

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

# 2 THESSALONIANS

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**GOSPEL  
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## Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven member of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs and Henry Simmons. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, Ray Hawk and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections. Our grasp of the infinite will of God is not absolute, despite the diligence of our efforts; there is always more to learn.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The notes were put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over much time. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people. "Outlined" does not imply skimpy—these are full-length books.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we barely cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge to the recipients. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers.

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

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## INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS

### A. The Church at Thessalonica.

#### 1. The city of Thessalonica.

- a. The first name of this city was Therma, named after certain hot springs located there. "Cassander the son of Antipater rebuilt and enlarged it, and named it after his wife Thessalonica, the sister of Alexander the Great" (*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. IV, p.3230). The city was on the great Roman Road, called *Via Egnatia*, which connected Rome with the whole region to the north of the Aegean Sea. Because of the road and the importance of the city itself, it was an invaluable center for the spread of the gospel: "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" (1 Thess. 1:8). The name of the city has been shortened over the years, and is now known as Salonica.
- b. Thessalonica became very wealthy and populous. "In the war between Perseus and the Romans it appears as the headquarters of the Macedonian navy (Livy xlv. 10) and when, after the battle of Pydna (168 BC), the Romans divided the conquered territory into four districts, it became the capital of the second of these (Livy xlv.29), while later, after the organization of the single Roman province of Macedonia in 146 BC, it was the seat of the governor and thus practically the capital of the whole province. In 58 BC Cicero spent the greater part of his exile there, at the house of the quaestor Plancius (Pro Plancio 41, 99; Epistle Ad Att, iii.8-21). In the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Thessalonica took the senatorial side and formed one of Pompey's chief bases (49 BC - 48 BC), but in the final struggle of the republic, six years later, it proved loyal to Antony and Octavian, and was rewarded by receiving the status and privileges of a 'free city' (Pliny, NH, iv.36). Strabo, writing in the reign of Augustus, speaks of it as the most populous town in Macedonia and the metropolis of the province (vii.323, 330), and about the same time the poet Antipater, himself a native of Thessalonica, refers to the city as 'mother of all Macedon' (Jacobs, Anthol. Graec., II, p. 98, no. 14); in the 2nd century of our era Lucian mentions it as the greatest city of Macedonia (Asinus, 46). It was important, not only as a harbor with a large import and export trade, but also as the principal station on the great Via Egnatia, the highway from the Adriatic to the Hellespont" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by BibleSoft].
- c. The city's importance is traceable to its good harbor, and also because of its being a principal station on the Egnation Way. "Another allusion (1:8) reminds us that not only must such a city have had special attraction for Paul as likely to give a favorable hearing to the gospel message, but that its commercial and seafaring population would rapidly spread what they themselves might receive. Every ship that left the harbor, and every wagon that turned inland, carried some account of the riot at Thessalonica and the extraordinary man who had been the occasion of it" (Lipscomb, p.9).

#### 2. The church at Thessalonica was founded by Paul on his second missionary tour.

- a. The account of Paul's planting the church there is recorded in Acts 17:1-10. He traveled from Philippi, through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and came to Thessalonica. When he arrived, he entered the synagogue of the Jews and reasoned with them from the Scriptures on three successive Sabbath days. From Philippians 4:15,16, it may be seen that Paul spent more than three weeks in Thessalonica for he commends the brethren at Philippi for their having sent support to him time and again.
  - b. Acts 17:2: "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." Paul's usual plan when entering a city, was to go to a synagogue of the Jews, if one was present, and begin his work among them. In these gatherings he would find at least
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some who were open to the gospel, and often Gentile proselytes would be present who were a fertile field for the truth. Compare: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17). Going to the synagogues was a very logical means of gaining an audience for the gospel.

- 1) Luke's inspired description of Paul's work in those gatherings is significant: he "reasoned with them out of the scriptures." The apostle presented evidence from the Old Testament Scriptures to convince the audience that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. He appealed to their intellect. Jesus was broadly rejected by the Jews for two fundamental reasons: (1) he did not measure up to their expectations as to his hometown, his demeanor, his message, and his appearance; and (2) his execution on the cross was repulsive to them because of the shame inherent in that type of death (Gal. 3:13).
    - a) Deuteronomy 21:23: "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance."
    - b) Galatians 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree."
  - 2) Therefore, the Jews failed to see Jesus as the Messiah. Their failure was based on their own misconceptions, not on the actual predictions made of him in the Old Testament. They believed the Scriptures, so Paul directed to their minds what the Scriptures said about the Messiah.
  - c. Acts 17:3: "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." He opened (from *dianoigo*: "to open up completely", Vine, Vol. 3, p.141). It is used in this verse of "opening the minds" of his auditors by presenting scriptural evidence.
    - 1) The word "allege" does not carry the same meaning as our modern word. Paul did not "assert without proof" that Jesus was the Christ. The word is from the Greek term *paratithemenos* ("setting forth by argument and proof," Vine, Vol. 1, p.47). Paul set forth from the Scriptures the proof that Jesus is the Christ. The Scriptures contain **proof** of things; there is such a thing as fulfilled prophecy; we can **know** certain things; the Bible is absolute truth.
    - 2) Paul proved that it was in God's plan that the Messiah should suffer (and die), and be raised from the dead; he also proved that Jesus is the Messiah.
    - 3) Our teaching and preaching must follow the same pattern today: we must present the written word of God, and set forth the truth to others by sound argument and proof, thus reasoning with them from the Bible in order open their minds to see the truth. Isaiah 1:18; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Timothy 4:1-16; Acts 2:14-40.
  - d. Acts 17:4: "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." Although we prove the truthfulness of a proposition, that does not mean that we have proved it to someone.
    - 1) Paul plainly proved the proposition of his lesson, but the reaction was mixed: it was accepted by some but rejected by others (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 2:16; 4:1-7). Those which believed Paul, consorted with him: they "joined themselves to" him, or they "threw in their lot with" the apostle.
    - 2) A great multitude of the devout Greeks and a goodly number of the chief women were persuaded of the truthfulness of Paul's inspired message. The term translated as *believed* in the KJV and
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*persuaded* in the ASV, carries the idea of "obedience." The term is used in the following passages:

- a) John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
  - b) Romans 2:8: "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."
  - c) Hebrews 3:18: "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?"
  - d) 1 Peter 2:7: "Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."
- 3) Paul later addressed these saints as having formerly been idol worshipers: "For they themselves show 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" (1 Thess. 1:9).
- e. Acts 17:5: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." The Jews who rejected the gospel were unwilling to allow the Christians to continue without opposition.
- 1) There are many today, as there were then, who will not obey the truth themselves, and will try to undermine all efforts to advance it. Christ reproved the scribes and Pharisees because they "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:23). The lawyers (those trained in teaching the Law of Moses) were accused by the Lord with having "taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52).
  - 2) The unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica got together a band of "lewd fellows of the baser sort" and incited a riot against the brethren. The motive of these Jews was jealousy. They were far more interested in maintaining their status than in the truth. Sadly, this is true of the great majority of our generation. Our English words *zeal* and *jealousy* are derived from the same Greek word used here—*zelos*.
  - 3) The "lewd fellows of the baser sort" are called "vile fellows of the rabble" in the ASV. These were unprincipled individuals (most likely Gentiles) who could be bribed or incited to initiate a disturbance. How could those Jews who claimed to follow the will of God stoop to such despicable actions? Their jealousy and hatred far exceeded their godliness and their love for truth!
  - 4) We are not told who this Jason was, but obviously he was one of those who obeyed the gospel. Paul had a kinsman with this name (Rom. 16:21), but these might be entirely different individuals. Through the work of the "lewd fellows of the baser sort," the Jewish leaders set the city in an uproar, and the mob assaulted the house of Jason, endeavoring to apprehend Paul and Silas, and possibly all that were inside.
- f. Acts 17:6-7: "And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus."
- 1) Paul and Silas were not in the house, but the mob dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city. They described Paul and Silas (who were not present) as those who have turned the world upside down, i.e., revolutionaries. The news about the troubles Paul and Silas had faced

- in Philippi had reached Thessalonica.
- 2) Their having "turned the world upside down" was not intended as a compliment, but as an accusation that they had disturbed the peace wherever they had gone. This was a false charge; it was not Paul and Silas who had caused the furor at Philippi and Thessalonica, but the spiteful enemies of the gospel. Compare: "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim" (1 Kings 18:17-18).
  - 3) The other accusation leveled against Paul and Silas was that they had caused the citizens to violate the decrees of Caesar by trying to convince them that there is another king who is named "Jesus." [The decrees of Caesar may have included the one of Acts 18:2: "And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them"]. Also, Roman law forbade the introduction of any new religion. As their legions conquered new territory, the citizens were allowed to continue their usual religious activities. For some time, Christianity was seen by Rome as a sect of Judaism and tolerated it. The charge of our text was a misrepresentation; although Jesus is King, his realm did not interfere with the reign of Caesar.
    - a) Mark 12:14: "And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"
    - b) Luke 23:2: "And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King."
    - c) John 18:33-38: "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*."
    - d) John 19:15: "But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."
  - 4) The statement that Jesus was a king shows that they perceived that Paul had taught that Jesus was even then reigning. If Jesus was reigning, his kingdom had been established, a truth abundantly affirmed in the New Testament. The millennial theories, which say Christ is not now reigning, are false.
- g. Acts 17:8-9: "And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go."
- 1) The charges made against Paul and Silas were a source of trouble to the rulers and the people. But they could not prosecute them since they were not in custody.
  - 2) Before releasing Jason and the others, the rulers took a security of them (required that they post a bond). No details are given about the bond, but the purpose for it was likely to keep them from
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raising a disturbance. The effect of the bond would be that Paul must leave the city.

B. The time, place and author of the book of 1 Thessalonians.

1. The letter was written from Corinth.

- a. When persecutions arose at Thessalonica, Paul went to Berea. "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 17:10). There, Timothy joined the apostle's party (Acts 17:14-15). Leaving Timothy and Silas in Berea, Paul made his way to Athens, and finally went on to Corinth. He was later joined at Corinth by Silas and Timothy.
- b. In the meantime, while Paul was at Berea, he sent Timothy (possibly from Berea) back to Thessalonica to confirm the church (1 Thess. 3:1-2). Since the epistle is addressed from Paul, Silas, and Timothy, it is evident that the letter was not written until all three had come together at Corinth. It was written at Corinth.

2. The date of the epistle.

- a. A period of time had elapsed since the church was established in Thessalonica, at the time the epistle was written, for Paul said he had tried to come to see them on two occasions but Satan had hindered him (1 Thess. 2:17-18). However, Paul had learned of their welfare by the information Timothy had brought; he had learned that their faith had spread abroad.
- b. Such news could be widely disseminated mainly because of the sea transportation that was available at Thessalonica, and also via the Roman road that ran through the city. Regarding the time that had elapsed since the church was founded and the writing of the letter, the *Pulpit Commentary* says: "The interval, however, could not have been long. Timothy returned at the commencement of Paul's residence at Corinth; and the apostle's anxiety for the Thessalonians would induce him to write the Epistle immediately on his receiving the information. He speaks of his absence from them as having as yet lasted only a short time. 'We, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire' (2:17), We may, therefore, safely fix the time of the composition of the Epistle toward the close of the year 52 or the beginning of the year 53, and during the early part of Paul's residence at Corinth, about six months after the planting of Christianity in Thessalonica" (*The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 21, Wm. B. Eerdmans publishing Company, 1962, p.7).
- c. Some have concluded that the letter was written from Athens, but this could not be, because of what Paul said in chapter three: "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone" (3:1). This is in the past tense and indicates the apostle was not in Athens when he wrote these words; and Timothy had joined Paul in Corinth, as we have seen.

3. The inspired author is the apostle Paul.

- a. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, is the writer of both Thessalonian epistles. He is widely known for his several missionary tours, during which many received the gospel of Christ through the preaching he and his co-workers did.
  - b. While making these hazardous journeys, Paul found it necessary to engage in tent-making in order to support himself and his companions. He worked at this trade while preaching in Thessalonica. "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" (1 Thess. 2:9; cf. Acts 18:1-3).
  - c. As to the author, we have a direct statement in the text: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto
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you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:1).

C. The Purpose of 1 Thessalonians.

1. Paul had been unable to return to Thessalonica.

- a. 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18: "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. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us." The persecutions which had been upon them while Paul was there, continued to be a distressing factor for the new believers. Paul's desire to come again to them stemmed from the need that they be confirmed in the faith; they needed more instruction and encouragement.
  - b. Since it was not possible for the apostle to see them personally, he wrote the letter after Timothy had returned from Thessalonica with news of their welfare. His report contained both good and bad news. The good news included a report that information about their faith and love had spread abroad. For this, Paul commends them highly. "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" (1 Thess. 1:3).
  - c. But as was the case of most of the seven churches of Asia in Revelation, there were also deficiencies which needed to be corrected among them. Paul had learned that they had developed an erroneous view, and even a fanatical attitude, concerning the second coming of Christ.
    - 1) It was the belief of some that Christ would return any moment, certainly during their life time. Many quit working and were being supported by the church. Their attitude was this: "Since the Lord is coming soon, why work?"
    - 2) Paul did not intend for them to have this disposition, and boldly stated in the second letter: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:10-12).
  - d. There had also arisen some misconceptions of the resurrection. It was their belief that only those who were alive at the return of Christ would be benefitted by the blessings associated with his return and the resurrection.
    - 1) 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: "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. 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: 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."
    - 2) 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."
  - e. Another problem, which gives another reason for the epistle, was the need to correct their unhealthy feeling toward spiritual gifts.
    - 1) "They needed to be reminded of the superior value of prophesying—teaching—compared with other gifts of the Spirit which they exalted at its expense" (Lipscomb, p.11).
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2) 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20: "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings."

- f. One of the other prime reasons for the letter was the persecutions which these Christians were enduring. The preaching of the gospel created no small stir among the envious Jews who brought hardships upon them. "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. 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" (1 Thess. 3:4-5).
- g. Another reason for the letter involved a warning to beware lest they fall back into their old heathen ways. They had been idol-worshippers prior to their conversion. The possibility existed that they could and might lose their faith in God, and therefore Paul encourages them to be steadfast.

D. Outline of 1 Thessalonians.

- 1. Chapter One.
    - a. Greetings and Expressions of Thanks: 1:1-4.
    - b. Paul Commends the Thessalonians for their Obedience: 1:5-10.
  - 2. Chapter Two.
    - a. The Manner in Which Paul Presented the Gospel to the Thessalonians: 2:1-12.
    - b. How They Received the Gospel: 2:13-16.
    - c. Paul Was Unable to Return to Thessalonica: 2:17-20.
  - 3. Chapter Three.
    - a. Paul Elated Over Timothy's Good Report: 3:1-8.
    - b. Paul's Gratitude and Prayers for Them: 3:9-13.
  - 4. Chapter Four.
    - a. Exhortations to Christian Living: 4:1-12.
    - b. Instructions Regarding the Second Coming of Christ: 4:13-18.
  - 5. Chapter Five.
    - a. The Way to Watch for the Lord's Return: 5:1-11.
    - b. Short Sermons: 5:12-22.
    - c. Closing Exhortations: 5:23-28.
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# 1 THESSALONIANS 1

## A. 1 Thessalonians 1:1-4: Greetings and Expressions of Thanks.

1. Verse 1: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."
  - a. Each of these three great gospel preachers suffered imprisonment at one time or another. Silas had been beaten and jailed along with Paul at Philippi (Acts 16:19-29). Timothy's confinement is stated in Hebrews 13:23: "Know ye that *our* brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."
  - b. Silas was chosen as Paul's missionary companion following the breakup of the team of Paul and Barnabas. "And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God" (Acts 15:40). Timothy was added to the party at Lystra, where Paul had been stoned and left for dead, on the first journey (Acts 14:19-20).
    - 1) Acts 14:19-20: "And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe."
    - 2) Acts 16:1-3: "Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek."
  - c. Paul does not emphasize his apostleship in the introduction, as he did in some of his letters; there was no need to do so here, for his authority was not questioned. His apostleship was not subject to doubt in Thessalonica, since he demonstrated miraculous powers which put it beyond question:
    - 1) "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong" (2 Cor. 12:11-13).
    - 2) Compare: "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" (1 Thess. 1:5).
  - d. The church of the Thessalonians refers to the congregation which was comprised of the Thessalonian Christians; all of the saints at that place were members of this congregation. There were no denominations in that day. The church is *in God* and *in Christ*. It is impossible to be in one without being in the other, just as it is impossible to be in Christ without also being in the church, and *vice-versa*.
    - 1) "And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph 1:22-23).
    - 2) "Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called

Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:11-13).

- e. The apostle expresses the commonly used commendation regarding the grace and peace which come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. God is our Father only if we are his children, despite the fact that we are all his offspring (Acts 17:28).
    - 1) Because we are men and women, we are God's offspring; he created the first pair miraculously, and provided the means of procreation; when our earthly life commences, God forms the spirit within us (Zech. 12:1).
    - 2) When we obey the gospel, we are brought into Christ and God, where spiritual life is obtained, and where also we become children of God.
  2. Verse 2: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."
    - a. Paul was overjoyed by their obedience, and expressed his gratitude unto God for them. There is joy in heaven among the heavenly host over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:1-10); likewise there was great rejoicing within the noble heart of the apostle when sincere people obeyed the gospel.
    - b. He thanked God for their faithful Christian lives, for their works, and for their trials. It is easy for one to feel gratitude in the heart but never get around to expressing it, either to God or to the person. Gratitude needs to be shown by word and deed.
    - c. Perhaps the least and the greatest thing we can do for anyone (and everyone) is to pray in their behalf! "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). No one can know just how much good may be done through prayer.
  3. Verse 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."
    - a. Paul did not ignore, take for granted, or forget their faithfulness. This verse appearing as it does in the immediate context of a reference to his intercessory prayers in their behalf, the apostle spoke in his prayers to God in regards to their work, love, and hope.
    - b. Unceasingly, he kept in his mind a remembrance of their work of faith. Faith is of the saving variety only if it is expressed by works of obedience (Jas. 2:14-26). Their faith worked; it operated; it was seen by what it did.
      - 1) "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal 5:6).
      - 2) "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29).
      - 3) "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23).
    - c. He remembered their labor of love. Love is love (agape) only if it is expressed in word or deed. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18).
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- 1) "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:3). The more excellent way is the way of love: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:1-3)
  - 2) Love has very definite characteristics: "Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away" (1 Cor. 13:4-8).
- d. He remembered their patience of hope. Patience is steadfastness or endurance. Their hope was steady and continual; it sustained them on a continuing basis. Their hope was centered in Christ the Lord and God the Father. The goal of heaven is real; the hope of gaining heaven enables us to remain faithful regardless of the troubles and oppositions we face.
- 1) "And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (Rom. 5:3).
  - 2) "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*" (Rom. 8:25).
  - 3) "Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3).
  - 4) "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. 10:36).
- e. In 1 Corinthians 13:13, the apostle affirmed the absolute necessity of faith, love, and hope to the success of our Christian lives. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity" (1 Cor 13:13).
4. Verse 4: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."
- a. The Israelites were once the elect of God; God had chosen them to fulfill the role he gave them, which included their providing the background for the appearance of the Messiah. But their hardness of heart and rebellion caused them to be removed from their honored standing. When they rejected Christ, they sealed their own doom.
    - 1) Romans 11:20-22: "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."
    - 2) Deuteronomy 30:15-19: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, *and that* ye shall not prolong *your* days
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upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

- 3) Matthew 27:24-26: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."
- b. Now, the elect of God are those throughout the world, in every generation, who sincerely obey the gospel of Christ.
- 1) Galatians 3:26-29: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
  - 2) Colossians 3:12: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering."
  - 3) 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
  - 4) As the pioneer preachers used to say, our election follows this pattern: God votes for us, the devil votes against us, and we cast the deciding ballot.

B. 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10: Paul Commends the Thessalonians for their Obedience.

1. Verse 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."
  - a. The gospel was not brought to them on the basis of some man's wisdom; it was not dispensed in the first century without authentication and confirmation. It was given with power which was furnished by the Holy Spirit of God.
    - 1) Mark 16:20: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
    - 2) Galatians 1:11-12: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
    - 3) 2 Thessalonians 2:14: "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
    - 4) Hebrews 2:3-4: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
    - 5) 2 Corinthians 12:11-13: "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be

- nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong."
- 6) Galatians 2:4-5: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."
- b. The Holy Spirit gave the inspired apostles and prophets the message of the gospel; he empowered them to receive and transmit it without error; he provided them with certain supernatural signs which were sufficient to confirm the spoken word as truly coming from the Almighty. The faith of converts rested, not on the unsupported word of a mere man, but on the authenticated and confirmed word of God!
- 1) Acts 19:11: "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul."
- 2) Romans 15:18-19: "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."
- 3) John 2:23: "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did."
- 4) John 3:1-2: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."
- c. Those miraculous signs were sufficient to convince anyone of the nature of the inspired spokesmen—that they were empowered by God to deliver the message. So convincing was the evidence that none but the blind would deny the inspiration of the apostles and prophets.
- 1) John 20:30-31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."
- 2) Matthew 11:20-24: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."
- d. The purpose of their work was not selfish; it was for the good of those addressed. Proof of this could be seen in the nature of the message itself, as well as from the fact that no financial, political, or social advantage was gained by them; instead, they suffered privations and persecutions of all kinds.
- e. Modern day false teachers who assert the possession of miraculous powers meet a great obstacle in this verse. **All** they can offer is their unsupported claims!
- 1) "As goes the proposition, so must also be the demonstration." If they have supernatural gifts, let them demonstrate them! If they will not, it is because they cannot!
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- 2) It is foolish for them to claim that Jesus did not produce a miracle to satisfy the demands of the Jews (Matt. 12:38-40), and therefore they have no obligation to satisfy our demand that they work a miracle. But Christ had already wrought miracles before the unbelieving Jews, and they still would not believe; what good would another miracle accomplish? The modern “miracle-workers” have never yet produced even one miracle! "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:20-24).
2. Verse 6: “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”
- a. The Thessalonian brethren had received the gospel, and became followers of Paul and the Lord. If they followed Paul, they were following the Lord, for the word he taught them was the Lord’s.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 4:16: "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."
  - 3) Philippians 3:17: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."
  - 4) Philippians 4:9: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."
  - 5) 1 Corinthians 14:37: “If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord” (ASV).
- b. The regular consequence of obedience in that day was persecutions. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). They received the word, and along with it, they were placed in “much affliction.” If they remained faithful, afflictions were brought to bear upon them; if they turned away from the gospel, the afflictions would be removed; but to give up the gospel was to forfeit their eternal hope!
- c. To counter-balance the predicament, they had the knowledge that they were right with the Lord; thus being right, they had hope of heaven. This knowledge furnished them joy, which is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit provided this joy by the gospel message, which they obeyed.
- 1) Luke 8:11: "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."
  - 2) John 6:63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life." [The physical body is alive because our spirit (our soul) gives it life; our spirit is alive because the gospel gives it life. Death is separation (the body without the spirit is dead—James 2:26). The spirit separated from God is dead; the gospel provides union between our spirit and God, thus producing spiritual life].
  - 3) The fruit of the Spirit is produced by means of the Spirit-given gospel. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"
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(Gal. 5:22-24). To the extent we learn, believe, and obey the word, to that extent we possess the fruit of the Spirit. An alien sinner's soul is not profitted if he learns the truth and adopts the spiritual characteristics the gospel teaches—until he obeys the gospel, is saved thereby, and is added to the Lord's church; at this point the convert is required to develop the attributes of Christianity.

