stifle, to snuff out, or to stop. The believer quenches the Spirit's work by:
 - o Ignoring Him
 - o disobeying him
 - or by simply
 - o procrastinating.
2. **Grieving the Spirit** (Eph.4:30). To grieve means to pain, to vex, to sadden. The believer grieves the Spirit when he...
 - o Allows impure things to penetrate his life
 - o behaves immorally
 - o acts unjustly.
 - o Allows or participates in anything contrary to the nature of the Spirit.
3. **Blasphemy against the Spirit** (Matt12:31). This means to slander and defame against the Spirit. It will not be forgiven because it is deliberate rejection of Christ and His salvation. The Holy Spirit brings the offer of salvation; ministers to the heart of man. However, to willfully and persistently reject Him is to act presumptuously (filled with pride and unwarranted boldness) and thus to blaspheme (curse) God.
4. **Lying to the Holy Spirit** (Acts 5:3-4). There is no such thing as a secret sin. God knows all and knows the contaminated heart when Satan takes a hold of it. A lie to God will be exposed by God!

1ST—5:20 Despise not prophesyings.

1. **Despise not prophesyings.** Prophecy is the gift of proclaiming the gospel and of predicting the future under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which is a gift and not to be despised. God will expose false prophesying.

1ST—5:21 Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

2. The Thessalonians are then exhorted to "**prove all things; hold fast to what proves to be good.**" The word "**prove**" (*dokimazete*) means to test and to prove. Both gifts and behavior of the believer are to be tested. We are not to blindly accept what people say, even if it is the preacher or servant of God. How are we to do this? By measuring what he says and does by the scripture. **But note:** the scriptures must be studied in order to measure what people say and do. When a person or truth is proven, "**hold fast**" to it.
 - o Do not let a good person go: learn from him.
 - o Do not let a good doctrine or exhortation go: hang on to it, live and practice it, and teach it to others.

1ST—5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

3. "**Abstain from all appearance of evil.**" The very appearance of evil:
 - If something even appears or borders on evil, get away from it.
 - If there is any chance whatsoever that it could be wrong, flee it.
 - If there is even a suggestion that it could be wrong, flee it.

What Paul is calling for here is balance; Christians should neither be overcritical nor gullible.

1ST—5:23-24 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. If a believer will behave properly; if a person will follow the exhortations given in this passage—he will experience four things:

1. The believer will experience the presence of the God of peace: "**Peace**" means to be bound, joined, and weaved together. Only God can do this. Only God can bring peace to a person's soul—the kind of peace that brings absolute assurance, confidence, and security to a person's heart.

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2. The believer experiences sanctification: "**Sanctification**" means to be set apart and separated to God. The word "**wholly**" means completely, in every respect God is to be involved in every aspect of our lives. The person who follows this is greatly blessed by God. God sets him apart unto Himself and gives him a special relationship with Himself.
3. The believer has his spirit, soul, and body preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will be acceptable to God and receive a full reward. The idea is that the whole man (spirit-soul-body) will be preserved (only if the believer follows the exhortation of the scripture).
4. The believer experiences the assurance of God, the very faithfulness of God. The work of salvation is God's work from beginning to end. If a person is not living for God, it is evident that he is not really a true believer. But if a person is living for God by following the exhortation of scripture, it is clear evidence that he is a true believer. How do we know this? Because God is faithful. If God possesses a person God continues to work in the person until the person is fully saved in the glorious day of redemption.

1ST—5:25-27 The final exhortation for behavior is:

- **Pray for us (ministers)**. Paul does not say please or if you will. He emphatically charges this. He says "**us**" not just for me—but for all God's chosen ministers. What an impact would be made upon the world if we obeyed this one charge (5:25).
- **Greet all Christian brethren with a holy kiss** (greet them immediately with care). The point is that affection and care are to be expressed between believers (5:26).
- **Read this epistle to all the holy brethren** (believers). Why was that necessary for Paul to give this exhortation? This was an oath by the Lord to be read aloud. And Paul charges all the brethren to be made accountable to the Lord. We must see to it that every believer hear the Word of God. Reading it aloud gives everyone the opportunity to hear His message because it would answer a lot of their questions and offer needed encouragement. What a challenge to the churches! To provide ministries that will carry the Word of God out to those who are unable to worship and study at the regular service (5:27).

1ST—5:28 **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.** Paul ends it with a benediction: "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*" Only God's grace resting upon them can they heed and follow the exhortations (5:28).

SUMMARY:

1ST—5:1-10 Paul lets the Thessalonians know that he doesn't need to write about the times and seasons because they already know that the "*Day of the Lord*" is coming like a thief in the night. This event will be unexpected, destructive and inescapable. Once they think they are at peace and safe, a sudden disaster will come like the labor pains of a woman, causing no escape. Paul lets them know that they are brethren that will not be overtaken as a thief because they are not in the dark to these things. They have been saved and are the children of the light and children of the day. Darkness obscures our view. The light makes manifest. This is not the time to sleep but this is the time to be alert and clearheaded. Remember what Jesus said in *Mark 13:33-37* "*Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the {appointed} time is. It is like a man, away on a journey, {who} upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, {assigning} to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Therefore, be on the alert - for you do not know when the master of the house is*

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coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning - lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!' " Too many have gotten spiritually sleepy. Whoever is sinning seems to think the darkness will cover the sin. Those who have drunk too much wine lose control of their actions. But being of the Day, stay alert by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and for an helmet, the hope of salvation, because God chose to save us, not to pour out His anger on us. Christ died for us that whether wake or sleep, we share His life; to live together with Him.

1ST-5:11-28 That's why Paul tells them keep doing what they have been doing— encourage, comfort, and build-up one another. They'll find hope in being alert and watchful because they were prepared on the "*Day of Lord*"—His return. And they were helpful to one another, encouraging and lifting the other up by allowing others to see that there will be a glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! He's Coming Soon! ¹⁵A series of exhortations follows. First, to recognize and esteem those who labor among them and are over them in the Lord, and to be at peace among themselves. Then, exhortations related to our concern for one another, along with a call to rejoice always, to pray without ceasing, to give thanks in everything, to quench not the Spirit nor despise prophecies, yet testing all things, holding fast to what is good and abstaining from all that is evil. Paul concludes his epistle with a prayer for their sanctification as it relates to the coming of Christ, a reminder of the faithfulness of God, a plea for prayer in his behalf, and final instructions concerning greeting one another and having the epistle read to all the brethren. He signs off with a prayer for grace from the Lord Jesus in their behalf.

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¹⁵ http://executableoutlines.com/1th/1th_05.htm
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