- 4) The Christian graces likewise are produced by the Holy Spirit through the power of the inspired word; to the extent we learn, believe, develop, and follow the Christian graces, we have them. The Holy Spirit does not directly or miraculously create these attributes in us. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:5-11).
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### THE HOLY SPIRIT OPERATES THROUGH THE WORD

WORK	HOLY SPIRIT	WORD
Instructs	Neh. 9:20,30	2 Tim. 3:16-17
Begets	John 3:5	1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18
New Birth	John 3:5	1 Peter 1:22-23
Quickens	John 6:63	Psalms 119:50
Teaches	John 14:26	John 6:44-45; Titus 2:11-12
Convicts	John 16:8	Titus 1:9
Comforts	Acts 9:31	1 Th. 4:18; Rom. 15:4
Gives Love	Rom. 5:5	1 John 2:5
Saves	1 Cor. 6:11	Acts 4:4; Jas. 1:21
Washes	1 Cor. 6:11	Eph. 5:26
Sanctifies	1 Pet. 1:2	John 17:17
Converts	John 16:7-8	Psalms 19:7
Makes Free	Rom. 8:2	John 8:32; 17:17
Strengthens	Eph. 3:16	Deut. 11:8; Acts 20:32
Indwells Saints	Eph. 5:18-19	Col. 3:16
Leads	Rom. 8:14	Psalms 119:105
Witnesses	Heb. 10:15; 1 John 5:6-8	Heb. 10:15-16; Jer. 31:31-34
Produces Fruit	Gal. 5:22-23	Col. 1:5-6

### How the Holy Spirit Operates Is Seen in Cases of Conversion

CASE	GOSPEL	ACTION	ACTION	ACTION	RESULT
Acts 2	Spoke	Heard	Pricked	Baptized	Added, Saved
Acts 8:1-13	Preached	Heard	Believed	Baptized	Great Joy
Acts 8:26-40	Preached	Heard	Believed	Baptized	Rejoiced
Acts 10 & 11	Spoke	[Heard}	Believed	Baptized	[Saved]
Acts 16:12-15	Spoke	Heart Opened	Attended	Baptized	[Saved]
Acts 16:19-34	Spoke	[Heard]	[Believed]	Baptized	Washed Stripes
Acts 18:1-8	Reasoned	Heard	Believed	Baptized	[Saved]
Acts 9, 22, 26	Spoke	Heard	Believed	Baptized	Sins Washed

### How the Holy Spirit Operates Is Also Seen in Cases of Non-conversion

CASE	GOSPEL	ACTION	ACTION	RESULT
Acts 5:29-33	Spoke	Heard	Cut to the Heart	Wanted to Kill Them
Acts 7	Spoke	Heard	Cut to the Heart	Resisted, Stoned
Acts 13:14-46	Spoke	Heard	Contradicted & Blasphemed	Rejected
Acts 17:16-33	Spoke	Heard	Mocked	Rejected
Acts 24:24-25	Reasoned	[Heard]	Trembled	Put Off
Acts 26	Spoke	[Heard]	Believed	Rejected
Acts 28:23-29	Expounded & Testified	[Heard]	Did Not Believe	Disputed

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3. Verse 7: “So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”
    - a. The faithfulness of the Thessalonian saints exalted them before the Christians in the rest of Macedonia and in Achaia. There were congregations also in the Macedonian cities of Philippi and Berea, and Corinth was situated in Achaia.
    - b. The word “ensample” is from *tupos* (“type”); it refers to a pattern.
      - 1) 1 Corinthians 10:6: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."
      - 2) Philippians 3:17: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."
      - 3) 2 Thessalonians 3:9: "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us."
      - 4) 1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
      - 5) Titus 2:7: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity."
    - c. The realization of the fact that others are noting the words we speak and the works we do, and to some extent will imitate us in these, ought to cause us to be even more cautious in our conduct. The influence we exert can encourage or discourage godliness, and can either increase or decrease the population of heaven.
  4. Verse 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.”
    - a. Their faithfulness in spite of persecution bore a strong influence on others in far-away places who learned of their faith. It was “sounded forth” with great effect. “The loudest, clearest, most eloquent, and most unanswerable proclamation of the gospel is the unconscious testimony of Christian living. It may be sounded forth in great power in the midst of the severest afflictions—and often is. The troubles they endured for the name of Christ tested and revealed their faith, and so led to the fuller proclamation of the gospel” (Lipscomb, p.20).
    - b. For centuries these people had worshiped idols, but now a sizeable portion of the population had turned from these abominations, and served an invisible Lord; furthermore, they maintained loyalty to him despite suffering afflictions on his account. This made a profound impression on the thoughtful, locally and elsewhere.
  5. Verse 9: “For they themselves show 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.”
    - a. Mount Olympus, the mythical “home of the gods” in ancient Greece, was located in the area, making their forfeiture of idolatry even more remarkable. Athens was noted for the great number of idols and shrines located there. "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16).
    - b. The mental picture formed in the minds of idolaters of their deities is completely foreign to the view the Bible gives us of God. Idols were produced by men; they had no being and no power; even a child could perceive this. But the God of the Bible is Living; he is for real; he is truly God! What a profound effect this novel idea must have had on the hearts of thinking idolaters.
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- 1) John 17:3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."
  - 2) Acts 14:15-17: "And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
  - 3) Acts 17:28-29: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."
6. Verse 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. None of the apostles knew when Christ would come again. The angels in heaven do not know when that great day will be. Even Christ said he did not know. "But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32-33).
  - b. Many foolish men through the centuries have thought they had discovered the time of the second advent, by studying the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments. That this is impossible may be learned by reflecting on a simple little truth: Jesus knew the Old Testament perfectly; yet he did not know when the end would be. He knew the New Testament perfectly; yet he did not know when the end would be. Therefore, the Bible does not reveal when the return of Christ will be!
  - c. Some of the Thessalonians had the mistaken idea that the coming of the Lord was to occur in the very near future; some of them had quit working, and depended on the church for their support. The next epistle dealt with this problem in a very pointed way: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:10-12).
  - d. Paul spoke of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, which was accomplished by the Father; he spoke of Christians awaiting the return of Christ. He declared that Jesus had delivered "us" (faithful Christians) from the wrath to come. There are two levels (or kinds) of spiritual salvation: we obtain salvation from sins (forgiveness; pardon) when we obey the gospel; we will receive salvation from the wrath of God in fact in the Judgment.
    - 1) Romans 5:8-9: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."
    - 2) Revelation 2:11: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."
    - 3) Revelation 20:14-15: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
    - 4) Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and
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whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

- 5) 1 Peter 1:3-9: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls."
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## 1 THESSALONIANS 2

### A. 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12: The Manner in Which Paul Presented the Gospel to Them.

1. Verse 1: "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain."
  - a. The purpose for this and the following statements was to remind them of the reliability of the message they had been taught; the gospel they received was the truth and those who taught them were truly the servants of Heaven. There was the natural tendency to question their faith and the gospel when persecution came upon them.
  - b. By calling their attention to their first contact with Paul, they would remember him and what he did, as well as what he taught them. This would reaffirm their continued belief in the truth, even though persecution and false teachers assailed them. What the apostle writes in this context is an enlargement of verse six of chapter one.
  - c. When Paul and his company came to Thessalonica, they met with great success; they did not fail to accomplish the object of their mission. "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (Acts 17:4).
    - 1) This would remind them of their conversion. If one's conversion to Christ has been genuine, he is filled with joy by the experience, and later references to that glad occasion is one which returns that joy.
    - 2) This reminder would have a strengthening effect on them, giving them courage to continue in the Christian life despite the harsh realities of persecution.
  - d. Paul had already called attention to the fact that when he came to their city, he did not come with empty claims, but with powerful demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's miracles (1 Thess. 1:5).
    - 1) 1 Thessalonians 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."
    - 2) Acts 8:5-6: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."
    - 3) Hebrews 2:3-4: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
    - 4) 2 Corinthians 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."
2. Verse 2: "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention."
  - a. Here he reminds them of the shameful treatment and suffering he had encountered at Philippi. There he and Silas has been arrested, beaten, and imprisoned; this was forced upon them by those who had been angered at Paul when he cast the demon from the young girl who had been manipulated by her owners for financial gain (Acts 16:16-24). God had obtained their release by means of a great earthquake.

- b. That harsh and unfair experience at the hands of those unbelievers had not destroyed the faith and courage of Paul. He and Silas came to Thessalonica and spoke with boldness as they presented the gospel. Even in the Philippian prison, they had sung praise to God. Their courage did not fail them under the most difficult of conditions.
- c. However, their bold presentation of the gospel at Thessalonica also met with strong opposition. The word translated “contention” is the word that gives us our word *agony*. The word was used in reference to an athlete in the midst of the hard struggle and pain of a demanding contest. Compare the following verses:
- 1) Acts 17:5-9: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go."
  - 2) Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
  - 3) Colossians 2:1: "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and *for* them at Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh."
  - 4) 1 Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."
  - 5) Hebrews 12:1: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."
- d. At any time or place, when the gospel is preached boldly, the proclaimer should not be surprised to meet with opposition. That is the case in our present time and country. The only reason that overt persecution does not befall us is because presently the legal system does not permit it. However, there are less direct ways to be persecuted. One can be blacklisted, shunned, hated, ignored, and dismissed from his position. The gospel will always be hated by unbelievers, and persecution of some degree will always be heaped upon those who support and proclaim it! Such will be so until the end of time. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).
3. Verses 3-4: “For our exhortation *was* not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”
- a. The word “exhort” is from *paraklasis*: “From *para*, to the side of, and *kaleo*, to call or summon. Literally, a calling to one’s side to help; and therefore entreaty, passing on into the sense of exhortation, and thence into that of consolatory exhortation...” (Vincent, p.163).
  - b. The exhortation to which Paul refers was the preaching and teaching he did in the course of presenting the gospel to them. His preaching encouraged them to obey the gospel; their obedience brought them consolation. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ" (Acts 17:2-3).
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- c. Paul's preaching was not done out of deceit (error—ASV). It was truthful. "For our exhortation *did* not *come* from error or uncleanness, nor *was it* in deceit" (NKJ). False teachers, then and now, have a message of error; it contains enough truth and logic to appear right, but enough error to destroy the soul. Rat poison is comprised mostly of good food (for rats), but just enough poison to kill. The apostle taught no error; his message was the inspired truth of the gospel.
- 1) Galatians 1:11-12: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 2:10-13: "But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."
- d. Paul's preaching was not of uncleanness. The word translated "uncleanness" is used in Matthew 23:27 in reference to the "corruption of the sepulchre. Elsewhere in New Testament of sensual impurity (See Rom. 1:24; 2 Cor. 12:21; Eph. 4:19). Here in the sense of impurity on the side of sordidness" (Vincent, p.934). What he taught would lead them away from uncleanness; idolatry, the religion of the pagans, promoted all kinds of sensual activity. Paul's efforts would not lead to any sensual fulfillment for himself; instead, he faced persecution. There was nothing of a worldly nature for him to gain by his preaching; he stood to lose whatever material possessions he had.
- 1) Romans 1:24: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."
  - 2) 2 Corinthians 12:21: "And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed."
  - 3) Ephesians 4:19: "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."
- e. Paul's preaching was not done in guile (deceit). His message, methods, and work were honest, open, and beyond question. He had nothing to hide; there was no secret agenda; there was no trickery or cunning involved. The miracles he wrought were unquestionably genuine; the message he preached was truthful.
- 1) The work of false teachers is filled with sophistry, craftiness, and deceit; it will not stand the test of truth. Charlatans parading in the guise of Christianity have deceived the multitudes in America, and made themselves wealthy in the process. One of these [Oral Roberts] received millions of dollars a few years ago by asserting that God had told him he would "call him home" if a certain amount of money was not raised.
  - 2) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
  - 3) 2 Peter 2:3: "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."
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- 4) 2 Corinthians 2:17: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."
  - 5) 2 Corinthians 4:2: "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."
- f. Paul had been privileged to be put in trust with the gospel. God had approved him for that great trust. He understood the great responsibility and privilege connected with this calling, and often referred to it.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 9:16-17: "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship" (NKJ).
  - 2) Acts 26:15-18: "And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."
  - 3) 1 Timothy 1:11-12: "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."
  - 4) 1 Timothy 6:20: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called."
  - 5) Acts 20:22-27: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
  - 6) 1 Corinthians 2:1-2: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."
- g. Paul knew that if he preached to please men, he would fail to discharge his mission and cease to be the servant of Christ. It is impossible to please both our holy God and sinful men. To please God is to displease men, and to please men is to incur the wrath of God.
- 1) Matthew 6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."
  - 2) Galatians 1:10: "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."
- h. God is described as the one who tries (proves) our hearts. He weighs, investigates, searches, and knows our hearts. Paul has nothing to fear from a thorough search of his heart by the Lord; he has
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nothing to hide; he is honest with himself, with God, and with all men. No one can hide his true condition from the all-seeing eye of the Almighty.

- 1) 1 Samuel 16:7: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."
  - 2) 1 Chronicles 28:9: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."
  - 3) 1 Chronicles 29:17: "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee."
  - 4) Psalms 11:4: "The LORD *is* in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men."
  - 5) Jeremiah 11:20: "But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause."
  - 6) Jeremiah 17:10: "I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings."
  - 7) Romans 8:27: "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*"
  - 8) Revelation 2:23: "And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."
4. Verses 5-6: "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God *is* witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor *yet* of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." "For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness; nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ" (ASV).
- a. Paul denies having used flattering words at any time, as he discharged his God-given duties. At no time, in any circumstance, would this man of God have used craftiness and guile in his dealings with others.
    - 1) "The meaning is, that the apostle did not deal in the language of adulation; he did not praise them for their beauty, wealth, talent, or accomplishments, and conceal from them the painful truths about their guilt and danger. He stated simple truth—not refusing to commend men if truth would admit of it, and never hesitating to declare his honest convictions about their guilt and danger. One of the principal arts of the deceiver on all subjects is flattery; and Paul says, that when preaching to the Thessalonians he had carefully avoided it" (Barnes, p.21).
    - 2) Job 17:5: "He that speaketh flattery to *his* friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail."
    - 3) Job 32:21-22: "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; *in so doing* my maker would soon take me away."
    - 4) Psalms 12:2-3: "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: *with* flattering lips *and* with a
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- double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, *and* the tongue that speaketh proud things."
- 5) Proverbs 6:24: "To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman."
  - 6) Proverbs 7:21: "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him."
  - 7) Proverbs 26:28: "A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin."
- b. Paul denies having used a cloak of covetousness in his dealings with them. Once again, he calls on God to be witness to this fact. Anyone who knew him could know that he did not make financial gain from his work, although it was perfectly legitimate and scriptural for him to be paid.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 9:6-15: "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are* not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for *it were* better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void."
  - 2) 2 Corinthians 11:8-9: "I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them*, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*."
- c. Paul often had to work with his own hands in order to provide for his daily necessities. There were certain powerful enemies who sought any kind of pretext to levy some charge against the apostle; he knew the extreme importance of the gospel, and realized that it would be better to forego the advantages of receiving financial support from the church, and earn his own living, than to allow his many unscrupulous enemies a charge of covetousness against him. He usually supplied his own support.
- 1) Acts 18:3: "And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."
  - 2) Acts 20:34: "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."
  - 3) 1 Corinthians 4:12: "And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it."
  - 4) 1 Thessalonians 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."
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- 5) 2 Thessalonians 3:8: "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you."
- d. Paul denies that he preached in order to be praised by any man. "He did not seek a high and honorable position in the midst of these nor yet of others. So guarded was he in this matter that he did not even use the power he might have to be supported as an apostle of Jesus Christ" (Lipscomb, p.27). Where would we be without the work and influence of the apostle Paul? The obvious implication of the verse is that he, as an apostle of Christ, had the authority and right to receive monetary support from the brethren; it was also his right to decline support, which he did when a salary would have done harm to his influence.
- 1) Deuteronomy 25:4: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out *the corn*."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 9:8-12: "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are* not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."
  - 3) 1 Timothy 5:18: "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward."
- e. Some have tried to read something into the reference to *apostles* that was not implied by Paul. His use of the pronoun *we* is thought to mean that Silas and Timothy, his associates at Thessalonica, were included in the reference.
- 1) Barnabas is described as an apostle in Acts 14:14, but he was an apostle ("one sent") by the church at Antioch; he was not an apostle of Christ (cf. John 14-16; Acts 1:5,8; 2:1-4; 2 Cor. 12:11-13).
  - 2) Silas and Timothy are not included in the present reference. Paul was using *we* in the editorial sense to mean *I*. That this is so is seen in verse 18 of this chapter: "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us."
  - 3) Furthermore, if his reference is to anyone else, it is to the other full-fledged apostles of Christ, of whom there were twelve. Following the martyrdom of James (Acts 12), there were only twelve. We speak of the twelve tribes of Israel, but actually there were thirteen, when Levi is included. We speak of the twelve apostles of Christ, but there were thirteen, with Paul included.
5. Verses 7-8: "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 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."
- a. How wonderful it would have been to have spent time with Paul! What a gentle, caring, kindhearted saint! Yet he could be as strong as the situation demanded. One who thinks he is a mature Christian ought to compare himself to this great man of God, and visualize the horrible trials and conditions he experienced, and still maintained his saintly characteristics and dedication.
  - b. He calls on them to bear testimony regarding his gentle dealings with them. He did not coerce them or harangue them to procure their obedience. Gentleness and long sufferance are two essentials of successful gospel preaching.
- 1) 2 Timothy 2:24: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient."
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- 2) 2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
- c. Paul affirms that he was as gentle with them as a nurse is with her children. "He was moved by a sincere love for them instead of making gain of them; he was willing not only to impart unto them the gospel of Christ, but his own soul. This is a similar expression to what he said of his own Jewish people: 'I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' (Rom. 9:3). These are strong expressions, showing the intense desire he had for their salvation" (Lipscomb, p.28).
- d. He imparted the gospel to them; this was the purpose of his calling. If he had kept silent and not given out with the gospel, he might have lived to a ripe old age, and might have accumulated wealth; but he would have lost his own soul, and multitudes of others would have died lost. He fulfilled his great mission in the best possible way. We must do no less!
6. Verses 9-10: "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. Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe."
- a. He reminds the brethren of his visit with them, how that from their own remembrance they could recall his labor and travail, working night and day. He would pursue his craft of tent-making during part of the time, and preach and teach other times. He was a busy man!
- b. As we noted above, the apostle did not preach for money; and although he had every right to receive money from the brethren, he did not insist on that prerogative. He saw fit to decline the privilege in those cases where his enemies could use that situation to his injury.
- c. The brethren and God were witnesses of these facts. Both parties knew that Paul had operated in a holy, just, and unblamable manner. This described his conduct toward the believers in that place; but he does not imply that his conduct toward unbelievers was any different!
- 1) He conducted himself in a holy manner. "Holily" [*hosios*] means to be free from evil conduct, and to be obedient to God's will (Vine, Vol. 2, p.227).
- 2) He conducted himself justly (righteously).
- a) Romans 1:17: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
- b) Titus 2:12: "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
- 3) He conducted himself unblamably. This does not mean that he was above the possibility of sin, that he never violated any precept of God's word (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). It does mean that he did not live in a blameworthy manner; he did not have any sinful practice or habit which he regularly followed. Paul consistently practiced the principles of Christianity.
- 4) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
- 5) Luke 1:6: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."
7. Verses 11-12: "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (KJV). "As ye know how we *dealt with* each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you,
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and encouraging *you*, and testifying, to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory" (ASV). "For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory" (ESV).

- a. "He particularizes the carefulness he had shown for individuals. He dealt with each one, exhorting them to follow the better way, comforting them in their trials and troubles. [This shows that the success of the apostles was not easily won, that converts were not made in masses, but by the slow, toilsome affectionate application of the gospel to individuals, one by one. Without this personal and individual dealing, the public preaching is not so effective.]" (Lipscomb, p.29).
- b. Paul had no physical children, but those whom he converted he considered to be his spiritual offspring. He treated them as though they were his real children; he exhorted, comforted, and charged them as the situation demanded.
- c. "With an interest in your welfare, such as a father feels for his children, and with such a method as a father would use. It was not done in a harsh, dictatorial, and arbitrary manner, but in tenderness and love" (Barnes, p.24).
- d. The exhortations, comfortings, and charges he gave them were for a worthy end: that they should live in a manner that pleases and honors God. "Men can profess to accept God's calling and yet live very much as they had done before; hence, they needed to be told to walk worthily of God. And it is a consideration which helps those who are seeking godliness that God has associated them with himself. As men are helped by their position to live up to it, and as children naturally strive to be worthy of their parents, so those who know God and are connected with him are stimulated to higher efforts" (Lipscomb, p.30).
- e. God had called them out of the world into his kingdom and glory. The word for "unto" [into] is from the Greek term *eis*. One cannot be called into a non-existent institution. The kingdom of God is presently in existence; these Thessalonian saints were citizens of it. The kingdom of God has been established, just as Daniel 2:44 predicted, and as the Lord promised (Matt. 4:17).
  - 1) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins."
  - 2) Revelation 1:9: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

B. 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16: How they Received the Gospel.

1. Verse 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, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, *even the word* of God, ye accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (ASV).
  - a. Paul also thanked God because they had received the word of God—as the word of God! Every mature saint rejoices to see others accept the true word of the Lord. God's inspired message of truth is able to do for our souls what nothing else on earth can do. The word has great abilities:

## The Bible is Able

Instructs	2 Tim. 3:16-17
Begets	1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18
Produces New Birth	1 Peter 1:22-23
Quickens	Psalm 119:50
Teaches	John 6:44-45; Titus 2:11-22
Convicts	Titus 1:9
Comforts	1 Th. 4:18; Rom. 15:4
Gives Love	1 John 2:5
Saves	Acts 4:4; Jas. 1:21
Washes	Eph. 5:26
Sanctifies	John 17:17
Converts	Psalm 19:7
Makes Free	John 8:32; 17:17
Strengthens	Deut. 11:8; Acts 20:32
Indwells Saints	Col. 3:16
Leads	Psalm 119:105
Witnesses	Heb. 10:15-16; Jer. 31:31-34
Produces Fruit	Col. 1:5-6

- b. Paul and all of the inspired apostles and prophets knew that the message they delivered was not of their own design, but was thoroughly inspired. They both witnessed and performed supernatural feats by the power of the Holy Spirit. They knew perfectly well that the message they spoke or wrote was God's word.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 2:9-13: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."
  - 3) Galatians 1:8-12: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
  - 4) Hebrews 2:1-4: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
  - 5) Mark 13:11: "But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."
- c. Paul obviously wrought sufficient miracles in Thessalonica, in company with the logical teaching he presented, to convince many [all who had open minds] that his message was from the Living God.
- 1) Acts 17:1-4: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."
  - 2) Romans 15:19: "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."
- d. Therefore they received the message as the word of God, which it clearly is. As teachable as the
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Thessalonians were, the Bereans were even more noble than they. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few" (Acts 17:11-12).

- 1) When honest people investigate the Bible, maintaining a mind that is willing and able to examine the evidence, faith is built within their hearts: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:14-17).
- e. The word of God works effectively. It is far more powerful than the greatest nuclear bomb; it can do what nothing else on earth can do. It can convert the alien to God; it can comfort the bereft heart; it can give hope; it can heal the sins of an individual; it can solve the problems of a society; it can lead precious souls to heaven.
  - 1) Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it."
  - 2) Jeremiah 23:29: "*Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?"
  - 3) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
- f. Evidences of the inspiration of the Bible include:
  - 1) Its durability in the face of powerful enemies.
  - 2) Its continuous, consistent, and compatible message.
  - 3) Its many fulfilled prophecies, in both the Old and New Testaments.
2. Verse 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."
  - a. The brethren in Thessalonica became imitators (NKJ, ASV) of the churches in Judea. This was the way Paul and his inspired companions and fellow-laborers taught them. The congregations in Palestine and elsewhere were all guided by the same pattern in the plan of salvation, worship, the work they were to accomplish, were taught to cultivate the same spiritual qualities, and were identical in the organization of the local church.
  - b. God's churches in Judea were in Christ; the churches in all other places are in Christ. The church fills up Christ: "And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). One cannot get into Christ without also, by the same process, entering the church.
  - c. The church at Thessalonica also suffered because of its faith just as their brethren in Palestine had been made to suffer. The unbelieving Jews persecuted Jewish believers; unbelieving Gentiles in pagan lands persecuted their believing neighbors.
    - 1) The pure gospel has always been hated by those who have rejected it. The gospel exposes all the corrupt beliefs, motives, and practices which selfish men love. Instead of changing their lives to

- conform to its teachings, many unbelievers will despise it, and afflict those who teach it.
- 2) Even as Christ was rejected, hated, and punished for teaching truth, so his followers are despised and opposed when they believe and teach the truth. "These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:17-20).
3. Verses 15-16: "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."
    - a. Most of the Jews rejected Christ and his message and work. They foolishly accepted full responsibility for his death, having no conception of the consequences. "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25).
      - 1) John 3:18-21: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."
      - 2) Luke 23:27-31: "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"
      - 3) Acts 2:36-37: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" Compare: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:22-24).
      - 4) Acts 3:17: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers."
      - 5) 1 Corinthians 2:8: "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."
    - b. There were many Gentiles who hated and opposed the gospel; they brought persecution upon Gentile believers, making their lot in life extremely hard. These suffering saints would be exposed to the temptation of giving up their faith in order to find relief from their tribulation. The purpose of the message to this point was to reinforce the brethren, fortifying their faith in the face of the present hardships. Paul accomplished this end by calling attention to certain facts:
      - 1) Paul and his co-workers were shamefully treated when they preached in Macedonia.
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- 2) Paul did not bring the gospel to their city for the purpose of financial gain or any other deceitful purpose; he sought no man's wealth, had no interest in self-glory, and had no hidden agenda.
  - 3) He loved them so much that he willingly worked night and day, earning his own living while he taught the gospel.
  - 4) The message they believed was not empty words, but its source was proved by the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - 5) He reminded them that they had received that message in the proper way: as the word of God.
  - 6) He encouraged them by reporting the effect of their faithfulness on others in distant places.
- c. The Jewish enemies of the truth had tried to undermine the work Paul did among the Gentiles. Those who "came in privily to spy out our liberty" (Gal. 2:4-5), followed Paul, seeking to sow their perverted gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).
- 1) The Jews had a long history of rejecting and even killing the prophets sent to correct them.
    - a) Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
    - b) John 16:2: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."
    - c) Acts 7:51-60: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."
  - 2) They refused to heed the gospel call for them to enter the kingdom, and did not want anyone else to be receptive. "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13).
  - 3) They were bent on filling up, as did their ancestors, the full measure of their sins.
    - a) "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" (Matt. 23:32).
    - b) Compare: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full" (Gen. 15:16).

C. 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20: Paul Was Unable to Return to Thessalonica.

1. Verse 17: "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured
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the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.”

- a. “This he says lest they should think he had deserted them while so great an emergency demanded his presence. If he could not give them the comfort of his presence, he gave them the comfort of knowing that he would have been with them had it been possible” (Lipscomb, p.34).
  - b. His initial stay with them was not long, and his absence had been too long to suit his intentions; he was unable to return, because of many pressures on his time and safety. His heart was with them, and he endeavored the more abundantly to see them; he had a great desire of heart to see their face.
  - c. Paul had warm regards for all the brethren. "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ" (Col. 2:5).
2. Verse 18: “Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.”
- a. He had tried to return to Thessalonica on two occasions, but was hindered by Satan. “How and when Satan hindered his visiting them is not revealed, though some adversity, some imprisonment, or hindrance was thrown in his way....When our endeavors are directed to the work of the Lord, it is certain that everything that hinders proceeds from Satan” (Lipscomb, p.35).
  - b. Paul spoke of a devilish hindrance in 2 Corinthians 12:7: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." “The apostle recognized the hand of *Satan* in frustrating his attempt to do good, and preventing the accomplishment of his strong desire to see his Christian friends....The agency of Satan may, for aught we can tell, often be employed in the embarrassments that we meet with in life” (Barnes, p.29).
  - c. “Thus it is clear that Satan is a person, the world-ruler of the kingdom of evil, and although a being of great magnitude of powers, nevertheless a creature, who shall at last be overwhelmed by the judgment of God. They are poor students of the word of God who do not have proper regard for the power and malignity of their enemy, Satan” (Coffman, p.33).
    - 1) 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
    - 2) Matthew 12:24: "But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." Compare:: "And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils" (Mark 3:22).
    - 3) Matthew 13:39: "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels."
    - 4) John 8:44: "Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."
    - 5) John 12:31: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Compare: "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).
    - 6) Ephesians 2:2: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."
    - 7) Ephesians 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

- 8) 1 Chronicles 21:1: "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."
  - a) Job 1:6: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them."
  - b) John 13:27: "And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly."
  - c) Acts 5:3: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?"
- 9) Acts 26:18: "To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Compare: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen" (Rom. 16:20).

d. Other passages which address the subject of Satan:

- 1) 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Compare: "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" (1 Thess. 3:5).
- 2) 2 Corinthians 4:4: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Compare: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side" (Matt. 13:19).
- 3) Matthew 12:29: "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." Compare: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).
- 4) 1 John 3:8: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."
- 5) 1 Corinthians 7:5: "Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."
- 6) 2 Corinthians 2:11: "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Compare: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).
- 7) 1 Timothy 5:15: "For some are already turned aside after Satan."
- 8) 2 Timothy 2:26: "And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."
- 9) James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

3. Verse 19: "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our

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Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

- a. "This word [*for*] introduces his reason for so ardently desiring to be with them again; this is conveyed in the form of a question to express his deep feeling more effectively than a mere statement would have done. This accounts for his earnest desire to visit them. He thus longed to see them for there was nothing that afforded him its same immediate enjoyment, or the same substantial satisfaction as his spiritual children in Thessalonica" (Lipscomb, p.35).
  - b. Paul's hope included being with his brethren in eternity, and sharing with them the awesome grandeur of heaven and the unfathomable blessings of eternal life. "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance" (Rom. 8:24-25, NKJ).
  - c. The joy Paul experiences at present is the happiness of knowing they are walking in the light of the gospel, enduring the persecutions bravely, and maintaining their love for him.
  - d. The crown of rejoicing is that which awaits all the faithful at the end of time, when Christ shall return. What could be a greater cause for rejoicing than to be in the presence of the Savior!
    - 1) 2 Corinthians 1:14: "As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also *are* ours in the day of the Lord Jesus."
    - 2) Philippians 2:16: "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."
    - 3) 2 Corinthians 4:14: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."
4. Verse 20: "For ye are our glory and joy."
- a. Philippians 4:1: "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved."
  - b. "They were the fruit of his life and labors. As an apostle of Jesus Christ, and as such he gloried and rejoiced in them. In his mind he saw them grow daily out of the taint of heathenism into the purity and love of Christ. He saw them, as the discipline of God's instruction had its perfect work in them grow from babes in Christ, and grow in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, to the measure of the stature of perfect men. He saw them presented faultless in the presence of the Lord in the great day. To witness that spiritual transformation which he had inaugurated carried on to completion gave the future a greatness and a worth which made Paul's heart leap for joy" (Lipscomb, p.36).
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# 1 THESSALONIANS 3

## A. 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8: Paul Elated Over Timothy's Good Report.

1. Verses 1-2: "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; 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."
    - a. Paul and his company were forced to leave Thessalonica due to persecution. They went on to Berea, where a congregation was established. The Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up more trouble for Paul. The brethren conducted Paul to Athens, from which Silas and Timothy were summoned. Acts 17:1-15.
    - b. Here, Paul says he had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the status of the new converts. He remained in Athens alone. In Acts 18:5, Paul had gone on to Corinth, where Timothy and Silas rejoined him.
      - 1) Acts 18:5: "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ.*" Compare: "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*" (1 Thess. 3:6).
      - 2) Obviously the apostle had sent Silas back into Macedonia, possibly to Berea. The two helpers joined Paul in Corinth after checking on the brethren in Macedonia.
    - c. The **we** in verse one is likely an editorial use of the word. Paul's concern for the new saints was so intense, and knowing their present state of tribulation, he dispatched Timothy back to Thessalonica to learn of their welfare. Timothy was a valuable helper.
      - 1) 1 Corinthians 16:10 "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also *do.*"
      - 2) Philippians 2:19-24: "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly."
    - d. "Timothy's mission was in the interest of their faith to impress upon them that the troubles in which they were involved were no proof that their faith was vain and to encourage them to continue steadfast in it" (Lipscomb, p.37).
      - 1) Romans 16:25: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."
      - 2) Colossians 2:6-7: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."
  2. Verses 3-4: "That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 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."
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- a. Afflictions brought upon the saints by those who hate the gospel was no reason for them to be moved away from the Lord. The strongest Christians are those who suffer the most oppression and hardship—and remain loyal.
- 1) 2 Corinthians 12:7-10: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."
  - 2) Hebrews 12:11: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."
- b. In his infinite wisdom, God knew that the religion of Christ needed the severe persecutions of the first century in order for it to take deep root and survive. If the saints were given a life of ease and prosperity, their faith would not be sufficiently strong to withstand the ordinary temptations of life. But if they were oppressed because of their faith, they would grow increasingly stronger, and the foe would not be able to overthrow their dedication to Christ.
- 1) There is something about Christianity that makes its adherents more determined to remain faithful when persecution is brought to bear. When someone is afflicted for no just cause, there are many in the world who will perceive their case, and seeing their undiminished faith, will be moved to obey the gospel themselves.
  - 2) It was God's will that our brethren in that age be strengthened by persecution. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Real persecution was their lot. The statement is true of every generation of Christians: if they live godly in Christ, they will suffer persecution, of the physical degree or a more subtle degree.
  - 3) The church went into complete apostasy after Rome issued the Edict of Toleration and made Christianity acceptable. False doctrine flooded in, and the members grew weak and worldly. The Roman emperor who legalized Christianity was Constantine, some time after his alleged conversion: "Following the example of his father and earlier 3rd-century emperors, Constantine in his early life was a solar henotheist, believing that the Roman sun god, Sol, was the visible manifestation of an invisible 'Highest God' (*summus deus*), who was the principle behind the universe. This god was thought to be the companion of the Roman emperor. Constantine's adherence to this faith is evident from his claim of having had a vision of the sun god in 310 while in a grove of Apollo in Gaul. In 312, on the eve of a battle against Maxentius, his rival in Italy, Constantine is reported to have dreamed that Christ appeared to him and told him to inscribe the first two letters of his name (XP in Greek) on the shields of his troops. The next day he is said to have seen a cross superimposed on the sun and the words 'in this sign you will be the victor' (usually given in Latin, in *hoc signo vinces*). Constantine then defeated Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, near Rome. The Senate hailed the victor as savior of the Roman people. Thus, Constantine, who had been a pagan solar worshiper, now looked upon the Christian deity as a bringer of victory. Persecution of the Christians was ended, and Constantine's co-emperor, Licinius, joined him in issuing the Edict of Milan (313), which mandated toleration of Christians in the Roman Empire. As guardian of Constantine's favored religion, the church was then given legal rights and large financial donations" [© 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved]. A more fitting explanation of his "conversion" to Christianity is the fact that he saw the
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- potential of this new religion, and sought to shape it to his own use.
- c. God appointed the period of persecution of that time; he appointed it in the sense of permitting it. "The antagonism between light and darkness is such that the upright, moral behavior of Christians is alone sufficient to incur the world's displeasure and hatred" (Coffman, p.38).
    - 1) Cain hated his brother Abel: "Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). Compare;
      - a) John 3:18-21: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."
      - b) John 15:18: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you."
      - c) John 16:33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
    - 2) The Lord forewarned the apostles to expect this kind of treatment: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2).
    - 3) The hardships, persecutions, and harsh realities the Israelites suffered, in Egypt and in the forty-year trip to Canaan, welded them together with a bond that has not been broken—even after thirty-five hundred years! The hardships, persecutions, and harsh realities our brethren suffered during the first century, welded the church together in an unbreakable bond—even the might of the Roman Empire could not shatter their resolve! Great strength grows out of great hardship. It was in the wisdom of God that our brethren in the early days of the church faced cruel tribulation. In the frontier days of America, when men began to call for the restoration of the pure gospel, they were faced with cruel opposition and persecution. When these brethren endured these harsh realities, the church was again welded together with an unbroken bond.
  - d. While he was with them in person, Paul told them that they would suffer tribulation. They were now well aware of this fact! But these troubles were well worth the pain.
    - 1) Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
    - 2) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
3. Verse 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."
    - a. His intense concern for these new saints was so great that Paul could no longer go without knowing of their situation. He therefore sent Timothy to obtain a report.
    - b. His fear for them hinged on the possibility that the *tempter* had been able to entice them away from the Lord, thus making his labor with them to have been in vain. If it was not possible for a Christian
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to lose his soul, why was Paul concerned?

- 1) 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
  - 3) 1 Corinthians 10:12-13: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*."
  - 4) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
4. Verses 6-7: "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: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith."
- a. The apostle was happy to learn that the brethren desired to see him, just as he wanted to see them. They did not blame Paul for leaving them; they did not begrudge his work in other places.
  - b. Timothy also brought back the good report that they still maintained their faith and love. "The word *now* qualifies *came*, and denotes *just now*. Timothy's return had been anxiously awaited, and no sooner had he arrived and given his report than Paul writes this affectionate and grateful Epistle" (Lipscomb, pp.39f).
  - c. Paul was elated to know that they had not apostatized, but were still faithful; their faith and love were both still being expressed. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).
  - d. The apostle derived a great amount of comfort from this uplifting report. He was also experiencing affliction and distress, but the good news from Thessalonica encouraged him.
5. Verse 8: "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."
- a. "When Timothy came from Thessalonica he found Paul in great need of comforting words. So extreme was his distress that he spoke of it by implication as death. But the good report of the faith and love of the Thessalonians and their joy and gladness brought life to him. This passage shows that Paul was a man of a high and ardent nature, sensitive in his affections to a high degree. His whole soul was bound up with the churches he had founded. (2:8.)" (Lipscomb, p.41).
  - b. We all need the love of our brethren. "I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. I looked on *my* right hand, and beheld, but *there was* no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Ps. 142:1-4).
  - c. Paul loved all the saints. "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28).

B. 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13: Paul's Gratitude and Prayers for Them.

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1. Verse 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."
  - a. "The thought of this passage is that Paul's gratitude at the state of the Thessalonians was so great that it would be difficult properly to thank God for so great a joy and blessing. Paul's joy was so great that all of the sufferings and hardships he had endured were as nothing compared with it" (Coffman, p.40).
  - b. "Only those who have suffered much know joy in its full capacity, 'as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.' (2 Cor. 6:9,10.)" (Lipscomb, p.41).
  - c. Few Christians in modern America have experienced genuine affliction on account of their faith. Most of us take our great abundance and prosperity for granted, and if we lose some small particle of our expectations, we groan and complain. Many have lost full appreciation for the blessings we have obtained from the gospel.
2. Verse 10: "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?"
  - a. Paul prayed in the nighttime and in the daytime. He prayed that God might grant him the ability to return to Thessalonica, not for selfish purposes, but for their good. He desired to return to this place where he had faced oppression.
  - b. He loved them all. He knew that they had not yet been taught everything they needed to know, so he willed to return to them that he might supply that which was lacking in their faith. He could expect further persecution if he returned, but since they were in need of information he could supply, he was willing to endure it.
3. Verse 11: "Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you."
  - a. This statement is in the format of a petition unto God. He states his desire that God and Christ might direct him back to them. It is his prayer that God might remove the hindrances from his way, so he would be able to see them again.
  - b. "Paul had earnestly endeavored to visit them, but in vain. Satan had successfully opposed him. But Paul made his appeal to God who is over all, and to the Lord Jesus, their Lord and his. God is mightier and wiser than Satan and his servants, so all is well" (Lipscomb, p.42).
4. Verse 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."
  - a. His petition for them was that the Lord might help them to increase and abound in love toward one another and toward all others. This was the way it was with him: his love increased and abounded, despite the afflictions. His troubles caused him to love the brethren more, and to seek their advance.
  - b. Love, like faith, is capable of growth. No one on earth is apt to reach the zenith of love; there is always room for increase, just as there is always room for growth in knowledge and faith.
    - 1) Matthew 5:44-48: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
    - 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:1: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, 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."
- 3) 1 Thessalonians 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."
  - 4) 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "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."
  - 5) 2 Thessalonians 3:5: "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."
5. Verse 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."
- a. "The prayer that God would make them to increase in love toward one another and toward all men was to the end that he might thereby establish their hearts unblamable in holiness before God" (Lipscomb, p.43).
  - b. Romans 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law."
  - c. Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
  - d. His desire for them was that they would remain unblamable and holy before God, and would be in that condition when the Lord returns. There is nothing in the statement that teaches that Christ was about to return any moment; more than nineteen hundred years have passed since the epistle was written, and the Lord has not returned. Therefore, Paul, an inspired apostle, did not teach or imply that the Lord's coming would be soon. Some of the Thessalonians misunderstood this point, and gave up their daily work, thinking the end was nigh. Paul corrected this faulty idea in 2 Thessalonians.
  - e. Christ is spoken of as returning with all his saints ["holy ones"]. Elsewhere, we read that his coming will be with the angels.
    - 1) Matthew 25:31: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."
    - 2) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
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## 1 THESSALONIANS 4

### A. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12: Exhortations to Christian Living.

1. Verse 1: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, 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."
  - a. The Greek word translated "furthermore" is *to loipon*, which means "for the rest" or "finally" (Vine, Vol. 2, p.138). "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God" (NKJ).
  - b. The apostle requested and besought them (cf. margin) that they would abound more and more in the lifestyle which pleases God. This manner of living was taught to them by Paul. The way we live is important. There are some things which are forbidden and other things which are required.
    - 1) Colossians 3:8-14: "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye. And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness."
    - 2) Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
    - 3) 1 Peter 2:1-2: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
  - c. The way one lives is frequently pictured in the Bible as a "walk." In this sense, life is depicted as a journey that leads to some destination. The Christian walk takes the faithful to heaven. This is the kind of life that is pleasing to God; a lifestyle contrary to that of the gospel is displeasing to God.
  - d. Paul shows that we must abound more and more in the Christian life. Life is characterized either by health and strength or by illness and weakness; we are either growing or we are declining. Regardless of our lifestyle, we are all marching inexorably toward the grave, but faithful Christians have hope beyond death. But we must grow stronger and be more faithful as we continue our journey.
    - 1) Ephesians 3:17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love."
    - 2) Ephesians 5:2: "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."
    - 3) Titus 2:2: "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience."
    - 4) 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen."
    - 5) 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "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."

- 6) 2 Peter 1:5-7: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."
  - 7) 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
  - 8) Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
  - 9) 1 John 3:3: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
2. Verse 2: "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus."
- a. The apostle spoke in verse one of the instructions they had received from him; here he affirms that those instructions were the commandments of Christ. This is one of a very great many affirmations in the sacred text of its inspiration.
  - b. The common belief by the majority of religionists is that strict adherence to a divine standard is not required in order to please God. This passage teaches the opposite! While it is true that salvation is by the grace of God, it is also true that there are obligations on the part of the individual who seeks salvation. Truth (God's word) is the means by which God expresses his grace; our obedience to his word is the means by which we appropriate the benefits of his grace.
    - 1) Law, as defined by Blackstone, is that which forbids the wrong and requires the right. The grace of God has appeared unto all men, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly (Tit. 2:11-12). Law forbids wrong and requires right; God's grace forbids wrong and requires the right.
    - 2) God's grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21). Righteousness is the doing of God's will (Ps. 119:172). His plan by which we are made righteous is the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-3). Hence, his grace operates through his plan of righteousness, which we are obligated to obey.
      - a) Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness."
      - b) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
      - c) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
      - d) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
  - c. In our text, Paul speaks of the commandments of Christ. These commands are his charge to each of us. Can we be pleasing to God (vs. 1) while we reject Christ's commandments? If so, we can be saved even though we are disobedient, a conclusion repudiated by many Bible statements:
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- 1) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
  - 2) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
  - 3) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
  - 4) James 1:25: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
  - 5) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
- d. The word translated "commandments" is the Greek *parangelia*, which means "a proclamation, a command or a commandment, is strictly used of commands received from a superior..." (Vine, Vol. 1, p.181). The word is also used in:
- 1) Acts 16:24: "Who, having received such a **charge**, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."
  - 2) 1 Timothy 1:5: "Now the end of the **commandment** is charity out of a pure heart, and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned."
  - 3) 1 Timothy 1:18: "This **charge** I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare."
3. Verses 3-5: "For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God."
- a. It is God's will that his offspring be holy in life. To be sanctified is to be set apart, devoted to God's holy purposes. The Greek word is *hagiosmos*. Vine defines it as "separation to God" (Vol. 2, p.317).
- 1) The word is used ten times in the Greek New Testament, being translated *sanctification* five times and *holiness* five times.
  - 2) In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7, it is used twice, being translated as *sanctification* once (verse 3) and *holiness* once (verse 7). The two English words, used interchangeably, are identical in meaning.
- b. The Bible itself gives the meaning of *sanctification*.
- 1) Exodus 13:1,12: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine....That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD'S."
  - 2) Genesis 2:3: "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."
  - 3) Exodus 13:2: "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the
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- children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine."
- 4) Exodus 29:37: "Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy."
  - 5) Leviticus 27:16: "And if a man shall sanctify unto the LORD some part of a field of his possession, then thy estimation shall be according to the seed thereof: an homer of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver."
  - 6) These things, animals, and people were set apart (sanctified) to God's holy purposes and uses.
- c. The meaning of sanctification then is plain:
- 1) "To set apart to God to be used by him and for him." Once the item or individual was separated, it was not to be used again for common purposes. When the pagans offered a hog on the altar at the temple, the altar was polluted. When a person obeys the gospel and is sanctified, he is to live a holy life, a life that is consecrated and dedicated to God's service; the individual cannot return to his old way of life and retain fellowship with God.
  - 2) 2 Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"
- d. The state of sanctification can be altered by sin. When a sanctified (holy) person falls victim to sin, he is contaminated, and loses his sanctification (holy status). The saints in Corinth committed the sins of fornication, strife, and other sins; this plunged them once again into guilt, just as the sin of Simon once more sullied his soul (Acts 8:13-24). The view of sanctification is therefore false which says that once a person reaches sanctification, he cannot commit sin.
- e. The brethren in Thessalonica, being from a heathen background and living in a society that was thoroughly indoctrinated in paganism, were faced with the daily temptations to commit fornication. They were swimming against a very strong current of licentious behavior when they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1:9).
- 1) Although the society of modern western countries is rapidly plunging itself into neo-paganism, still we are at present very far above that ancient Grecian society in morals.
  - 2) "The foul and heathenish vice of fornication was prevalent among the heathen and little condemned by public opinion. It was especially the great sin of Corinth, from which Paul wrote, the patron goddess of which city was Venus. The purity of the Thessalonian Christians was imperiled from the condition of society around them, and in many cases from former unchaste habits. The temptations to licentiousness assailing the first generation of Christians were fearfully strong, and Paul in all his Epistles gives urgent warnings upon this subject. The sense of purity had to be created in men gathered out of the midst of heathen corruption" (Lipscomb, pp.45f).
- f. It is the will of God that Christians abstain from fornication, that each one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor. The *vessel* is the individual's physical body. The RSV twists the passage to say: "That each one of you take a wife for himself in holiness and honor." This would make Paul teach that a wife is a mere possession of the husband, a repudiation of what he taught in Ephesians 5. Also, it would require each saint to be married, and furthermore, his statement would only be addressed to men.
- 1) The human body is to be brought under the control of the person's spirit, which is governed by God's word: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak" (Matt. 26:41).
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- 2) 1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
  - 3) Romans 8:5-7: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
  - 4) Romans 8:12-13: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."
- g. We are to master the sinful appetites of the physical body, bringing them under the control of our spirit; we are to abstain from fornication, by possessing (*i.e.*, gaining mastery over, controlling) our vessel (human body), and not give ourself over to the passion of lust; this latter condition is that which characterized the Gentiles who did not know the true God.
- 1) The lust of concupiscence is the lust of passion (ASV; NKJ). "Passion signifies an overpowering feeling, one to which one so yields himself that he is borne along by evil as if he were its passive instrument; he has lost the dignity of self-control and is the slave of his own appetites" (Lipscomb, p.46).
  - 2) The Gentiles were especially guilty of giving-in to their passions (Rom. 1:18-32). They denied the Creator, refused to have God in their knowledge, and then plunged headlong into every kind of sin and degradation. American society is in the process of doing this very thing today!
4. Verse 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" (KLV). "That no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified." (ASV). "That no man transgress and wrong his brother in any matter: because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified" (NKJ).
- a. The apostle discusses not only fornication and sinful lusts, but also deals with fraudulent conduct. God's people are different from those who are ruled by their physical desires. Whereas men of the world defraud one another, Christians treat each other as they would want to be treated in the matter at hand.
    - 1) Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
    - 2) Luke 6:31: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."
  - b. Some scholars (Lipscomb, Coffman) place this statement under the heading of fornication, but the subject may have been expanded to include any matter in which one could defraud another, thus going beyond God's will. The verses preceding and the one following speak of sexual misconduct, but verse nine addresses the broad subject of brotherly love.
  - c. To transgress is to go beyond the limits of God's will. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). We must not violate any command or truth given in the inspired word.
    - 1) We transgress God's law when we do what God says we are not to do. Failing to attend (Heb. 10:24-26), failing to give as we are prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7), fornication, hatred, stealing, profane or vulgar speech, evil thoughts—all of these are violations of God's will.
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- 2) But a failure to do our God-given duty also constitutes sin. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17).
- d. Paul reminds them that he has forewarned them and had given them inspired testimony regarding these matters. He saw fit to remind them, and since they needed reminding, so do we.
- 1) 2 Peter 1:12-13: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance."
- 2) 2 Peter 3:1-2: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."
- e. The motivation given for their heeding these instructions is the affirmation that the Lord is the avenger. Man frequently avoids the immediate penalty of his transgressions; often criminals get away with their crimes, due to some fallacy in the criminal justice system, or for some other cause. But it is certain that all who are guilty of transgressing God's law will be punished, and all of those who have served God faithfully will not go without reward.
- 1) Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
- 2) Colossians 3:5-6: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."
- 3) Matthew 10:42: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."
- 4) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
- f. There is a measure of pleasure in some sinful activities, but it is short-lived. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).
- 1) The time comes when we lose all interest in sensual and other physical pursuits. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccl. 12:1).
- 2) There are certain physical penalties which often come to those who are guilty of fornication. There are certain horrible diseases which bring immense suffering and even death to those who practice such a manner of life.
- 3) "The law of God, wrought into the constitution of the human body, takes care that we do not escape without paying the penalty. If not at the moment, it is in the future, and with interest in premature old age; in the torpor which succeeds the excesses of man's prime; in the sudden breakdown under any strain put on either physical or moral courage. They are avenged in the soul. Sensual indulgence extinguishes the capacity for feeling; the profligate would love but cannot; all that is inspiring, elevating, redeeming in the passions is lost to him; all that remains is the dull sense of that incalculable loss. This deadening is one of the most terrible consequences of
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immorality. They who do such things do not escape the avenging holiness of God. Even death, the refuge to which despair so often drives, holds out no hope to them. Men and women of the present age need to have impressed on them that God is an avenger of sexual wrongs both in this world and the next" (Lipscomb, pp.47f).

- g. Regarding the matter of our reaping what we sow, some wise scholar has perceived other related truths.
- 1) We reap what we sow.
  - 2) We reap more than we sow.
  - 3) We reap longer than we sow.
  - 4) Others reap from our sowing.
  - 5) Our sowing has eternal consequences.
5. Verse 7: "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."
- a. God called us out of darkness into the glorious light of the gospel to the intent that we should live holy lives; he did not call us out of darkness into a greater darkness. *Darkness* is used in the Bible in reference to sin and religious error. It was never the intention of our Holy Father to encourage any kind of unholy belief or practice.
  - b. The purpose of the gospel call is to lead individuals into living holy, clean, pure, godly and righteous lives.
    - 1) 1 Peter 2:9: "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
    - 2) 2 Corinthians 4:3-4: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."
    - 3) Colossians 3:9: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds."
    - 4) Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."
  - c. "The word *uncleanness (akaqarsia)* means, properly, *impurity, filth*; and then, in a moral sense, *pollution, lewdness*, as opposed to chastity" (Barnes, p.40).
    - 1) Romans 1:24: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."
    - 2) Romans 6:19: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."
    - 3) 2 Corinthians 12:21: "*And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed."
    - 4) Galatians 5:19: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness."
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- 5) Ephesians 4:19: "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."
  - 6) Ephesians 5:3: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."
  - 7) Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
- d. As already noted, God calls us into this holy state by the gospel.
- 1) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
  - 2) 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
6. Verse 8: "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit."
- a. Anyone who rejects the principle under discussion, has not merely rejected Paul (or any other teacher of the truth), he has rejected God! This is also true with any person who rejects any part of God's revelation.
    - 1) Luke 7:29-30: "And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."
    - 2) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
    - 3) 1 Samuel 8:7: "And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."
  - b. God gave to the apostles of Christ the power of the Holy Spirit. This gift enabled them to receive the inspired revelation from God's mind, inerrantly guided them in presenting that message, and empowered them to confirm it by miraculous signs. The point Paul here makes is to prove the accuracy of the preceding statement: that one who rejected that message was not merely rejecting Paul, but was repudiating God.
    - 1) John 14:26: "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
    - 2) John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you."
    - 3) Acts 1:5,8: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence....But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the
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uttermost part of the earth."

- 4) 1 Corinthians 2:9-14: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."
  - 5) Hebrews 2:1-4: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
7. Verse 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."
- a. They had already been well-taught in the subject of brotherly love, so much so that Paul did not need to give them here a detailed presentation of it. It was proper, however, for him to make reference to the matter and commend them for having cultivated this spiritual quality.
  - b. How had God taught them brotherly love? The point Paul makes is that it was unnecessary for him to teach them this subject since God had already taught it to them. But how had he taught them?
    - 1) When Paul came to Thessalonica, he taught them as much of God's will as time permitted. He was assisted in this good work by Silas and Timothy. The teaching they did was by the inspired direction of God's agent, the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:1-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is inconceivable that Paul did not address the subject of brotherly love during his initial visit.
    - 2) When an apostle of Christ planted a congregation, he would lay hands on certain ones in order to impart gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8-10; Acts 8:14ff; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11). It is sensible to assume that Paul imparted some of these miraculous gifts to the brethren at Thessalonica, and that through the exercise of these gifts, further instructions were provided to the brethren. Hence, here is one of the means God employed in the first century by which he taught his people. See 1 Corinthians 12-14.
    - 3) Paul and his company had taught them about brotherly love during their initial work with them. Those upon whom Paul had imparted spiritual gifts most likely also taught this important subject. God was behind each of these teaching efforts.
  - c. God teaches men today by the inspired message of his word. This is the only means by which we are able to obtain information from God. There are no inspired teachers living on earth today!
    - 1) John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."
    - 2) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for
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- reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
- 3) Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."
  - 4) 2 John 1:9: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (ASV).
  - 5) 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other" (ASV).
- d. 1 Thessalonians 4:9: περι δε της φιλαδελφιας ου χρειαν εχετε γραφειν υμιν αυτοι γαρ υμεις θεοδιδακτοι εστε εις το αγαπαν αλληλους . In the Greek New Testament on this verse, "brotherly love" is from the Greek *philadelphia*; "love" is from the Greek *agapan*. The former denotes affection we naturally feel toward others of our kind; the latter is the highest kind of love, the willing of good toward all others: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10).
- e. Christians are members of the same spiritual family, and as such, are to have the tender, sincere, and abiding concern and sympathy for each other that naturally occurs in a closely-knit human family. In this biblical concept, Christ is depicted as our elder brother in the family.
- 1) Romans 8:17: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together."
  - 2) John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
  - 3) 1 Thessalonians 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."
  - 4) Hebrews 13:1: "Let brotherly love continue."
8. Verse 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."
- a. Paul commends them for developing and expressing love toward all the brethren throughout Macedonia. It would have been hypocritical if they had limited it to certain selected brethren, but they showed it to all the saints in the province. They were not in personal contact with brethren in other parts of the world, thus were unable to express love for them directly. "*Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9).
  - b. There is always the need and possibility of increasing in love. No one in this world can ever reach a point where he can lay aside love or increase in love to the degree that he cannot elevate it even more. Only in heaven, can love reach its fullness. Compare: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity" (1 Cor. 13:13).
  - c. "The brotherly love of the apostolic church was not only visible to the world, it commended it to the world; it brought a new thing into being, a new thing for which the world was pining. The poor in the cities of Asia and Europe saw with wonder and joy and hope men and women united to one another in a spiritual union which gave scope to all their gifts for society and satisfied all their desires for it. The churches were companies of people where love to God and man was the prevailing sentiment,
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where outward pressure often increased the inward bonds, and where mutual confidence diffused inward joy. Men were drawn to them by the desire to share the life of love” (Lipscomb, p.50).

9. Verses 11-12: “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.” “That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing” (NKJ).
  - a. They are admonished to “study to be quiet and to do your own business.” This paradoxical pronouncement calls on Christians to strive to be quiet. Self-centered and worldly-minded people are greatly interested in making an impact on society to their own glory. Unselfish and spiritually-minded people (which describes every faithful Christian) are greatly interested in doing their work quietly, drawing no attention to themselves.
    - 1) The Greek term Paul used refers to “tranquillity arising from within, causing no disturbance to others” (Vine, Vol., p.242).
      - a) 1 Timothy 2:1-2: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”
      - b) 1 Peter 3:4: "But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."
    - 2) Instead of interfering in the affairs of others, Christians are to concern themselves with the work God has given into their own hands. There is too much each one has to do for him to have time and energy to be a busybody in other men’s matters. "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as a thief*, or *as an evildoer*, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:15-16).
    - 3) “Though he may escape the excitements of social and political life, the Christian is exposed to the more subtle dangers of religious excitement, always a chief hindrance to love of the brethren; for as fever prevents the due discharge of the functions of the body, so does excitement the healthy activities of the spirit” (Lipscomb, p.51).
    - 4) “Fanatics are doomed to frustration and defeat. Striving for religious excitement requires that something new and different be encountered constantly; and this inevitably leads the seeker into error. Busybodies are carriers of gossip, disturbers of the peace, troublemakers and thorns in the body of the believers wherever they appear. Loafers are especially detestable. While doing little or nothing on their own behalf, they require attention, goods and services of others that might be far better employed than in the maintenance of idlers and spongers off others” (Coffman, p.49).
  - b. Paul admonished them to work with their own hands. From the beginning of human experience, God has required his offspring to work. Death, not work, was the curse placed on man for his sin. “Labor was the antidote to the curse, as it would employ him in the ways not hurtful” (Lipscomb, p.52).
    - 1) Before sin entered into Adam and Eve, they were required to dress and keep the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). Three things easily discernible in Eden which are essential to the happiness of man: Law, Labor, and Love.
    - 2) “Idleness is one of the great evils of the heathen world in almost every country, and the parent of no small part of their vices. The effect of religion everywhere is to make men industrious; and every man, who is able, should feel himself under sacred obligation to be employed” (Barnes,

- pp.42f).
- 3) One of the causes of the volume and variety of vice in modern America is the vast amount of free time on the hands of so many. Idle minds and unused hands are handy tools for Satan's mischief.
  - 4) Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."
  - 5) 2 Thessalonians 3:12: "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."
- c. Paul admonished them to walk honestly toward those who are without (non-Christians). "A good reputation of the saved for minding their own business and conducting holy and blameless lives not only made them more acceptable to their pagan compatriots, but also commended the gospel to persons not yet obedient to it" (Coffman, p.50).
- 1) More is involved in *honestly* than "to mere honesty in the transaction of business, but to their general treatment of those who were not professing Christians. They were to conduct themselves towards them in all respects in a becoming manner..." (Barnes, p.42).
  - 2) Ephesians 5:15-16: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
  - 3) Colossians 4:5: "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."
  - 4) 1 Peter 3:1-2: "Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear."
  - 5) 1 Peter 3:7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."
- d. If the brethren will heed the foregoing admonishments, the result will be that they would have lack of nothing. God has never promised us a luxurious life on earth, filled with great wealth, property and opulence; concerning material matters, he has only committed himself to supplying the essentials of life. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33; cf. Ps. 37:25).
- 1) Some of the members at Thessalonica later became fanatical regarding the Lord's second coming. These individuals had quit working, deeming it needless since the end was nigh (according to their inane speculations), thinking the church would tend to their needs in the meantime.
  - 2) Paul corrected their misunderstandings, rebuked their self-imposed idleness, and denounced their willingness to live at the expense of others. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:10-12).
  - 3) In modern America, we have taught an entire generation that idleness will be rewarded at the public expense. A frightening percentage of the current generation has destroyed itself through indolence, condemning many of its offspring to a life of drugs, crime, and immorality.
  - 4) "No man should be dependent on others as the result of idle habits; of extravagance and improvidence; of the neglect of his own business, and of intermeddling with that of others. If by
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age, losses, infirmities, sickness, he is made dependent, he cannot be blamed, and he should not repine at his lot. One of the ways in which a Christian may always do good in society, and honour his religion, is by quiet and patient industry, and by showing that religion prompts to those habits of economy on which the happiness of society so much depends" (Barnes, p.42).

- 5) The American Explorer, Meriwether Lewis, said: "May works be a test of patriotism as they ought, of right, to be of religion" (January 14, 1807, Richard Dillon, *Meriwether Lewis*, Coward-McCann, Inc., New York, 1965, p.264).

#### B. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: Instructions Regarding the Second Coming of Christ.

1. Verse 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."
  - a. The apostle did not want the saints to be unenlightened concerning the subject he is now to introduce. It is possible for us to be unlearned, but in regards to the will of God, if we are ignorant, it is likely to be our own fault. Paul frequently made the statement that he did not want the brethren to be ignorant.
    - 1) Romans 1:13: "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles."
    - 2) Romans 11:25: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."
    - 3) 1 Corinthians 10:1: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea."
    - 4) 1 Corinthians 12:1: "Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."
    - 5) 2 Corinthians 1:8: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life."
  - b. The Bible makes numerous references to death as sleep. Some have taken this as a literal statement, even a few of our brethren, and teach that our soul goes to sleep when the body dies, and will not be awakened until the resurrection. This is not what the Bible teaches.
    - 1) The depiction is a figure of speech. "This beloved metaphor was frequently used by our Lord himself, as in the instances of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:39) and of Lazarus (John 11:11), and was quickly adopted wherever Christianity was known" (Coffman, pp.51f). Our word "cemetery" comes from the Greek word used in the text.
    - 2) The connection between death and sleep is the obvious similarity between a dead body and a sleeping body. The former resembles the latter so much that we connect the two. To speak of death as sleep is a euphemism; it is much kinder to say someone "fell asleep" than to say he died.
    - 3) Acts 7:60: "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." The picture the New Testament paints of death as a sleep, builds in our minds an image of rest and serenity, as opposed to the rage and violence surrounding the death of Stephen.
    - 4) This word-picture has a wonderful, consoling effect on our hearts as we ponder the death of a loved one, or as we contemplate our own passage from this world.

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- 5) Cases in the New Testament:
- a) Luke 16:19-31: The story of Lazarus and the wicked rich man. This is a factual report of the experiences of two real men, who lived and died under the Mosaic Age.
  - b) 2 Corinthians 12:1-4: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The context demands that the individual described is the apostle Paul himself.
- c. Evidently, Timothy had brought a report to Paul regarding the death of some of the brethren at Thessalonica, that the passing of those beloved ones had engendered a melancholy in the hearts of the survivors. They had not yet had the time and opportunity to learn the Bible doctrine of final things [*eschatology*].
- 1) Knowing little or nothing about the resurrection, they would naturally think that their dead loved ones had forfeited the eternal blessings of Christ by not having lived until his coming. Their sorrow would be inconsolable. Ignorance of this truth caused much pain.
  - 2) Paul sought to relieve their sorrow regarding this misconception. With the information he is about to give, there would be no need for them to be filled with sorrow.
- d. Christians are different from those who are in the world. We usually do not have as much worldly success and honor as they do, but our advantages far outweigh what we may lose in this world.
- 1) When a man of this world loses a loved one who is of this world, he is grief-stricken; but there is no hope for him to be reunited with that loved one in heaven. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).
  - 2) People in ancient times expressed their sorrow in excessive degrees. "Their grief at parting was not mitigated by the belief that the soul was now happy, or by the prospect of again being with them in a better world. It was on this account, in part, that the heathens indulged in expressions of such excessive grief. When their friends died, they hired men to play in a mournful manner on a pipe or trumpet, or women to howl and lament in a dismal manner. They beat their breasts; uttered loud shrieks; rent their garments; tore off their hair; cast dust on their heads, or sat down in ashes. It is not improbable that some among the Thessalonians, on the death of their pious friends, kept up these expressions of excessive sorrow. To prevent this, and to mitigate their sorrow, the apostle refers them to the bright hopes which Christianity had revealed, and points them to the future glorious reunion with the departed pious dead" (Barnes, pp.43f).
  - 3) When a Christian loses a loved one who is also a Christian, there is the happy prospect of meeting that loved one again in heaven.
    - a) 2 Samuel 12:23: "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."
    - b) 2 Corinthians 4:14: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you."
    - c) 1 Thessalonians 4:17: "Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with
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them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

2. Verse 14: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”
  - a. The harsh reality of death does not preclude the happy verity of the resurrection! Those saved ones who precede us in death will be present with Christ at his return, and as verse seventeen will declare, we will meet them “in the air” and both we and they will forever be with the Lord and each other. What a blessed hope! "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11).
  - b. Our hope of being raised up at the last day, and united with all the redeemed of all ages, is based on the irrefutable fact that Christ died and was raised to life. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:17-20).
    - 1) Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection form the heart of gospel truth. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
    - 2) Our faith in the truths of the gospel lies at the heart of our obedience (Jas. 2:14-26). Without faith, there can be no obedience (Heb. 11); without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6); without faith in Christ, we cannot be saved (John 8:21-24).
  - c. These departed saints will not have been annihilated in death, but will be present with Christ at his return; God will bring them with Christ.
    - 1) “This does not mean that God will bring them with him *from heaven* when the Saviour comes—though it will be true that their spirits will descend with the Saviour; but it means that he will bring them from their graves, and will conduct them with him to glory, to be with him...” (Barnes, p.45).
    - 2) John 14:3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."
    - 3) Hebrews 2:10: "For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."
  - d. At the second coming of Christ, several things will be accomplished. The dead will be raised, the living will be changed, the earth and universe will be destroyed, all mankind will stand before Christ in the Judgment, the unrighteous will be cast into Gehenna, and the righteous will be ushered into heaven.
    - 1) The definition of “death” is *separation*.
      - a) James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." When the body dies, the spirit returns into God’s hands, and the body reverts back to the elements of the earth.
      - b) Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

- c) Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
- d) 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
- 2) At the return of Christ, the dead are resurrected; the body of each is raised as a spiritual body, and the individual's spirit resides therein. Those still living at the Lord's coming will be instantly changed into the spiritual body. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:51-53).
- e. At death, the spirit enters the "Hadean Realm" (Hades). By definition, hades is the place of the unseen dead, the location where all departed spirits are reserved until the resurrection.
- 1) The spirits of the righteous dead are in Paradise. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).
- 2) The spirits of the unrighteous dead are in Tartarus: "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2:4, ASV). The Greek text is: " ei: G1487 theos:G2316 pheidomai:G5339 . .aggelos:G32 . hamartano:G264 . tartaroo:G5020 . . . tartaroo:G5020 . paradidomi:G3860 . . seira:G4577 . zophos:G2217 . . tereo:G5083 . krisis:G2920." *Tartaroo* (tartarus): "Tartaroo: from Tartaros (the deepest abyss of Hades)..." (Strong's PC Concordance).
- 3) Luke 16:22-23: "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (NKJ).
- 4) Christ will bring forth the departed spirits held in hades, and join them with their immortal bodies in the resurrection.
- f. From the point of view of heaven, God will **bring** the dead saints to heaven (after the resurrection). From the point of view of those alive on earth when the Lord returns, he will have with him the spirits of the dead who then enter their resurrected bodies. The statement does not say that these spirits were in heaven at the time Christ began his return to earth.
- g. We will enter our eternal abode at the Judgment. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me **at that day**: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).
3. Verse 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." "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep" (NKJ). "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep" (ASV).
- a. Some of the Thessalonians mistakenly believed that death obliterated the heavenly reward for those
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Christians who died prior to the Lord's second coming; this statement is designed to show that death does not eradicate the hope of dead saints, that they will partake of eternal glory just as do those who are alive at Christ's return.

- b. The apostle affirms that Christians who are alive on earth at the Lord's return will not *precede* those who have died. The KJV has *prevent*, which had the idea of "preceding" as its meaning when that grand old translation was produced. "The living shall not share the blessings of the advent sooner than the dead in Christ" (Vincent, p.942).
- c. Paul gives the authority for this affirmation in the expression, "by the word of the Lord." Being an apostle of Christ, he was empowered by the Holy Spirit to receive direct revelations from heaven and to communicate that information by inspiration, either in spoken or written form.
  - 1) Acts 18:9: "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace."
  - 2) Galatians 1:11-12: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
  - 3) Ephesians 3:3-7: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power."
  - 4) Acts 26:16: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."
- d. The next two verses will make the affirmation crystal clear by declaring directly that the dead in Christ will be resurrected prior to the instantaneous change of the living; therefore, those who died in the Lord have not forfeited their hope; their hope will be fully realized in the resurrection; the hope of the living saints will be fully realized when they are changed from a physical body into an immortal, spiritual body.
  - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:50-53: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality."
  - 2) Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
  - 3) 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

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4. Verse 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."
    - a. Christ will personally descend from heaven. He ascended from earth to heaven in a cloud; he will return after a similar fashion, and his return will be known by all—instantly!
      - 1) John 14:1-3: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."
      - 2) Acts 1:9-11: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
      - 3) Matthew 24:26-27: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."
      - 4) When the Lord returns, some will be sleeping while others are working in the fields (this indicates that the earth is round); one will be taken and the other left:
        - a) Matthew 24:37-42: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."
        - b) Luke 17:34-36: "I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."
        - c) This separation will occur at the second coming, when the righteous living will be caught up to meet the Lord and righteous dead in the air—to ever be with the Lord.
    - b. A shout will be emitted which will summon all the dead to arise. In this passage, Paul is only dealing with the righteous people; other passages deal with the disposition of the unrighteous. Every dead person will be raised at the same instant; this will be followed by the instantaneous changing of all the living (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:50-53). The shout "does not mean here, that the Lord would himself make such a shout, but that he would be attended with it; that is, with a multitude who would lift up the voice like that of an army rushing to the conflict" (Barnes, p.47).
      - 1) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
      - 2) Acts 24:15: "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."
      - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:50-53: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom
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- of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”
- c. The voice of the archangel would be heard. “The voice of the archangel may be employed to summon the heavenly hosts and marshal the innumerable company of the redeemed...” (Lipscomb, p.59).
- 1) Jude 9: "Yet **Michael the archangel**, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."
  - 2) Christ will be accompanied with a great host of angels when he returns.
    - a) "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31-32).
    - b) "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).
- d. The trumpet of God will be sounded. It is elsewhere called the last trumpet. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52).
- e. The dead in Christ shall be raised first, before the living will be changed; this is the very point of the passage. There is hope for the righteous dead! "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13).
5. Verse 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.”
- a. Those who are still alive on the earth at the Lord’s return will be changed into immortal bodies. This will be done immediately after the dead are raised. All of the dead will be resurrected and all of the living will be changed.
    - 1) Each of the unrighteous, living and dead, will be given an immortal body so as to be able to sustain the punishment God has in store for them; they will suffer in the flames, but cannot be consumed!
    - 2) The righteous, living and dead, will be given an immortal and glorious body, fashioned after the glorious body Christ now occupies; they will enjoy the bliss and glory of heaven, but the unending eons of eternity cannot diminish the vitality of those spiritual bodies!
      - a) Matthew 17:1-5: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
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- b) Luke 9:28-31: "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment *was* white *and* glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."
  - c) 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
- b. The righteous dead will rise to meet Christ in the air; the righteous living will be changed into their eternal bodies and will likewise meet him in the air. There will be a glorious reunion, a reunion that will never be broken, for we shall ever be with the Lord, and with each other! "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11).
- c. There is no passage of scripture, properly understood, which affirms that Christ will ever set foot on the earth again. When he returns, he will utterly destroy the earth and universe.
- 1) Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
  - 2) 2 Peter 3:10-14: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
6. Verse 18: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
- a. There is great comfort in the knowledge that Christ will return, raise the dead, change the living, and take his own into heaven.
  - b. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians to use this information to comfort each other. When the saints lost loved ones to death, there was much comfort in the knowledge that they are in a state of happiness, and have heaven before them. When they faced the horrors of persecution, there was great comfort in the knowledge that a better situation awaited them in eternity.
- 1) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
  - 2) Revelation 21:4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

### C. The Second Coming of Christ.

- 2. The **fact** of the Lord's return is set forth plainly in the Scriptures.
    - a. The Savior himself declared it.
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- 1) Matthew 24:36-44: "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."
  - 2) Matthew 25:31-32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats."
  - 3) John 14:1-3: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."
- b. The inspired apostle Paul affirmed it:
- 1) Colossians 3:4: "When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."
  - 2) 1 Thessalonians 2:19: "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"
  - 3) 1 Thessalonians 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."
  - 4) 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."
  - 5) 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "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."
- c. Peter, another inspired apostle, spoke of the Lord's return: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:10-14).
- d. The apostle John also taught it:
- 1) 1 John 2:28: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."
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- 2) 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."
  - 3) Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."
  - 4) Revelation 22:7: "Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."
  - 5) Revelation 22:12: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."
  - 6) Revelation 22:20: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."
- e. The angels declared it: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).
3. The **manner** of his return is set forth in the Scriptures.
- a. He shall come as he went: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1:7; cf. Acts 1:9-11).
    - 1) It will be visible to all.
    - 2) It will be with clouds.
  - b. His coming will be audible: "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" (1 Thess. 4:16).
    - 1) It will be accompanied with a shout, a term used in the sense of a general shouting commands to his army.
    - 2) It will be accompanied with the voice of the Archangel.
    - 3) The trumpet of God will be heard: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52).
  - c. No one will need to be told that the Lord has returned! (Matt. 24:27; Rev. 1:7). This spoils the theory that his coming would be secretive, known only to a few.
    - 1) Matthew 24:27: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."
    - 2) Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."
  - d. His coming will be suddenly and unexpectedly:
    - 1) Matthew 24:44: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."
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- 2) Matthew 24:50: "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of."
  - 3) Luke 21:34-36: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so* that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."
  - 4) 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."
- e. His coming will be quickly accomplished:
- 1) Revelation 22:7: "Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."
  - 2) Revelation 22:12: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."
  - 3) Revelation 22:20: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."
- f. He shall come in glory:
- 1) Matthew 16:27: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."
  - 2) Matthew 25:31: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."
4. The **time** of Christ's coming is unknown.
- a. No man knows: "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:36-44).
  - b. The angels of heaven do not know. "But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32).
  - c. While Christ was on earth, he did not know, and may not know even now. "But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32-33).
  - d. Only God knows the time (Mark 13:32-33).
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- e. The Old Testament does not give any clue regarding the time of his second coming. Christ knew the Old Testament Scriptures perfectly, and he did not know the time of the coming. Thus the Old Testament does not give that information!
  - f. Christ also knew the New Testament Scriptures perfectly; since he did not know the time of his coming, the New Testament does not provide that information!
5. The **effects** of his coming are set forth in the Scriptures.
- a. The resurrection of the dead will occur. "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" (1 Thess. 4:16).
    - 1) "The dead in Christ shall rise first" does not teach that there will be two separate and distinct resurrections, one for the righteous dead and later one for the disobedient; this passage simply is not considering the wicked.
    - 2) Other passages show that at the Lord's coming the righteous and wicked dead will all be raised at the same time:
      - a) "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).
      - b) "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15).
  - b. The living will all be changed instantly: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:50-53).
    - 1) The context here shows that physical bodies cannot enter heaven (vs. 50); and that these earthly bodies must all be changed into spiritual, incorruptible, and everlasting bodies. Without such bodies the righteous could not enjoy the blessings of heaven and the wicked could not suffer proper punishment for their evil lives.
    - 2) The faithful saints alive on the earth at the coming of Christ will be caught up along with the resurrected saints to meet the Lord in the air: "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: 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" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).
    - 3) In the Bible picture of the second coming, there is no indication that Christ will set foot upon earth again. This fact is disastrous for the premillennial view.
  - c. The end of the universe, the earth, and all physical affairs and things will then occur: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness" (2 Pet. 3:10-11). The present physical order was never intended to remain for all eternity.
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- 1) God implied so in Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth..."
  - 2) Psalms 102:24-28 declared it: "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." Compare: "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail" (Heb. 1:10-12).
  - 3) Matthew 24:35 announced the temporary status of the universe: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."
  - 4) I John 2:17: "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."
- d. The Judgment will be held.
- 1) All people who have ever lived upon earth will be gathered before the judgment throne of Christ:
    - a) Matthew 25:31-32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats."
    - b) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
    - c) Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."
  - 2) The Bible teaches that each individual will know from the instant he dies what his eternal destiny will be (Luke 16:19-31). Both the rich man and Lazarus knew by virtue of their present state immediately after death the kind of eternal destiny they would have.
  - 3) Therefore, the purpose of the Judgment is not to determine guilt or innocence, but to formally pass the sentence, either of eternal reward or of eternal punishment:
    - a) Matthew 25:31-32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats."
    - b) Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
  - 4) The standard by which the proper sentence is determined will be the Word of the Lord (John 12:48; Rev. 20:12). Those who lived during the Patriarchal Age will be judged by the spoken will of God; those who lived under the Law of Moses are to be measured by that Law; those who lived on earth from the cross to the second coming will be judged by the New Testament. Oh, how important the Bible will be to people then! The lost can only lament over their squandered opportunities; but the redeemed can glory in their faithful obedience!
    - a) John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
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- b) Revelation 20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."
- e. The eternal destinies will be formerly assigned. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46).
6. The **attitude** of the saints toward the Lord's coming is set forth in the Scriptures.
- a. We should watch and pray. Christ stated the necessity of watchfulness and showed the importance of prayerfulness.
- 1) Matthew 24:42-43: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."
  - 2) Luke 12:37: "Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Cf. Matthew 15:1-13.
  - 3) Mark 13:33: "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."
  - 4) Luke 21:36: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."
- b. We should always be ready.
- 1) Our Redeemer showed us the importance of this also: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:44-51).
  - 2) We will have no acceptable excuse if we are caught unprepared:
    - a) Matthew 15:10: "And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand."
    - b) Matthew 22:11-14: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few *are* chosen."
    - c) 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober."
- c. We should work diligently.
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- 1) Each is given a talent (s) which he should use faithfully: Matthew 25:14-30.
  - 2) If we fail to use our talents and opportunities, we will be cast forth from his presence as was the wicked and slothful servant of Matthew 25:14ff.
- d. We should be charitable and benevolent.
- 1) As we have opportunity and ability, we ought to feed the hungry, visit the sick and other unfortunates, give water and clothing to those in need: Matthew 25:31ff.
  - 2) To refuse to do this is to lose our souls!
- e. We should be in a state of expectancy.
- 1) Our desire ought to be for the Lord's return:
    - a) "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13).
    - b) "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Pet. 3:12).
    - c) "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).
  - 2) The eternal reward awaits those who "love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).
- f. We should be steadfast in living for Christ.
- 1) The Bible calls on us to be patient (steadfast) in all things.
    - a) 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
    - b) James 5:7-8: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."
  - 2) We ought to put forth every effort to remain faithful in Christ: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 Jn. 2:28).
- g. We should live holy lives.
- 1) Ample reason for so doing is given in 2 Peter 3:11-14: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
  - 2) Without holiness we will not see God in peace:
    - a) Matthew 5:8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
    - b) Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the
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Lord."

- h. We should have achieved full spiritual maturity, which is called "sanctification." "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" (1 Thess. 5:23).
    - 1) Colossians 1:28-29: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."
    - 2) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
    - 3) 1 Peter 2:1-2: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
    - 4) 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen."
  - i. We should find comfort in this hope of his return.
    - 1) His coming will bring us forth from the grave in the resurrection, or if we are still alive on earth at that time, we will be instantly changed into our glorified, eternal bodies.
    - 2) Christ's return will bring eternal blessings for the redeemed, including a grand reunion with our saved and beloved ones who went before.
      - a) 2 Samuel 12:23: "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."
      - b) 2 Corinthians 4:14: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you."
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# SANCTIFICATION

1 Thessalonians 4:1-7

## INTRODUCTION:

### A. Sanctification is a Bible term often obscured by the theories of men.

1. The view is held by many that sanctification comes initially by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous and mysterious conversion process; some theorists allege that later the baptism of the Holy Spirit may be obtained, which puts the recipient beyond the possibility of committing sin of any kind.
2. This is not a scriptural view.
  - a. Peter had received Holy Spirit baptism, and yet he committed sin: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (Gal. 2:11-14).
  - b. The apostle John likewise had obtained this baptism, but wrote that he and all saints are capable of sin: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:6-10).
  - c. No one in this life stands beyond the reach of temptation and disobedience: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

### B. This study will content itself with learning what the Bible teaches on this significant subject.

1. We have no pet views to preach or defend; we are willing to take whatever the Bible teaches on this or any other subject, and abide with the truth.
2. Our sincere aim is always to learn the will of God more perfectly, so that we can serve him more and better.

## DISCUSSION.

### A. First, we need to learn the definition of the word *sanctification*.

1. Our English word derives from two Latin words.
  - a. *Sanctus* ("holy") and *facio* ("to make"). Thus, sanctification describes the process by which one is made holy.
  - b. Webster defines it as "the act of consecrating or of setting apart for a sacred purpose; the act of making holy."
2. The Greek word is *hagiosmos* ('agiasmos). Vine defines it as "separation to God" (Vol. 2, p.317).
  - a. The word is used ten times in the Greek New Testament, being translated *sanctification* five times and

*holiness* five times.

- b. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7, it is used twice, being translated as *sanctification* once (verse 3) and *holiness* once (verse 7). The two English words, which are used interchangeably, are identical in meaning.
3. The Bible itself gives the meaning of *sanctification*. [The same Greek word is used in both instances].
  - a. Exodus 13:1,1,12: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine ....That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD'S."
  - b. Genesis 2:3: "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."
  - c. Exodus 13:2: "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine."
  - d. Exodus 29:37: "Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy."
  - e. Leviticus 27:16: "And if a man shall sanctify unto the LORD some part of a field of his possession, then thy estimation shall be according to the seed thereof: an homer of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver."
  - f. These things, animals, and people were set apart (sanctified) to God's holy purposes and uses.
4. The meaning of sanctification then is plain:
  - a. "To set apart to God to be used by him and for him."
  - b. Once the item or individual was separated, it was not to be used again for common purposes. When the pagans offered a hog on the altar at the temple, the altar was polluted.
  - c. When a person obeys the gospel and is sanctified, he must live a holy life, a life that is consecrated and dedicated to God's service; he cannot return to his old way of life and remain in fellowship with God. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14).

**B. There are two sides of sanctification as used in the New Testament.**

1. It is used in reference to the process by which one is first set apart.
  - a. All who become Christians are set apart at the time they are saved. This sanctifying process is called being "added to the church" (Acts 2:47), "translation into the kingdom" (Col. 1:13), and "entering Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27).
  - b. The gospel of Christ (God's word) is the sanctifying power. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).
    - 1) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
    - 2) Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
    - 3) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the

- righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
- 4) 1 Corinthians 1:2: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"
- c. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). The Corinthians were washed, sanctified, and justified.
- 1) They were washed when they were baptized:
    - a) John 3:5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."
    - b) Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
    - c) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
    - d) Ephesians 5:26: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."
    - e) Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."
    - f) Hebrews 10:22: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."
  - 2) In this washing, they (and we) received the cleansing made possible by the blood of Christ.
    - a) Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
    - b) 1 Peter 1:18-25: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
    - c) Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
  - 3) This same process justifies (causes us to be held as though we were never guilty of sin in God's sight) and sanctifies (sets up apart in Christ to serve and glorify God).
- d. Salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10); sanctification is in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2); baptism puts us into Christ (Gal. 3:27); thus to enter Christ results in salvation, sanctification, and justification, and baptism is the culminating act which places us into this spiritual state with all of its attendant blessings (Eph.
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1:3).

2. It is used in reference to our spiritual development after we obey the gospel.
    - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "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." These Christians had already been sanctified, but Paul's desire for them is that they might be sanctified wholly or fully. His inspired statement spoke of their need to be made sound in every part, with every grace present.
      - 1) James 1:4: "But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."
      - 2) 2 Peter 1:5-7: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."
      - 3) 2 Peter 1:11: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
    - b. 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." *Perfecting holiness* is bringing our spiritual development to completion, to reach spiritual adulthood.
    - c. Romans 6:19-21: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
      - 1) They had given themselves over to be servants of sin in the past to work uncleanness; now Paul calls on them to give themselves over to serve righteous unto sanctification; that is, to go on to greater sanctification.
      - 2) The fruit of sanctification is the blessed state of being free from the practice and guilt of sin, to serve the God of heaven, and to have the hope of eternal life in heaven.
  3. Sanctification (being in a state of holiness) means we are separated from sin.
    - a. We are separated from the guilt of our past sins and set apart to God's holy purposes when we obey the gospel.
    - b. As we increase our store of knowledge, and live better and serve God more fully, we grow in holiness (sanctification), and draw nearer to spiritual perfection. As long as we are in this life, absolute perfection is beyond our reach (cf. Matt. 26:41); we never reach a point here when we can say that there is nothing else to learn and nothing more to do for the Lord, or that we have grown beyond the possibility of violating God's word (1 John 3:4).
    - c. 1 John 1:7-10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
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C. There is other information given regarding the means by which we are sanctified.

1. The claim is made that sanctification is accomplished by some sudden, mysterious, supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart, a procedure called the *second work of grace*.
  - a. Passages which are used in support of the theory offer no support: "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:16). The verse says nothing about the means by which the Holy Spirit accomplishes the action denoted. It simply states a fact. The statement might even have reference to Paul's apostleship, and not to the sanctification of individuals.
    - 1) Paul says he is writing to them so that he can put them in mind of things they need to know and remember. The ASV rendering says: "But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God." Some of the instructions included in the epistle they had already been taught, but there is ever the need for Christians to be reminded of the details of God's word (2 Pet. 1:12; 3:1-2).
    - 2) The apostle wrote with some measure of boldness to accomplish the aims intended. Paul had the authority to write such a letter because of his apostleship. He sometimes speaks of his apostleship as *grace* (Eph. 3:6-11; Rom. 1:5; Gal. 2:1-9). The apostles received authority and power vouchsafed to no other Christian.
      - a) Matthew 19:28: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
      - b) 2 Corinthians 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."
    - 3) The apostle states here that the *grace* granted to him (Rom. 15:15) was the commission and power Christ gave him to be his minister to the Gentiles (Acts 26:15-19). Paul did not limit himself, of course, to preaching only to Gentiles. His practice was, on entering a new city, to meet with the Jews and try to teach them first; afterwards, he sought out the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16-17; Acts 13:14-48). Usually there were proselyted Gentiles who assembled with the Jews; these made excellent prospects for the gospel. Paul's calling took him especially to Gentile lands, and more than any other one person, he was able to reap a great harvest of souls among them. The other apostles gave themselves especially to work among the Jews (cf. Gal. 2:1-8).
    - 4) The remnant of the Gentiles obeyed the gospel; these were acceptable before God. The Gentiles were the offering that was acceptable to God. They were sanctified (set apart) by the Holy Spirit. This statement of fact does not tell how the Holy Spirit sanctified these people who obeyed the gospel. Jesus spoke about people being sanctified by God's word (John 17:17); since the Holy Spirit revealed the word of God, the way the Spirit sanctifies people is by that word, the gospel. The Holy Spirit appoints elders (Acts 20:28), but he does not do so by a supernatural fiat directly from heaven; he does so by men meeting the qualifications set forth in the inspired word, and being selected by the church to serve as elders.
    - 5) We are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), but the Spirit does not personally immerse us; rather, as individuals believe the gospel and obey it by being baptized, they are sanctified thereby; the Spirit's role in the process is one he accomplished by revealing the gospel.
    - 6) When men do not follow sound procedures in interpreting the Bible, they accept all kinds of foolish and hurtful beliefs and practices (2 Tim. 2:15).

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- 7) 2 Thessalonians 2:13: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The apostle states the fact that the Holy Spirit is the author of the sanctification that accompanies salvation, without stating the method by which the sanctification is accomplished. There is no support in the verse for the theory.
  - b. Sanctification is attributed to the word of God.
    - 1) John 17:17, 19: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth....And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."
    - 2) Hebrews 10:10, 29: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all....Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"
  2. Sanctification is accomplished by the Holy Spirit; he uses the inspired word of God to bring this spiritual condition to pass. It is not an action done by the Spirit in a direct, miraculous way; it is not done independent of our will.
    - a. 1 Peter 1:2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."
    - b. The Spirit's work is accomplished through the message he revealed to inspired men, and which he caused to be recorded as the New Testament.
      - 1) 1 Corinthians 2:9-14: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."
      - 2) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."
    - c. The part the individual plays in the great spiritual drama of sanctification is to hear, believe, and obey the Spirit-given message.
      - 1) Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
      - 2) 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
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3. The Godhead is unified in the sanctification process:
  - a. The Holy Spirit sanctifies, using the inspired message of truth.
  - b. Christ redeems through the ransom price of his blood.
  - c. God elects those who meet the condition into the ranks of his spiritual family.
4. The sanctification process includes (1) the initial setting apart when we obey the gospel and (2) the growth we experience as we study, learn, serve, and increase in spiritual strength.

D. Both of these aspects of sanctification are essential to our eternal salvation.

1. It is God's will. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1Thess. 4:3).
    - a. Can God's will be ignored in any matter with impunity?
    - b. We cannot shun either part of God's plan of sanctification; we must obey the gospel in order to be saved from our past sins; and we must walk in the light of the gospel in order to retain salvation.
    - c. Romans 5:8-9: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."
  2. Sanctification prepares us for useful service in Christ's kingdom. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21).
    - a. The one-talent man was unprofitable: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30).
    - b. The ancient Gentiles and some of the Jews were not profitable: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:12).
    - c. We are saved in order to serve, not to be served.
      - 1) 2 Corinthians 5:15: "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."
      - 2) Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."
    - d. We cannot be useful to the Lord unless we are separated from the sinful world, and dedicated to the Lord's business.
  3. Sanctification qualifies us for fellowship with the saints, both here and in eternity.
    - a. Matthew 5:8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
    - b. Ephesians 3:15: "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."
    - c. 1 John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."
  4. Sanctification permits us to enter heaven and see God in peace.
    - a. 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
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- b. Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
- c. Revelation 21:27: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."
- d. 1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

E. Examination of the means by which sanctification is produced.

1. Sanctification is produced by the word of God.
  - a. John 8:31-32: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
  - b. John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
  - c. Hebrews 10:10: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*."
2. We are made free from sin (separated from its guilt) by the truth when we believe and obey the truth (God's word).
3. We cannot expect to be acceptable if we reject any of the requirements of God: "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:30).
4. We cannot expect to be acceptable if we do not continue in to follow the truth.
  - a. Matthew 10:22: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
  - b. Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
5. We are sanctified when we obey the truth and try to live in harmony with the truth.
  - a. 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."
  - b. James 1:23-25: "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
6. Growth in sanctification is produced by worshiping in spirit and in truth: "God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).
  - a. It is a well-established principle that we become like the object of our adoration.
  - b. God has ordained our worship to be offered through studying his word, singing praise, eating the Lord's Supper, praying, and giving.
  - c. Each component of scriptural worship is a powerful influence in developing sanctification. Who are the spiritually weak and poverty-stricken members? Those who do not attend and worship sincerely. Who are the mature, strong Christians? Those who ever attend and worship devoutly.

F. Results of sanctification.

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1. If one is sanctified, he has a deep reverence for sacred things.
    - a. He has profound respect for the Bible, for worship, for the Lord's church, and for the name of the Lord.
    - b. When he speaks of God or to God, he does so with awe and respect. "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD" (Lev. 19:12).
    - c. If one uses the Lord's name loosely, or is critical of his church, is inattentive in worship, or treats the Bible lightly, we can know that he is not a sanctified person; he is either grossly ignorant or indifferent.
    - d. Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
  2. If one is sanctified, he has the earnest desire for the prosperity of the church and for the salvation of the lost world.
    - a. He is willing to sacrifice self-interest for the church's welfare.
    - b. He will go out of his way to avoid being offensive to the saints or to the lost.
    - c. He is willing to do his part to reach the lost, with his talents, his time, his energy, and his money.
    - d. Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
  3. If one is sanctified, he is longsuffering.
    - a. If impatient, peevish, harsh, critical, unfriendly, or ever complaining about others, he has an unholy disposition of mind.
    - b. The heart that is right is the heart that suffers long with others even when others are out of step with the Lord.
    - c. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."
    - d. Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
  4. If one is sanctified, he hates all sin and religious error and loves the truth.
    - a. One who hates sin and error does so because God does: "Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way" ( Psalm 119:128).
    - b. We hate it because it is ruinous to man.
    - c. We love the truth because it leads to everlasting life.
    - d. If a man is tolerant of sin and error, he is not on God's side.
  5. One who is sanctified delights in worshipping and obeying God.
    - a. He does not view it as a heavy burden, but a joyful privilege.
      - 1) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
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- 2) 1 John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
  - b. He counts it a happy fate to be even the lowliest servant. "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10).
  - c. He considers it a privilege and joy to give. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).
  - d. It is a time of happiness for him to be able to sing praise to God, to eat the Lord's Supper, to study God's word, and to pray; and he is happy to be able to serve in any capacity.
6. One who is sanctified is a willing worker in the kingdom of Christ.
    - a. There is no need to threaten or cajole such a one.
    - b. He is willing to learn and do his duty without keeping a record of his accomplishments.
    - c. Mark 14:8: "She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

## CONCLUSION.

### A. Do you measure up to God's high standards?

1. 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
2. Do not get discouraged if you are trying but fall short: keep trying.
3. But if you are not trying, or think little of sanctification or of other spiritual affairs, reflect on these statements of truth:
  - a. Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
  - b. Revelation 21:27: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."
  - c. Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

### B. What we have presented in this study is what the inspired apostles wrote:

1. Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
2. 1 Peter 1:13-16: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."



# 1 THESSALONIANS 5

## A. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11: The Way to Watch for the Lord's Return.

1. Verses 1-2: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."
  - a. The theme of the preceding passage (4:13-18) is continued here. The brethren at Thessalonica had been sufficiently taught the basics of the gospel to know perfectly well that the second coming of Christ would be unforeseen. That is, there would be no signs in nature to portend his return. A thief breaks into a house at a time unknown to the owner. There is no kind of indication in the sky that the thief is on the way. A thief sends no warning; he tries to keep his coming perfectly secret.
  - b. The apostles asked Christ to reveal to them the signs of his coming, when the world would end. His reply shows the danger posed by many who would claim to know when this would be.
    - 1) Matthew 24:3-5: "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."
    - 2) No one can know when that time will be by looking at nature. "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:36-39). Those people who claim that "signs of the times" indicate the nearness of the Lord's coming are wrong! They are deceived and they deceive others.
    - 3) Neither Christ (while he was on earth) nor the angels know when the end will be. "But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32-33). As already shown in these notes, since Christ knew the entire Bible to perfection, and still did not know when the end would be, it follows that the Bible does not reveal that fact!
  - c. The brethren already knew that they could not learn when the Lord would return; there was no need for Paul to belabor this point since it was beyond the possibility of discovering.
    - 1) In view of the fact that we cannot know when the end will be, there is no need for any of God's people to be anxious or discouraged. We have good reason to look toward and long for his return, but in the meantime, if we should die, our reward remains sure.
    - 2) 2 Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."
  - d. We must be prepared for death and his coming. "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Heb. 10:31).
    - 1) Matthew 24:42-46: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is

- that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."
- 2) Revelation 22:11-12: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."
  - 3) 1 Thessalonians 5:6: "Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober."
2. Verse 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."
- a. At a time when the Lord is least expected, he will suddenly appear. At a time when many men will be thinking that all is well with them and their world, the Lord will return. Despite the 120 years of faithful preaching done by Noah, his generation was utterly unprepared for the great flood. There was no manifestations in nature presaging the impending devastation. But they had all been properly warned.
  - b. Similarly, those who teach and preach the gospel throughout our world today, give notice to all men that the Lord is to return to earth, at which time the universe will be thoroughly destroyed; all the dead will be raised, all the living will be changed, and everyone will stand before Christ in the Judgment.
    - 1) Wherever the Bible is known, ample information is presented to mankind to warn them of that great day and to motivate them to be prepared. Although there will be no manifestations in nature identifying the impending devastation, there is more than sufficient, reliable information in the Bible to convince thinking men of the Lord's return.
    - 2) There will be many scoffers and unbelievers in the world to which Christ will return. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:3-7).
    - 3) Luke 18:8: "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"
  - c. Paul uses the illustration of a woman with child; she knows that her time of travail is inevitably coming, but she does not know when. We know the Lord is coming again, but we do not know when that time will be. No one can know the second, the minute, the hour, the day, the week, the month, the season, the year, the decade, the century, or the millennium in which Christ shall return.
  - d. The Lord said that his return will be as the coming of a thief in the night. If anyone can determine when his return will be, then his coming will not be as the coming of a thief in the night! To claim to know when the end will be is to accuse Christ and his apostles of being wrong!
  - e. False teachers seek to convince lost humanity that there is no cause for alarm, that peace and safety will prevail, that their lives and souls are not in danger. "For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD" (Jer. 8:11-12).
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3. Verses 4-5: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."
- a. Faithful Christians live in the light of God's glorious word. Those who are operating in broad day-light are not easily surprised; they can see where they are going, and can perceive and avoid dangers. Those who operate in darkness do not have these advantages.
  - b. Those who operate in the bright light of the glorious gospel will not be taken unawares by the coming of Christ; all their Christian life they had lived and prepared for this great occasion; they not only expect it, they long for it.
    - 1) 2 Corinthians 4:3-6: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
    - 2) 2 Peter 3:10-14: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
  - c. Truth and error, and righteousness and unrighteousness are contrasted in the Bible under the figure of light and darkness, and day and night. There are some who have developed and maintained a hard and indifferent heart, which is impervious to the gospel; there are others who have sought to maintain a soft and pliable heart, which is receptive to the gospel. The individual is fully responsible for the condition of his own heart; no blame can be directed toward the gospel, that it is not strong enough to penetrate hard hearts.
    - 1) Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."
    - 2) Matthew 12:34-35: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."
    - 3) Matthew 13:15: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
    - 4) Romans 2:4-6 "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds."
    - 5) John 3:19-21: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."
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4. Verses 6-8: "Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 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."
- a. There are some who sleep too much; they sleep when they could be active. Too much sleep can destroy the individual's health, deplete his strength, deprive him of opportunities for greater prosperity, and waste his precious life.
  - b. The majority of mankind has, in the spiritual sense, been quite content to sleep through life, instead of waking up to the joy of salvation, the blessings of serving God, the happiness obtained from helping others, and the comfort that comes from having hope of eternal life in heaven.
  - c. Watchfulness and sobriety are enjoined on those who would please God. These qualities and practices are the direct opposites of slumber and drunkenness.
    - 1) Those who sleep and those who are drunken follow these practices during the night, in the dark. Those who are spiritually asleep are likewise in darkness.
    - 2) On the other hand, those who are spiritually alert and sober-minded, are living in the light. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7).
  - d. The Lord requires of his people that they be spiritually alert and watchful. There are many things in which we are to be alert.
    - 1) We must watch out for our great adversary. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Pet. 5:8-9).
    - 2) We are to watch for opportunities to help those who are in need. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:9-10).
    - 3) We are to be watchful for the welfare of precious souls. "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*" (1Thess. 5:14).
    - 4) We are to watch for the Lord's return.
      - a) Matthew 24:44: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."
      - b) Mark 13:33: Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."
  - e. Modern society, steeped as it is in materialism and sinful pleasure, tends to be shallow and frivolous, but Christians are admonished to be sober.
    - 1) Titus 2:2: "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience."
    - 2) Titus 2:4: "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children."
    - 3) Titus 2:6: "Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded."
    - 4) 1 Peter 1:13: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the
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- grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
- 5) 1 Peter 4:7: "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."
- f. We are instructed to put on the breastplate of faith and love. In the figure of Ephesians 6, the apostle depicted faith as the Christian soldier's shield, which is able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. A living, vibrant faith is a powerful defense against the heaviest onslaughts of Satan. But it must be accompanied by love, or else all our sufferings and struggles will have been in vain.
- 1) Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
- 2) John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins."
- 3) 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."
- 4) Colossians 3:14: "And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness."
- 5) Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
- g. Paul further commands that Christians put on the spiritual helmet, which is the hope of salvation. The salvation he names is that deliverance to be obtained in heaven.
- 1) We are saved from our past sins when we obey the gospel (Acts 22:16); as we walk in the light of the gospel (1 John 1:7), the blood of Christ cleanses us of the guilt we incur by our occasional stumbles.
- a) Acts 8:22: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
- b) James 5:16-20: "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
- c) 1 John 1:8-10: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
- 2) Completing our sojourn on earth in faithfulness, we are given the object of our goal: an eternal home in heaven.
- a) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
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- b) 1 Peter 1:3-9: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls."
- c) 2 Peter 1:5-11: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
5. Verse 9: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."
- a. The purpose God had in sending Christ into the world was not to condemn humanity, but to effect their salvation.
- 1) John 3:14-18: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not con-demned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
- 2) 1 John 4:9-10: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins."
- b. The wrath of God is to be visited upon the unbelieving members of the human family, but he punishes only because there is no other choice.
- 1) Ezekiel 18:30-32: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."
- 2) Romans 5:8-9: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."
- 3) Hebrews 10:23-31: "Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:
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Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

- c. It is God's desire that every sinful person should be righteous in the Judgment, but of course he knows that the majority will not choose to live as he requires.
  - 1) Romans 14:9-11: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."
  - 2) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
6. Verse 10: "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."
  - a. The death of Christ on the cross for the remission of sin is sufficient to obtain salvation for every sinful person, provided each individual will gladly meet the conditions he has set. He died for us that we should live for him. But what if we choose to live for ourselves? His sacrifice is meaningless to us! There is no salvation for one who does not obey his will.
    - 1) John 5:40: "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."
    - 2) Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*."
    - 3) Matthew 13:13-15: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
    - 4) John 8:12: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."
    - 5) John 8:44: "Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."
    - 6) Ephesians 4:18: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

- b. It is God's will that we obey the gospel, which includes believing in Christ (John 8:24), repenting of sin (Acts 17:30), confessing our faith (Rom. 10:9-10), and being baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Having begun the Christian life by thus obeying the gospel, we are to live our lives in service to him who died for us.
  - 1) Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."
  - 2) 1 Peter 1:17: "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear."
  - 3) John 14:23: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."
  - 4) 1 John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
7. Verse 11: "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."
  - a. Paul admonished them to comfort (exhort) each other, so as to edify one another, a practice which they were already following.
  - b. Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
  - c. 1 Corinthians 10:23: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."
  - d. Romans 15:2: "Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification."
  - e. 1 Corinthians 14:3: "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort."
  - f. 2 Corinthians 10:8: "For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed."
  - g. 2 Corinthians 13:10: "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

B. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22: Short Sermons.

1. Verses 12-13: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves."
  - a. Paul does not identify specifically who these are that were over them in the Lord. Obviously, he speaks of men in the local congregation who were laboring in behalf of the saints. The only ones in the New Testament, other than the apostles, who were ever set over a congregation are its elders.
    - 1) 1 Timothy 3:4-5: "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)."
    - 2) 1 Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they

- who labour in the word and doctrine."
- 3) Hebrews 13:7: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation."
  - 4) Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
  - 5) 1 Peter 5:1-3: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."
  - 6) Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
- b. The congregation had not been established for very long, and clearly there had not been sufficient time for men to develop through natural means the spiritual qualities, experience, and knowledge that are mandated by the Scriptures as necessary qualifications for elders.
- 1) 1 Timothy 3:1-7: "This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."
  - 2) Titus 1:5-11: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."
- c. During the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas, they established congregations in several cities of Asia Minor. At the end of their outward journey, they re-visited these churches, giving them further instructions, and appointing elders in each. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23).
- 1) In the short period of time between these visits, all the necessary qualifications could not have been acquired naturally, so obviously other means must have been employed in providing them with the qualifications.
  - 2) Among the nine miraculous gifts provided by the Holy Spirit were certain ones which enabled men to fill the office of elder. "For to one is given by the Spirit the **word of wisdom**; to another the
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- word of knowledge** by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another **prophecy**; to another **discerning of spirits**; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:8-10). The emphasized gifts could equip a man for the eldership.
- 3) Another passage that addresses the matter is Romans 12:3-8: "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; or ministry, *let us use it in our* ministering; **he who teaches**, in teaching; **he who exhorts**, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; **he who leads**, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (NKJ). These gifts include those which are commonly acquired and those which were miraculously provided; some of the latter would give a man the ability to serve as an elder even if he had been a Christian only for a short time.
- d. They were to **know** those [elders] who were over them in the Lord. To know the elders is to be well-acquainted with them and the work which they are appointed to do. The elders must also know those people who are in their care. Compare: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).
  - e. The Christians under the care of elders are to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. The work of elders is done in obedience to the Lord and in behalf of the members. Elders watch over the souls of those in their charge: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).
    - 1) The degree of esteem in which elders are to be held by their brethren is declared to be "very highly in love." The same Greek term is used also in Ephesians 3:20 and 1 Thessalonians 3:10.
      - a) Ephesians 3:20: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."
      - b) 1 Thessalonians 3:10: "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?"
    - 2) To show despite toward God-approved elders is to rebel against God himself. "For members to fail or refuse to follow qualified men in their scriptural work and duty is to rebel against God, not the men" (Roy J. Hearn, "The Eldership").
    - 3) 1 Samuel 8:5-7: "And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."
    - 4) "The Bible deals but little in mere sentiment of feeling. It demands action and deeds that flow from kindly feelings and loving hearts, faith made perfect by works. So the esteem must show itself in deeds of kindness and helpfulness in whatsoever they need or will aid them in their work. It involves both moral and material support" (Lipscomb, p.69).
  - f. The elders are to labor among and admonish the flock. *Admonish* is a strong word, including the idea

of warning. "Admonition is a somewhat severe word; it means to speak to one about his conduct, reminding him of what he seems to have forgotten, and of what is rightly expected of him" (Lipscomb, p.69). "The difference between 'admonish' and 'teach' seems to be that, whereas the former has mainly in view the things that are wrong and call for warning, the latter has to do chiefly with the impartation of positive truth..." (Vine, Vol. 1, p.31). The word is also used in the following verses:

- 1) Romans 15:14: "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to **admonish** one another."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 4:14: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I **warn** you."
  - 3) Colossians 1:28: "Whom we preach, **warning** every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."
  - 4) Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and **admonishing** one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
  - 5) 1 Thessalonians 5:14: "Now we exhort you, brethren, **warn** them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*."
  - 6) 2 Thessalonians 3:15: "Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but **admonish** *him* as a brother."
- g. Paul further instructed them to be at peace among themselves. Disunity among Christians in a local congregation does for it what broken strands do to a rope: weakens and destroys it. The Scriptures demand peace and unity.
- 1) Psalms 133: "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore."
  - 2) Mark 9:50: "Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."
  - 3) Romans 12:18: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
  - 4) 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
  - 5) 2 Corinthians 13:11: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."
2. Verse 14: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*." "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (NKJ). "And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all" (ASV).
- a. **We exhort you.** The previous passage called on the saints to esteem their elders highly in love; here the apostle continues his admonishing words to the saints, calling on them to adhere to the four truths which follow in this verse.
- 1) It is the obligation of elders to do the things prescribed here, but it is not limited to them. Paul's use of the word *brethren* shows that the items named are also the obligation of each Christian.
  - 2) There are very few things which are required of elders which are not also part of each saint's duty.

In the case of these matters, each Christian has the obligation to warn the unruly, comfort the fainthearted, support the weak, and be patient toward all—in keeping with his opportunities and abilities.

- b. **Warn them that are unruly.** “This the same word [”warn”] which in ver. 12 is rendered *admonish*. It is the duty of every church member...affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this subject” (Barnes, p.57).
- 1) To be unruly is to be disorderly [see margin]. The Greek term (from *ataktos*) “signifies not keeping order (*a*, negative, *tasso*, to put in order, arrange); it was especially a military term, denoting not keeping rank, insubordinate...” (Vine, Vol. 1, p.320).
  - 2) A disorderly Christian is an unfaithful child of God. He has not yet apostatized, but is in danger of doing so; the reason for the warning is to prevent his falling away.
    - a) 1 John 5:16-17: "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."
    - b) Acts 8:22: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
    - c) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
    - d) 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
    - e) 2 Thessalonians 3:6: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” The word translated “unruly” in our text also appears in this passage, being translated “disorderly.”
- c. **Comfort the feebleminded.** This word is better rendered “fainthearted.” “This refers to those who are easily disheartened and discouraged. They lack the energy and boldness in which the disorderly abound. They require constraint as the others require restraint. Sensitiveness to criticism, dread of persecution, a sense of failure to follow the will of the Lord, apprehensiveness concerning the future are among the causes that produce faintness of heart” (Lipscomb, p.70).
- d. **Support the weak.** The Bible cautions us all against overconfidence, and counsels us to obtain as much strength as possible.
- 1) Matthew 26:41: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

- 3) "Those without spiritual strength, the weak in faith, and conscience who do not go forward. It is very conceivable that in so young a church there were yet people, who, like children, easily stumbled. We must hold on to them, not expect or leave them to stand alone" (Lipscomb, p.70).
  - 4) Romans 15:1: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."
  - 5) The church is comprised of many individuals, but each has a genuine concern for all the others. "That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12:25-27).
- e. **Be patient toward all.** To be patient is to be longsuffering. "Long-suffering is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate nor promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy and used of God....Christians must learn to be patient, forbearing, persevering, not easily discouraged in helping all men in their weakness and trials" (Lipscomb, p.70).
- 1) Exodus 34:6: "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."
  - 2) 1 Peter 3:20: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."
  - 3) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
3. Verse 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*." "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all" (NKJ).
- a. The common response of the average man is to respond to others in the same way they act toward us. If someone insults us, the tendency is to return an insult; if one attacks us, we want to launch an assault in response. But Christ did not react in this fashion, and he does not permit his followers to do so.
- 1) 1 Peter 2:21-23: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously."
  - 2) Romans 12:17-20: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."
  - 3) Matthew 5:38-48: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that
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asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

- 4) Matthew 27:39-44: "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth."
  - b. "The same spirit of love, forbearance, kindness, returning good for evil, that shone so brightly in the Son of God, must exist in the life and bearing of Christians toward one another" (Lipscomb, p.71).
  - c. There is a special relationship that exists between members of the Lord's family. The love we have for each other is strong, genuine, and lasting. We have no desire to hurt a fellow-Christian, but to do what we can for his good. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10).
  - d. We are to cultivate and practice a similar attitude toward those who are not Christians. We have no right to mistreat them because they are unbelievers. We must seek to do good, not only to our own brethren, but we are to treat everyone else as we would want to be treated by them (Matt. 7:12).
4. Verse 16: "Rejoice evermore."
- a. This is a prominent theme in the book of Philippians. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). It figures prominently in other places in the Bible.
  - b. There is reason for a joyful heart when we obey the gospel. We have received full pardon for our past offenses against God, we are added to the Lord's body, we have fellowship with the best people on earth, God's providence provides for our necessities, and we live in happy anticipation of entering heaven. No wonder men and women rejoiced in the first century when they obeyed the gospel.
    - 1) Acts 8:39: "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."
    - 2) Acts 16:34: "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."
  - c. Salvation from the guilt, the practice, and the penalty of sin is certain to implant joy within the heart of a genuine believer. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12).
  - d. Christians also rejoice over suffering for the Lord.
    - 1) Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
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- 2) Acts 5:41-42: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."
  - e. We rejoice because of the abundant blessings we presently enjoy.
    - 1) John 10:10: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly."
    - 2) Psalms 23:5-6: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."
  - f. We rejoice in the anticipation of heaven.
    - 1) Romans 5:1-2: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
    - 2) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
  5. Verse 17: "Pray without ceasing."
    - a. Obviously, we will not be able to pray every minute of every hour of every day; this manifestly is not the apostle's point. He is simply telling us to be regular in praying.
    - b. Christ wants us to pray, and he is always ready to listen. "And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).
    - c. Praying brings glory to God and works to our benefit. In our prayers, we reverently address our minds to the Father; and he is ready to respond in harmony with his perfect will.
    - d. Prayer is essential in properly using the sword of the Spirit. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:17-18).
    - e. Prayer is the Christian's way of obtaining God's providential help.
      - 1) James 1:5-8: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways."
      - 2) James 5:16-20: "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
      - 3) 1 John 3:22: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."
  6. Verse 18: "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
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- a. Gratitude is another of the essential attributes which children of God must possess and exercise. Some people cultivate a spirit of thanksgiving from childhood, and only need to enhance it after becoming a Christian. Others have to work diligently to develop and use this spiritual trait.
  - b. Philippians 4:6: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
  - c. It is God's will that we be grateful and express our gratitude to him and to others. Can a Christian reject this requirement and be pleasing to God?
7. Verse 19: "Quench not the Spirit."
- a. Some resist the Holy Spirit. "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye" (Acts 7:51).
    - 1) These unbelieving Jews resisted the Holy Spirit by rejecting the word which the Spirit spoke by the mouth of Stephen. Compare: "The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2).
    - 2) The people of Noah's generation who rejected the message Noah preached to them (2 Pet. 2:5) resisted the Holy Spirit.
      - a) God declared to them: "...My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3).
      - b) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Pet. 3:18-20).
  - b. Some grieve the Holy Spirit.
    - 1) Ephesians 4:30: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."
    - 2) One who refuses or neglects to obey the Spirit-revealed gospel of Christ brings grief to the Holy Spirit. All of the members of the Godhead think and feel alike; what pleases one, pleases the other two; what grieves one, grieves the other two.
    - 3) Deuteronomy 5:29: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"
    - 4) Ezekiel 18:32: "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."
    - 5) 1 Timothy 2:4: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
    - 6) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
  - c. To quench the Holy Spirit is to finally reject and refuse the tender pleadings he offers through the inspired, written gospel. The individual reaches a stage of hardness in his mind and heart when the truth has no effect.
    - 1) Matthew 12:31-32: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven

unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come."

- 2) Acts 7:51-53: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*."
  - 3) Acts 13:44-46: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
  - 4) Romans 2:4-6: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds."
  - 5) Ephesians 4:18: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."
- d. Christians can quench the Spirit, or else Paul's warning in the text is empty.
- 1) Hebrews 6:4-6: "For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame" (NKJ).
  - 2) Hebrews 10:23-31: "Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
8. Verse 20: "Despise not prophesyings."
- a. Prophesying was a miraculous gift which enabled the individual to receive and present inspired messages. The subject of the material might have reference to the past or future, or deal with present issues. Prophets were spokesmen for God. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1).
    - 1) The message of prophets was God's inspired word: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the
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- scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20-21).
- 2) The first preachers were prophets, for there was no written New Testament. The brethren are directed not to despise prophesying; they were to accept what the inspired prophets taught them.
- b. Some of the Corinthians had the mistaken idea that speaking in tongues was a greater gift than the gift of prophecy. They thought this because the use of tongues was more spectacular than the simple presentation of God's word.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 14:1-3: "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort."
  - 2) The gift of prophecy was second in importance to apostleship. "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3:4-5).
  - 3) It is common for man to think more highly of activities that are sensational than those of a more humble nature. This is one reason that the religious groups which offer spectacular shows, plays, and entertainment, coupled with sensational themes, are presently swelling in number. The same people would be bored to death by a simple presentation of the gospel.
- c. The statement of the verse was directed toward members of the Lord's church. There was a danger that these brethren might turn an indifferent ear toward the presentation of gospel truth, even when it was delivered by an inspired prophet.
- 1) We have no living prophets on earth today, so the exact same situation no longer exists, but we have the written New Testament, in its final and complete form; in this sense, we have a great advantage over the saints of the first century.
  - 2) But we can develop an indifferent disposition toward the written word of God, or to an accurate presentation of it. In the past, members of the Lord's church in this country were widely known for their great interest in the Bible. They studied it daily, taught it to their friends, and demanded that it be preached in their pulpits. They loved the truth, lived by it, and would die for it.
  - 3) But today a sinful situation has developed, in which a great percentage of the members of liberal congregations will refuse to hear the pure gospel; they want something that is entertaining; they do not want to hear sermons on Acts 2, the plan of salvation, scriptural worship, and a host of other biblical subjects. Gospel meetings are no longer held by these churches. Instead, they show films, some produced by sectarian errorists, on how to get along in the family, with much of the information being a product of human wisdom only.
- d. A member of the church today is guilty of despising prophesying if he refuses to accept a simple presentation of the gospel.
- 1) Some will write out their shopping list, pass notes, sleep, sneer, glare, play with a nearby child, or do any number of other things, instead of listening and learning the truth that is being delivered.
  - 2) To ignore the preaching of the gospel during the worship hour is to refuse to worship God, a sin which the God of heaven cannot and will not ignore.
  - 3) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that
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- despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
- 4) 2 Corinthians 2:15-17: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."
  - 5) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
- e. If we teach God's message today, although we are not inspired, we are still presenting God's word. If men reject us, they are rejecting God.
- 1) "And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:5-7).
  - 2) "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).
9. Verse 21: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
- a. Each Christian is given this obligation. No one can obey the gospel for you except you; no one can commit a sin for you except you; no one can prepare you for the Judgment and eternity except you. If you die lost, you can blame no one but yourself. The same is true with every responsible person.
  - b. Your soul depends on your personal obedience to the truth. If someone deceives you into believing and practicing an error which condemns your soul, you can blame no one but yourself. God has made his word available to us all, so if we take no interest in it, we take no interest in our own soul. If we are content to believe and follow a message, taking another's word for its accuracy, it is our soul that must pay the penalty if it is not the truth that we have accepted.
  - c. In view of these facts, Paul admonishes each one to prove all things, and hold on to that which is good. If it were not possible to prove a matter, his words here are without meaning. If there is no absolute standard of truth, what he said here is utterly empty. There is an absolute standard of truth in the moral and spiritual realms.
    - 1) John 8:30-32: "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
    - 2) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
    - 3) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
    - 4) 2 John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
    - 5) Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them."
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- 6) Revelation 2:2: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."
  - 7) John 6:69: "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."
  - 8) Acts 2:36: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
  - 9) 1 John 2:3-4: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." [The Book of 1 John has several other references to things we can *know*].
- d. Every tenet or practice which is offered to us for acceptance is to be tested by the inerrant standard of God's word. If it does not pass the test, we must reject that religious belief or practice. Before any such matter can be accepted as right, it must have the authority of the Bible behind it. Those that are authorized by the Bible, are to be held on to at all costs. A belief or practice is good only if it is true, and it is true only if it has God's approval (i.e., is taught in the Bible).
- e. We must be aware of the fact that, despite their claims to the contrary, there are many false teachers in operation today. The only way they can be identified is by comparing their fruit (their teachings) with the infallible word of God.
- 1) Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
  - 2) 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
  - 3) 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."
  - 4) Philippians 3:17-19: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)"
  - 5) Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
  - 6) Colossians 2:18: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind."
  - 7) 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
10. Verse 22: "Abstain from all appearance of evil." "Abstain from every form of evil" (NKJ). "Abstain from every form of evil" (ASV).
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- a. While we are to hold fast to those things which are good (true), we are to abstain from every belief and practice that is either unauthorized or prohibited by the Bible. Every form or kind of evil must be shunned if we seek the good pleasure of God.
- b. "They were not only to abstain from doing evil, but from the 'form of evil'—the *likeness* of evil" (Lipscomb, p.74). The things that have the appearance of evil are to be shunned, because of the possible evil they may do to us, and because of our influence on others.
  - 1) Matthew 5:13-16: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
  - 2) Romans 14:21: "*It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."
  - 3) 1 Corinthians 5:6: "Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

C. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28: Closings Exhortations.

1. Verse 23: "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."
  - a. Paul here expresses his desire that the brethren be completely sanctified by the God of peace. This is not some miraculous change which God brings upon us, but the gradual growth we undergo as we study, learn, and improve in the Christian life. It is the apostle's heart-felt wish that the saints should reach this level of spiritual maturity, and enter into their heavenly reward at the end.
  - b. It was his desire also that their whole spirit, soul, and body should be preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ. A distinction is made here between the spirit and the soul. Man is a triune being, possessing a physical body, physical life, and a spirit.
  - c. In the usual case, the words *spirit* and *soul* are used interchangeably in the Scriptures.
    - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The part of man which will be saved in eternity is called "the spirit."
    - 2) Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
    - 3) Ezekiel 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." The part of man which is subject to eternal punishment is here called "the soul."
    - 4) Genesis 35:18: "And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin."
    - 5) James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
    - 6) 1 Kings 17:21: "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again."
    - 7) Zechariah 12:1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth

forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and **formeth the spirit of man within him.**"

- 8) Daniel 7:15: "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me."
  - d. The word *soul* is also used in the Scriptures in reference to individuals (persons). "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Pet. 3:20).
  - e. The word *soul* is used in the Scriptures in reference to animal life which we possess in common with beasts. In this sense, animals have souls [life].
    - 1) Psalms 74:19: "O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude *of the wicked*: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever."
    - 2) Psalms 72:13: "He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy." The needy are those in need of physical necessities; the provisions given was food to sustain their lives.
    - 3) Genesis 2:7: "And the LORD God formed man *of the dust of the ground*, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."
  - f. The text speaks of the spirit, the soul, and the body of each of the saints; the spirit is the eternal part of the person; the soul in this usage is a reference to the life of the person; and the body referred to is the physical body in which the spirit dwells. Paul expresses his desire that the spirit, soul, and body of each of the saints might be preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ.
    - 1) "He prays that they may be found free of blame at the coming of the Lord, when the saints and their works 'shall be made manifest' (1 Cor. 3:13) before the judgment seat of Christ. Thus they were to be without blame not merely in conduct before men, but in the heart before the Lord himself" (Lipscomb, p.76).
    - 2) "The apostle does not intimate here that either the body or the vital principle will be admitted to heaven, or will be found in a future state of being, whatever may be the truth on that subject. The prayer is, that they might be entirely holy, and be kept from transgression, until the Lord Jesus should come; that is, until he should come either to remove them by death, or to wind up the affairs of this lower world" (Barnes, p.63).
2. Verse 24: "Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*."
- a. Paul affirms the faithfulness of God in this statement. That God is loyal to his promises and will stand behind his faithful children will be admitted by those who know and believe the Scriptures.
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 1:9: "God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."
    - 2) 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*."
    - 3) 2 Thessalonians 3:3: "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from evil."
    - 4) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
  - b. God calls individuals to come out of the world of sin into Christ, where they may grow into faithful servants. That call is issued by the gospel.
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- 1) 2 Corinthians 6:17-18: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
  - 2) 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
3. Verse 25: "Brethren, pray for us."
- a. Those brethren were not long in the faith, and many of them were still rather ignorant of certain great Biblical principles, yet the apostle asked them to pray in his behalf. Any person's prayers carry much influence with the Father, provided the individual is faithful.
    - 1) James 5:16: "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**"
    - 2) Ephesians 6:19: "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel."
    - 3) Colossians 4:3: "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."
    - 4) Hebrews 13:18: "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."
    - 5) 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith."
  - b. It may be the case that you would not be alive and well upon the earth today were it not for the frequent and fervent prayers of your faithful brethren and kinsmen.
4. Verse 26: "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."
- a. Kiss: "Most often used of the touching of the lips to another person's lips, cheeks, shoulders, hands, or feet as a gesture of friendship, acceptance, respect, and reverence. The location of the kiss carried different meanings as Jesus made clear in the episode of the woman kissing his feet (Luke 7:36-50)... Kiss translates two Hebrew words and three Greek words; the basic Hebrew term is found 32 times, and the basic Greek term is found seven times. In the Old Testament close relatives kissed at greeting and departing with the connotation of acceptance most often in the foreground (Gen. 27:26-27; 29:11; 50:1; Ex. 18:7; 1 Sam. 10:1; Ruth 1:9). The term was further used of the gesture of reverence to idols (1 Kings 19:18; Hos. 13:2) as well as to the Lord (Ps. 2:12). A kiss of betrayal is also found (2 Sam. 20:9). The term 'kiss' in the New Testament is used of Judas (Mark 14:44-45), of the father to the prodigal as a sign of acceptance and reconciliation (Luke 15:20), of the Ephesian elders to Paul as a sign of gratitude (Acts 20:37), of the woman who kissed the feet of Jesus (Luke 7:38), and of the 'holy kiss' (1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; Rom. 16:16). The holy kiss was widely practiced among the early Christians as a manner of greeting, a sign of acceptance, and an impartation of blessing. This custom could well have been used to express the unity of the Christian fellowship. The substitute kiss involved kissing the hand and waving it in the direction of the object to be kissed (Job 31:27). The kiss of betrayal from Judas does not belong to the category of the kiss of Joab to Amasa (2 Sam. 20:9), but was the sign of respect from pupil to master. Either the action of Judas did not
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accord with his inner feeling, or his action had other motivation than betrayal. The kiss still survives in the Near Eastern culture as a sign of love, respect, and reverence” (G. Al Wright, *Holman Bible Dictionary*).

- b. Paul concludes this closing passage of the letter by calling on the brethren to greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. This has been interpreted by some to mean that the proper greeting for Christians is a kiss. Kissing was an ancient means of greeting or parting.
    - 1) Jesus reminded a certain Simon that he had not greeted the Lord with a kiss when he entered his house (Luke 7:45); Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss (Matt. 26:49).
    - 2) Joab slew Amasa by deceiving him by feigning a kiss. "And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri" (2 Sam. 20:9-10).
  - c. The New Testament speaks of more than one method of greeting. An embrace without any mention of a kiss is found in Acts 20:1; giving the right hand of fellowship is mentioned in Galatians 2:9. Since the Bible cites several ways of greeting, we may know that it did not bind the kiss as the exclusive method.
  - d. What is bound by Paul in this passage is the holy kiss. Since a greeting might be by the exchange of kisses, the apostle says the kiss must be holy. There is such a thing as an unholy kiss; such is not to be practiced by Christians. Some might want only to kiss the opposite sex; that would show the real intent.
  - e. Kissing was a common greeting in ancient days, and still is in some societies. But in our nation, handshakes are used. Paul was not binding the kiss as the only proper greeting, but was regulating the kind of kiss that was to be given, if any was given: the kiss was to be holy (not unholy).
    - 1) If the statement here is bound as a law, then both men and women are duty-bound to greet each other with a kiss. We would have no right to use another procedure. In our society, we are facing a tremendous problem with immorality; requiring a kiss as the greeting would make that problem even greater, humanity being what it is. With the homosexual problem being what it is today, kissing might be misunderstood or used to initiate some evil transaction.
    - 2) However, kissing was the common custom in Paul's day. Rather than forbidding the saints the right to practice this usual greeting, the apostle placed a restriction on it: "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."
5. Verse 27: "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."
- a. The letter was intended to be read unto all the brethren. Paul made this a specific charge. "Why it was necessary to make this request is a little strange. Perhaps then as now, some were not highly esteemed and were neglected, and he wished all, the least as well as the greatest, to have the benefit of his teaching" (Lipscomb, p.77).
  - b. This charge implies that the letter could be understood, or else he would not have directed that it be read unto all. The very thing which Paul required, the religious hierarchy of Catholic Rome has forbidden! In fact, their view is that only certain ones, who have been indoctrinated in Romanist dogma, are allowed to teach the Bible.
  - c. "There is no secret code in Christianity, no mystery for the initiated few. All God's spiritual gifts are intended for all God's children. Paul had a message from God to deliver (4:15) to all the saints, and
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each individual believer was, personally and directly, responsible to God for his own hearing and understanding of that message, and for his own obedience to it. There were distracting influences among the saints (2 Thess. 2:3). Some lightly accepted untested teachings, some set prophecy altogether at nought (5:19-22); some [were] impatient with the disorderly (5:14); some may have been so overwhelmed with sorrow as to forsake the assembling of the saints (4:13-18). To help such the Epistle had been written, but only those who had heard it read could profit by it. Thus garbled reports of its contents might be circulated, and the authority of the apostle claimed for teachings and practices he had not sanctioned. And if Timothy had reported that some were already misusing his name, and pretending to have his authority for their statements, as was certainly the case afterwards (2 Thess. 2:2), the public reading of what he had written would be the best cure for the mischief, and the best preventive of its recurrence" (Lipscomb, p.77).

- d. Notice that Paul described the brethren as *holy*. They were holy because they had been sanctified (set apart) when they obeyed the gospel, and had continued in the gospel.
6. Verse 28: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen."
- a. "This contains all spiritual good that one Christian can wish another. Such grace is with us, when it constantly attends us, when it forms the atmosphere we breathe, the light by which we see, the guiding and sustaining influence of our whole lives" (Lipscomb, p.78).
  - b. The grace of the Savior includes all the blessings which God bestows upon his people today. These are available to all, but obtained only in Christ.
    - 1) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."
    - 2) Romans 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."
    - 3) Ephesians 2:11-13: "Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
    - 4) Galatians 3:26-27: "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (ASV).
    - 5) John 15:9-10: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."
    - 6) Jude 21: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

## INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS

### A. The Church at Thessalonica.

#### 1. The city of Thessalonica.

- a. “The name of modern Thessaloniki, given to the city about 315 B.C. by Cassander, a general of Alexander the Great. He founded the city in that year, naming it after his wife who was the daughter of Philip II and half sister of Alexander. Located on the Thermaic Gulf (Gulf of Salonika) with an excellent harbor—and at the termination of a major trade route from the Danube—it became, with Corinth, one of the two most important commercial centers in Greece. In the Roman period, it retained its Greek cultural orientation and functioned as the capital of Macedonia after 146 B.C. When the apostle Paul visited the city, it was larger than Philippi which reflected a predominantly Roman culture. Thessalonica was a free city, having no Roman garrison within its walls and maintaining the privilege of minting its own coins. Like Corinth, it had a cosmopolitan population due to the commercial prowess of the city. The recent discovery of a marble inscription, written partly in Greek and partly in a Samaritan form of Hebrew and Aramaic, testifies to the presence of Samaritans in Thessalonica. The Book of Acts testifies to the presence of a Jewish synagogue there (17:1). Since most of the ancient city still lies under modern Thessaloniki, it has been impossible to excavate it. However, in the center of town a large open area has been excavated revealing a Roman forum (marketplace), about 70 by 110 yards, which dates to about A.D. 100 to 300. An inscription found in the general area, dating to 60 B.C., mentions an agora (Greek for the Roman 'forum') and opens the possibility that a Hellenistic marketplace was located here just prior to the construction of this Roman one. In Hellenistic times there were a stadium, a gymnasium, and a temple of Serapis in the city. A third-century odeum (small theater) is preserved on the east side of the forum. The authenticity of Acts has been questioned due to Luke's mention of Roman officials in Thessalonica by the name of politarchs (Acts 17:6), who are otherwise unknown in extant Greek literature. However, a Roman arch at the western end of ancient Vardar Street contained an inscription from before A.D. 100 which began, ‘In the time of the Politarchs.’ Several other inscriptions from Thessalonica, one of them dating from the reign of Augustus Caesar, mention politarchs” (John McRay, *Holman*).
  - b. The first name of this city was Therma, named after certain hot springs located there. "Cassander the son of Antipater rebuilt and enlarged it, and named it after his wife Thessalonica, the sister of Alexander the Great" (*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. IV, p.3230). The city was on the great Roman Road, called *Via Egnatia*, which connected Rome with the whole region to the north of the Aegean Sea. Because of the road and the importance of the city itself, it was an invaluable center for the spread of the gospel (cf. 1 Thess. 1:8). The name of the city has been shortened over the years, and is now known as Salonica. “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” (1 Thess. 1:8).
  - c. Thessalonica became very wealthy and populous. “In the war between Perseus and the Romans it appears as the headquarters of the Macedonian navy (Livy xlv. 10) and when, after the battle of Pydna (168 BC), the Romans divided the conquered territory into four districts, it became the capital of the second of these (Livy xlv.29), while later, after the organization of the single Roman province of Macedonia in 146 BC, it was the seat of the governor and thus practically the capital of the whole province. In 58 BC Cicero spent the greater part of his exile there, at the house of the quaestor Plancius (Pro Plancio 41, 99; Epistle Ad Att, iii.8-21). In the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Thessalonica took the senatorial side and formed one of Pompey's chief bases (49 BC—48 BC), but in the final struggle of the republic, six years later, it proved loyal to Antony and Octavian, and was
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rewarded by receiving the status and privileges of a 'free city' (Pliny, NH, iv.36). Strabo, writing in the reign of Augustus, speaks of it as the most populous town in Macedonia and the metropolis of the province (vii.323, 330), and about the same time the poet Antipater, himself a native of Thessalonica, refers to the city as 'mother of all Macedon' (Jacobs, Anthol. Graec., II, p. 98, no. 14); in the 2nd century of our era Lucian mentions it as the greatest city of Macedonia (Asinus, 46). It was important, not only as a harbor with a large import and export trade, but also as the principal station on the great Via Egnatia, the highway from the Adriatic to the Hellespont" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].

- d. The city's importance is traceable to its good harbor, and also because of its being a principal station on the Egnation Way. "Another allusion (1:8) reminds us that not only must such a city have had special attraction for Paul as likely to give a favorable hearing to the gospel message, but that its commercial and seafaring population would rapidly spread what they themselves might receive. Every ship that left the harbor, and every wagon that turned inland, carried some account of the riot at Thessalonica and the extraordinary man who had been the occasion of it" (Lipscomb, p.9).
2. The church at Thessalonica was founded by Paul on his second missionary tour.
    - a. The account of Paul's planting the church there is recorded in Acts 17:1-10. He traveled from Philippi, through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and came to Thessalonica. When he arrived, he entered the synagogue of the Jews and reasoned with them from the Scriptures on three successive Sabbath days. From Philippians 4:15,16, it may be seen that Paul spent more than three weeks in Thessalonica for he commends the brethren at Philippi for their having sent support to him time and again..
    - b. Acts 17:2: "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." Paul's usual plan when entering a city, was to go to a synagogue of the Jews, if one was present, and begin his work among them. In these gatherings he would find at least some who were open to the gospel, and often Gentile proselytes would be present who were a fertile field for the truth. Compare: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17). Going to the synagogues was a very logical means of gaining an audience for the gospel.
      - 1) Luke's inspired description of Paul's work in those gatherings is significant: he "reasoned with them out of the scriptures." The apostle presented evidence from the Old Testament Scriptures to convince the audience that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. He appealed to their intellect. Jesus was broadly rejected by the Jews for two fundamental reasons: (1) he did not measure up to their expectations as to his hometown, his demeanor, his message, and his appearance; and (2) his execution on the cross was repulsive to them because of the shame inherent in that type of death:
        - a) Deuteronomy 21:23: "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance."
        - b) Galatians 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree."
      - 2) Therefore, the Jews failed to see Jesus as the Messiah. Their failure was based on their own misconceptions, not on the actual predictions made of him in the Old Testament. They believed the Scriptures, so Paul directed to their minds what the Scriptures said about the Messiah.
    - c. Acts 17:3: "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." He opened (from *dianoigo*: "to open up

completely," Vine, Vol. 3, p.141). It is used in this verse of "opening the minds" of his auditors by presenting scriptural evidence.

- 1) The word "allege" does not carry the same meaning as our modern word. Paul did not "assert without proof" that Jesus was the Christ. The word is from the Greek term *paratithemenos* ("setting forth by argument and proof," Vine, Vol. 1, p.47). Paul set forth from the Scriptures the proof that Jesus is the Christ. The Scriptures contain **proof** of things; there is such a thing as fulfilled prophecy; we can **know** certain things; *the Bible is absolute truth*.
  - 2) Paul proved that it was in God's plan that the Messiah should suffer (and die), and be raised from the dead; he also proved that Jesus is the Messiah.
  - 3) Our teaching and preaching must follow the same pattern today: we must present the written word of God, and set forth the truth to others by sound argument and proof, thus reasoning with them from the Bible in order open their minds to see the truth (Isa. 1:18; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Tim. 4:1-16; Acts 2:14-40).
- d. Acts 17:4: "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." Although we prove the truthfulness of a proposition, that does not mean that we have proved it to someone.
- 1) Paul plainly proved the proposition of his lesson, but the reaction was mixed: it was accepted by some but rejected by others (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 2:16; 4:1-7). Those which believed Paul, consorted with him: they "joined themselves to" him, or they "threw in their lot with" the apostle.
  - 2) A great multitude of the devout Greeks and a goodly number of the chief women were persuaded of the truthfulness of Paul's inspired message. The term translated as *believed* in the KJV and *persuaded* in the ASV, carries the idea of "obedience." The term is used in the following passages:
    - a) John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
    - b) Romans 2:8: "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."
    - c) Hebrews 3:18: "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?"
    - d) 1 Peter 2:7: "Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."
  - 3) Paul later addressed these saints as having formerly been idol worshipers: "For they themselves show 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" (1 Thess. 1:9).
- e. Acts 17:5: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." The Jews who rejected the gospel were unwilling to allow the Christians to continue without opposition.
- 1) There are many today, as there were then, who will not obey the truth themselves, and will try to undermine all efforts to advance it. Christ reproved the scribes and Pharisees because they "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:23). The lawyers (those trained in teaching the Law of Moses) were accused by the Lord with having "taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in

- yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52).
- 2) The unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica got together a band of "lewd fellows of the baser sort" and incited a riot against the brethren. The motive of these Jews was jealousy. They were far more interested in maintaining their status than in the truth. Sadly, this is true of the majority of our generation. Our English words *zeal* and *jealousy* are derived from the same Greek word used here—*zelos*.
  - 3) The "lewd fellows of the baser sort" are called "vile fellows of the rabble" in the ASV. These were unprincipled individuals (most likely Gentiles) who could be bribed or incited to initiate a disturbance. How could those Jews who claimed to follow the will of God stoop to such despicable actions? Their jealousy and hatred far exceeded their godliness and their love for truth!
  - 4) We are not told who this Jason was, but obviously he was one of those who obeyed the gospel. Paul had a kinsman with this name (Rom. 16:21), but these might be entirely different individuals. Through the work of the "lewd fellows of the baser sort," the Jewish leaders set the city in an uproar, and the mob assaulted the house of Jason, endeavoring to apprehend Paul and Silas, and possibly all that were inside.
- f. Acts 17:6-7: "And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus."
- 1) Paul and Silas were not in the house, but the mob dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city. They described Paul and Silas (who were not present) as those who have turned the world upside down, i.e., revolutionaries. The news about the troubles Paul and Silas had faced in Philippi had reached Thessalonica.
  - 2) Their having "turned the world upside down" was not intended as a compliment, but as an accusation that they had disturbed the peace wherever they had gone. This was a false charge; it was not Paul and Silas who had caused the furor at Philippi and Thessalonica, but the spiteful enemies of the gospel. Compare: "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim" (1 Kings 18:17-18).
  - 3) The other accusation leveled against Paul and Silas was that they had caused the citizens to violate the decrees of Caesar by trying to convince them that there is another king who is named "Jesus." "And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them" (Acts 18:2). This was a misrepresentation; although Jesus is King, his realm did not interfere with the reign of Caesar.
    - a) Mark 12:14: "And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"
    - b) Luke 23:2: "And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King."
    - c) John 18:33-38: "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief
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priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*."

- d) John 19:15: "But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."
- 4) The statement that Jesus was a king shows that they perceived that Paul had taught that Jesus was even then reigning. If Jesus was reigning, his kingdom had been established, a truth abundantly affirmed in the New Testament. The millennial theories, which say Christ is not now reigning, are false.
- g. Acts 17:8-9: "And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go."
- 1) The charges made against Paul and Silas were a source of trouble to the rulers and the people. But they could not prosecute them since they were not in custody.
- 2) Before releasing Jason and the others, the rulers took a security of them (required that they post a bond). No details are given about the bond, but the purpose for it was likely to keep them from raising a disturbance. The effect of the bond would be that Paul must leave the city.

#### B. The time, place and author of the book of 2 Thessalonians.

1. The letter was probably written from Corinth soon after the first epistle.
  - a. After leaving Thessalonica, Paul made his way to Berea, and from there he went on to Athens. After a short stay in Athens, he went on to Corinth. He was later joined at Corinth by Silas and Timothy. He had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to confirm the church. When the company had reunited at Corinth, the apostle wrote 1 Thessalonians.
  - b. "This epistle appears to have been written soon after the first, and from the same place—Corinth.... The proof of this indeed is not certain, for there are no marks of time or place *in* the epistle by which these points can be determined. The probability rests upon these grounds: (1) That the same persons—Paul, Silas, and Timothy—are associated in both epistles, and are mentioned as being together at the time when they were written (1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1); but as there is no reason to believe that they did not continue long together, it is to be presumed that one epistle was written soon after the other. (2) Paul refers to an error which had grown up, apparently in consequence of a misunderstanding of his first epistle (chap. 2:2); an error which he regarded as of great magnitude, and which was producing very unhappy results (chap. 3:11,12), and it was natural that he should hasten to correct that error as soon as possible. (3) There is some probability...that the epistle was written *before* the troubles came upon him at Corinth under the administration of Gallio (Acts 18:12-16), and yet that he saw that the storm was approaching, and hints at it in chap. 3:2, 'And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.' If so, this epistle was written but a few months at farthest after the first. We may regard the evidence, therefore, as sufficiently clear, that this epistle was written at Corinth some time during the latter part of A.D. 53, or the beginning of A.D. 54" (Barnes, p.67).
2. The inspired author is the apostle Paul, who joins the names of Silas and Timothy to his in the salutation. The apostle to the Gentiles is the writer of both the Thessalonian epistles. He is widely known for his several missionary tours, during which many received the gospel of Christ through the preaching he and



his co-workers did.

#### B. The Purpose of 2 Thessalonians.

1. In all of his inspired communications, the apostle endeavored to encourage the brethren to faithfulness in their daily lives. Without devotion to the Lord and his word, they would not be able to withstand the pressures of persecution.
2. But as was the case of most of the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3, there were also deficiencies in the church at Thessalonica. Paul found out about these problems, and in both of the epistles directed to them, he addressed these errors. Of necessity, therefore, he included some rebukes.
3. Some of them had developed a fanatical view concerning the second coming of Christ; thinking Christ would return any moment, certainly during their life time, many quit working and were being supported by the church. Their attitude was this: "Since the Lord is coming soon, why work?" Paul repudiated this disposition, and boldly stated: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:10-12).
4. Paul emphatically demonstrated that the coming of Christ would occur only after the great apostasy took place. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:1-3). Since the apostasy would require many years, in fact it took a few centuries, to develop fully, the coming of Christ was far in the future from the first century. Also, since the Lord has not yet come the second time, we know that neither Paul nor any other inspired writer or speaker ever taught that the Second Coming was imminent in the First Century.
5. Another purpose which the epistle fills is to issue strong warning against false teachers. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).
6. The apostle taught them the necessity of withdrawing fellowship from those brethren who depart from the truth. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6).

#### D. Outline of 2 Thessalonians.

1. Chapter One.
    - a. Greetings: 1:1-2.
    - b. Information Concerning the Lord's Return: 1:3-12.
  2. Chapter Two.
    - a. The Man of Sin: 2:1-12.
    - b. God Calls us Through the Gospel: 2:13-17.
  3. Chapter Three.
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- a. Paul Solicits their Prayers: 3:1-5.
  - b. Information Concerning Discipline and Other Exhortations: 3:6-15.
  - c. Closing Salutations: 3:16-18.
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## 2 THESSALONIANS 1

### A. 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2: Greetings.

1. Verse 1: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
  - a. Silvanus is another name for Silas. "SILAS (si'las; apparently Gk. from Aram. Sheila [Saul]). This name is evidently a contracted form of Silvanus (sylvan), a prominent member of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22). Of his immediate family no account is given, but his name, derived from the Lat. silva, 'wood,' betokens him a Hellenistic Jew, and he appears to have been a Roman citizen (16:37). He is probably the same as Silvanus, mentioned in Paul's epistles. Mission to Antioch. Upon the return of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem from their missionary tour, a discussion arose respecting circumcision, and the council decided against the extreme Judaizing party. Silas was appointed a delegate to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return to Antioch with the decree of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:22,32), A.D. about 50. After accomplishing this mission he remained in Antioch, although granted permission to return (vv. 33-34). The qualification of Silas for speaking to a congregation is stated (v. 32)...Upon the separation of Paul and Barnabas, Silas was selected by Paul as the companion of his second missionary journey (Acts 15:40). 'The choice of Silas was, of course, due to his special fitness for the work, which had been recognized during his ministration in Antioch. Doubtless he had shown tact and sympathy in managing the questions arising from the relations of the Gentile Christians to the Jews' (Ramsay, St. Paul, p. 176). His double character, Hebrew and Roman, was also a qualification for a coadjutor of Paul. In further notices of him we learn that he was scourged and imprisoned with Paul at Philippi (Acts 16). At Berea he was left behind with Timothy, while Paul proceeded to Athens (17:10,14), and we hear nothing more of his movements until he rejoined the apostle at Corinth (18:5). If the same as Silvanus, his presence at Corinth is several times noticed (2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1) and he is mentioned (1 Peter 5:12) as the one who conveyed Peter's first epistle to Asia Minor. The probabilities are in favor of the identity. He probably returned to Jerusalem with Paul, where he remained, ceasing any longer to be his companion" [The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (c) 1988].
  - b. Timotheus of course is Timothy. "Personal name meaning, 'honoring God.' Friend and trusted coworker of Paul. When Timothy was a child, his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois taught him the Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). A native of Lystra, he may have been converted on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23). Paul referred to Timothy as his child in the faith (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). This probably means that Paul was instrumental in Timothy's conversion. When Paul came to Lystra on his second journey, Timothy was a disciple who was well-respected by the believers (Acts 16:1-2). Paul asked Timothy to accompany him. Timothy's father was a Greek, and Timothy had not been circumcised. Because they would be ministering to many Jews and because Timothy's mother was Jewish, Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3). Timothy not only accompanied Paul but also was sent on many crucial missions by Paul (Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 3:2,6). For example, when Paul was unable to go to Corinth, he sent Timothy to represent Paul and his teachings (1 Cor. 4:17). Later when Paul was in prison, he sent Timothy to Philippi (Phil. 2:19). Paul felt that no one had any more compassion and commitment than Timothy (Phil. 2:20-22). So close were Paul and Timothy that both names are listed as the authors of six of Paul's letters (2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Philem. 1). In addition, Paul wrote two letters to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). As Paul's ministry neared the end, he challenged Timothy to remain true to his calling (1 Tim. 1:18). As Paul faced death, he asked Timothy to come to be with him (2 Tim. 4:9). At some point in his life, Timothy was

imprisoned; but he was released (Heb. 13:23)” (Holman, Robert J. Dean).

- c. Paul joins the names of Silas and Timothy to his in the greeting of this letter addressed to the “church of the Thessalonians.” He could have also called them the “church of Christ at Thessalonica” or the “Thessalonica church of Christ.” Every Christian at Thessalonica was a member of this church. All who obeyed the gospel at that place were automatically made members of that congregation. There were no denominations present in that city, or anywhere else, during that time.
  - d. The church, said Paul, is **in** “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Lord's church is not **out of** either God or Christ. It is impossible to be in Christ and not also be in the church; it is also impossible to be in the Lord's church without also being in Christ. And to be in Christ is to be in God, for where one Divine Being is, there the others are also.
    - 1) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."
    - 2) Ephesians 1:20-23: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
    - 3) Ephesians 2:11-13: "Wherefore remember, that *ye being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time *ye* were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus *ye* who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
    - 4) Ephesians 3:17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that *ye*, being rooted and grounded in love."
    - 5) Ephesians 5:18-19: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
    - 6) Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
2. Verse 2: “Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
    - a. This statement is the apostle's inspired desire for the grace and peace of God and Christ to rest upon the saints at Thessalonica.
    - b. To possess God's grace is to have all the blessings which he offers to mankind through his gracious love. Grace is, in fact, the love of God in action.
    - c. To possess the peace of God is to enjoy the confidence, boldness, and serenity which are provided by being in the right relationship with God.
    - d. Romans 5:1-2: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
  3. These greetings are the shortest of any of Paul's letters. The reason, most likely, is the fact that the first epistle was written only a short time earlier, in which he gave a fuller salutation.
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## B. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12: Information Regarding the Lord's Return.

1. Verse 3: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."
    - a. Paul was continually grateful for the faithfulness of these brethren. He could have this disposition despite the fact that some of them were not presently walking as they ought. The majority of them had remained loyal, even though they were living in oppression.
    - b. He recognized the value of prayer, and regularly expressed his heart-felt gratitude for his brethren, as he made intercession for them. For what and for whom should we pray? The following verses gives us a general idea.
      - 1) 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."
      - 2) Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
      - 3) 2 Thessalonians 3:1: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you."
      - 4) Matthew 9:37-38: "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."
      - 5) Philippians 1:9-11: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."
    - c. This verse is very similar to the third verse of the first letter: "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" (1 Thess. 1:3).
    - d. His prayers had been answered in that the Thessalonians were maintaining faithfulness to the gospel. Paul says that their faith was increasing exceedingly, and that their love toward each other abounded. In all his letters, except Galatians, Titus and Hebrews, Paul expresses gratitude. Their love abounded because of the increase of their faith.
      - 1) Their love encompassed all of the members of the church. If it does not, then love is hypocritical love. "*Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9).
      - 2) Matthew 5:46-48: "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
    - e. Paul could find something good to say about all the saints; he did not look only to see the evil, but the good also. Some, who are "born in the objective case and in the kickative mood," seek only to find fault; such people will scarcely ever be known to speak a word of encouragement or give a word of praise toward anyone. They often wind up their earthly sojourn in a very bitter condition. Satan has few if any happy old people.
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- 1) Ephesians 4:31-32: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
  - 2) Colossians 3:8: "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."
  - 3) Colossians 3:19: "Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them."
- f. We live in a time of peace and prosperity, and although the Lord's church is facing much turmoil and opposition from within and without, we are not being persecuted as were these brethren. Compare: "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted....I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:3, 9).
2. Verse 4: "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure."
    - a. Paul and his companions rejoiced in the patience and faith evinced by the Thessalonian saints. They were steadfast and loyal although they were in the midst of persecutions and tribulations. They could have gained release from these torments by renouncing Christ, but they would not do so.
      - 1) Acts 17:5-9: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go."
      - 2) 1 Thessalonians 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."
    - b. Paul gloried in their behalf amid the churches of God, the congregations of the Lord's people in the places where he labored. The church belongs to God, because it originated in his mind; it belongs to Christ, for he died in order to bring it into existence. While there is only one church (Eph. 4:4-5; 1:22-23), it is comprised of many local congregations. A denomination is too big to be equal to a local congregation and too small to be equal to the Lord's church.
    - c. Patience (steadfastness; endurance; perseverance) and faith are separate spiritual traits: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Faith is the belief in the truthfulness of a proposition; patience is the continual loyalty to the lifestyle required by the truth which faith has accepted. Faith produces patience, and patience strengthens faith. Patience is faith in action (see Lipscomb, p.87).
      - 1) James 1:2-4: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."
      - 2) Romans 5:1-3: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience."

3. Verses 5-6: "*Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you."
  - a. The persecutions and tribulations they were enduring were a visible token of the righteous judgment of God. A *manifest token* is a clear sign, a plain proof or demonstration.
  - b. They were being afflicted by their enemies because of their faithfulness to Christ. They were not persecuted until they obeyed the gospel.
    - 1) Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
    - 2) Acts 4:18-20: "And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
  - c. What exactly is the *manifest token* of God's righteous judgment? Is it the presence of persecution? Or is it their faithfulness in the face of persecution? "The general sense seems to be, that the fact that they were thus persecuted was an evidence that there would be a future judgment, when the righteous who were persecuted would be rewarded, and the wicked who persecuted them would be punished. The manner in which they bore their trials was an indication also of what the result would be in regard to them. Their patience and faith under persecutions were constantly showing that they would "be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they were called to suffer" (Barnes, pp.69f).
  - d. The kingdom of God began on the Pentecost Day of Acts. The Thessalonian saints were already in the kingdom, just as were the Colossians. Each faithful saint will be ushered into the eternal phase of the kingdom, following the Judgment.
    - 1) "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14).
    - 2) "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:11-12).
    - 3) 2 Peter 1:5-11: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

- 4) Matthew 25:34: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."
- e. God had willed that the early Christians must face persecution, just as he knew that the Israelites had to face the afflictions of the wilderness. Israel's hardships of the forty years in the wilderness welded them together in a solid unit that holds them together today, even after thirty-five hundred years. The early Christians were welded together as a unified body in a struggle against a common enemy. The only way they could fight this enemy was by remaining faithful to Christ. Hardship and opposition are able to enhance our reliance on the Lord, our dedication to his cause, our desire to go to heaven, and to contend for the gospel.
- 1) Hebrews 12:6-11: "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (NKJ).
  - 2) 1 Peter 4:16-19: "Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."
  - 3) 2 Timothy 3:10-12: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
- f. Christ has never promised that life on earth will be easy for his followers. But he promises to those who are persecuted, and remain faithful, that they will be rewarded beyond their expectations.
- 1) John 15:18-21: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."
  - 2) John 16:20-22: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."
  - 3) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
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- 4) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal."
  - g. Those who have persecuted the saints, and do not obey the gospel, will be punished beyond their expectations.
    - 1) Psalms 98:9: "Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity."
    - 2) Ecclesiastes 3:16-17: "And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there; and the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work."
    - 3) Jeremiah 9:25: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all *them which are* circumcised with the uncircumcised."
    - 4) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
    - 5) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
    - 6) Revelation 20:10-12: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."
  - h. God is not unrighteous: he will remember and reward the faithfulness of his people (Heb. 6:10). God is righteous: he will punish those who have rebelled against his will; in this context, he especially declares this to be so with those who have persecuted his people. What the apostle has said in verses four through six is leading up to the affirmations and warnings of the next four familiar verses. This passage is intended to warn the wicked and to encourage the faithful.
4. Verse 7: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels."
    - a. It is a righteous act for God to repay tribulation to those who bring trouble to his people; it is also a righteous act for him to compensate his faithful children by giving them rest. Paul was afflicted by his enemies of God wherever he labored; the brethren at Thessalonica were likewise persecuted; faithful saints throughout the world were being opposed. To all of these, God will give rest at the appearance of Christ. *Rest* is used to describe all the blessings of their eternal reward.
    - b. There will be rest for the faithful at the end of their earthly sojourn. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13).
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- c. When Christ returns at the end of time, he will be accompanied by his mighty angels. The power of only one angel is beyond human comprehension. One angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (Isa. 37:33-38). How awesome indeed must be the combined power of all the mighty angels who will be with the Lord! And Christ's power is infinite. He was directly involved in the creation of the universe; it is certain that he has more than enough power to destroy the universe.
- 1) Matthew 25:31-32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats."
  - 2) Colossians 1:15-17: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."
  - 3) 2 Peter 3:10-13: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."
  - 4) Hebrews 9:26-28: "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."
- d. The *recompensing* will begin at the return of Christ, not a thousand years after his return. Both Paul and Emperor Nero will face the consequences of the Lord's return: Paul will be rewarded and Nero will be punished. Matthew 25:31-46.
- 1) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
  - 2) Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."
  - 3) Matthew 24:27: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."
  - 4) Acts 1:9-11: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
  - 5) Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This
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is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

5. Verse 8: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."
  - a. The manner of the Lord's coming is not described as with flaming fire; rather, the vengeance that he brings will be exacted in flaming fire. This is a reference to the punishment in the fires of hell. It is very common for those who know a little about the Bible to lightly make reference to this awful place of eternal punishment. There is no penalty as serious as being lost in this dreadful place!
    - 1) Matthew 8:12: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 2) Matthew 13:42: "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."
    - 3) Matthew 13:50: "And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."
    - 4) Matthew 22:13: "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 5) Matthew 24:51: "And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 6) Matthew 25:30: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 7) Luke 13:28: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out."
    - 8) Luke 16:22-26: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence."
  - b. This punishment awaits those who persecute God's faithful. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matt. 18:6-7). But it extends to many more than the persecutors.
  - c. This punishment in flaming fire awaits those who "know not God." This includes the myriads of men who have no relationship with God. It includes those who know about God but who do not permit that knowledge to affect the way they live.
    - 1) In the world of the first century, the Jews all knew God, but the Gentiles knew little or nothing about him. In our modern world, there are great numbers who know about God, but who live as if there is no God.

- 2) Romans 1:28-32: "And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."
  - d. This punishment in flaming fire awaits those who "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Men are lost in sin, not because they have not had opportunity to learn the gospel, but because they have violated God's will!
    - 1) Sin is the transgression of God's will.
      - a) "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4).
      - b) "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death" (1 John 5:17).
    - 2) Sin is also incurred by a failure to fulfill the positive requirements of his will: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17).
    - 3) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
  - e. Once the guilt of sin is acquired, only the blood of Christ can remove it. His blood is applied by the gospel.
    - 1) 1 Peter 1:18-25: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot....Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
    - 2) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
    - 3) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
  - f. The world has many people who deny the plain statement of this passage, that obedience to the gospel is essential to salvation.
    - 1) There are many who deny the existence of God, heaven, hell, and sin; these live their lives in open
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- rebellion against God. Their rejection of the truth will not eliminate their punishment, but will magnify it. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).
- 2) There are many with a sectarian background who deny the need for obedience to the gospel; they hold the erroneous view that salvation is either by divine fiat, separate from human will, or that it is obtained by faith only; in both cases, gospel obedience is denied. Their neglect to obey will not remove their punishment. Compare: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:13-17).
  - 3) There are many with a knowledge of the gospel, who do not obey the truth and become Christians or who obey but fall away. Their neglect or unfaithfulness will enhance their punishment.
- g. Anyone who does not obey the gospel, either through ignorance or through willful rejection, will face the gospel in the Judgment.
- 1) Luke 12:47-48: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
  - 2) John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
  - 3) John 14:15: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (ASV).
  - 4) John 14:23: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."
  - 5) 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
  - 6) John 15:14: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."
  - 7) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
  - 8) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right *to come* to the tree of life, and my enter in by the gates into the city."
6. Verse 9: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
- a. "This is not a destruction of the souls of men, but they will be banished from the presence of the Lord. The bonds that unite them will be destroyed forever. They will never be restored. And away from God, with all the means of help and blessing from God severed, man will be the subject of misery and woe forever. The Scriptures are so clear on this point that it seems that none willing to receive the truth can
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doubt this. In making the punishment for sin a light matter, we make sin against God a trivial matter and derogate his honor, majesty, holiness, and power. The whole trouble arises over a misconception of the meaning of death. Death does not mean annihilation, but separation of the spirit, the vital principle, from the body. Spiritual death means the separation of the soul and body from God, the vitalizing principle of spiritual life. Eternal death is the final and everlasting separation of the soul and body from God, the vitalizing principle of spiritual life. Eternal death is the final and everlasting separation of soul and body from the presence and glory of God. Thus separated, it is not annihilated. It is subject to perpetual and eternal suffering. Nothing looking toward annihilation is found in the Bible when we rightly use terms. This idea is not found in the Bible. Whence does it come? It comes from a disposition to mitigate rebellion against God, and to find lighter punishment than God has prescribed. Why should this be done? Is man too fearful of sinning against God? Lighten the sin and ameliorate the suffering and will it then make men dread sin and rebellion more? We may well suspect our position and our spirit when we find ourselves excusing sin or ameliorating the woes that come from sin against God" (Lipscomb, pp.90f).

- b. "The word which is here rendered *destruction* (*oleqthros*), is different from that which occurs in Mat. 25:46, and which is there rendered *punishment*, *kolasis*. The word *oleqthros*—*olethron*— occurs only here and in 1 Cor. 5:5, 1 Thes. 5:3, 1 Tim. 6:9; in each of which places, it is rendered *destruction*. It does not denote annihilation, but is used in the same sense in which we use the word when we say that a thing is *destroyed*. Thus health is destroyed when it fails; property is destroyed when it is burned or sunk in the ocean; a limb is destroyed that is lost in battle; life is destroyed when one dies. In the case before us, the destruction, whatever it be, is (1) to be continued for ever; and (2) it is to be of the nature of punishment. The meaning then must be, that the soul is destroyed as to the great purposes of its being—its enjoyment, dignity, honour, holiness, happiness. It will not be annihilated, but will live and linger on *in destruction*" (Barnes, pp.72f).
- c. Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The word *destroy* in this passage is from the Greek word *apollumi*. The idea of the word "is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being. This is clear from its use, as, *e.g.*, of the marring of wine skins, Luke 5:37; of lost sheep, *i.e.*, lost to the shepherd, metaphorical of spiritual destitution, Luke 15:4,6, etc.; the lost son, 15:24; of the perishing of food, John 6:27; of gold, 1 Pet. 1:7" (Vine, Vol. 1, p.302). This word is found in the following verses:
  - 1) Matthew 2:13: "And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."
  - 2) Matthew 8:25: "And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish."
  - 3) Matthew 22:7: "But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."
  - 4) Matthew 27:20: "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus."
  - 5) Luke 13:3, 5: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish....I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
  - 6) John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
  - 7) John 10:28: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man*

- pluck them out of my hand."
- 8) John 17:12: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."
  - 9) Also:
    - a) Romans 2:12: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."
    - b) 1 Corinthians 15:18: "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."
    - c) 2 Corinthians 2:15: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."
    - d) 2 Corinthians 4:3: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."
    - e) 2 Thessalonians 2:10: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."
    - f) James 4:12: "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"
    - g) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
  - d. The eternal destruction of which Paul speaks in our text is an unending banishment from God, a never-ending separation in which the offender is punished in a place prepared for the devil and his angels.
    - 1) Matthew 8:12: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 2) Matthew 13:42: "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."
    - 3) Matthew 13:50: "And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."
    - 4) Matthew 22:13: "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 5) Matthew 24:51: "And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 6) Matthew 25:30: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 7) Matthew 25:41: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"
    - 8) Luke 13:28: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out."
    - 9) Revelation 20:12-15 "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the
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dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

- e. This punishment involves being separated from the presence of the Lord. In this life, no one is fully separated from the blessings of God.
    - 1) While we live here, we have access to the earth's blessings, all of which God has supplied, including light, rest, food, water, and air; we may also avail ourselves of the spiritual blessings of the gospel.
    - 2) But in hell, none of God's blessings are available! There will be no water to cool the burning tongue; no breeze to give comfort; no access to any feature of God's grace; prayers will not be heard; the Bible cannot be read there; there will be no hope. Separated from the presence of the Lord, we can have none of his blessings!
  - f. This punishment involves separation from the glory of the Lord's power.
    - 1) "The *power* will be seen in the convulsions of nature which will precede or attend him [at the 2nd coming]; in the resurrection of the dead; and in the bringing of all to judgment: and the *glory* will be seen in his own person; the dignity and number of his attendants; and the honour that shall then be conferred on him as the final Judge of all mankind. By manifestation of that power and glory the wicked will be driven away into eternal ruin. They will not be able to stand before it, and though, in common with the righteous, they may see the majesty of the Redeemer in the last day, yet they will be driven away to witness it no more" (Barnes, p.73).
    - 2) The glory of divine power is demonstrated in heaven.
      - a) Revelation 21:4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."
      - b) Revelation 22:5: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."
7. Verse 10: "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."
- a. The blessings given the righteous and the punishment inflicted on the unrighteous will be forthcoming **when** he comes again. The recompensing will begin at the same time the Lord returns, not a thousand years after the second coming. Addressing 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. offered the following:
    - 1) "First—to you who are troubled rest with us.' The word 'rest' is not a verb in this passage. It is a noun, and is the object of the verb 'recompense' understood. Read the passage carefully. Paul said, when Jesus Christ comes he will 'recompense.' He will recompense what to whom? Here it is: he will recompense tribulation 'to them that trouble you.' It is rendered tribulation in the old version; affliction in the new. He will recompense affliction to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled or afflicted, 'rest.' The early Christians were being persecuted. Paul exhorted them to be patient—God will recompense tribulation to them that were the troublers, and to the troubled, he will recompense rest 'with us,' that is, with the apostles. Here, we have the two nouns—'tribulation' and 'rest'—objects of one verb 'recompense.' God will recompense two things to two classes. He will recompense tribulation to the wicked; he will recompense rest to the righteous.
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- 2) "Second, 'when he shall come.' Both the wicked and the righteous must be raised up at that time, if he will recompense tribulation to one and rest to the other—'when he shall come.' To make the illustration real and personal—take two characters, Nero, the emperor, and Paul the apostle. Nero beheaded Paul, so Nero was the troubler and Paul was the troubled. Now, applying Paul's argument, when Christ comes, God will recompense 'tribulation' to Nero and 'rest' to Paul. That brings Nero and Paul up in the same resurrection—no thousand years between.
  - 3) "Third, 'who shall be punished.' Continuing the argument Paul plainly states who shall be punished, how they shall be punished, and when they shall be punished. 1. Who—'taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel.' 2. How—'who shall be punished with everlasting destruction (banishment) from the presence of God.' 3. When—'when he shall come to be glorified in his saints.' That certainly could not refer to the end of the millennium. It says '*when*' he shall come—and when means then.
  - 4) "There are multiplied passages of like import. Take Matt. 25—the parable of the judgment—'when the Son of man shall come in his glory,' and shall sit on his judgment throne, 'before him shall be gathered all nations,' and he shall separate them 'as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.' To the sheep on the right, he will say, 'Come, ye blessed of my father'; to the goats on the left, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.' Here is the scene of judgment. The goats are the wicked; the sheep are the righteous. The sheep and the goats are in the same judgment at the same time, therefore, they will be in the same resurrection" (*God's Prophetic Word*, pp.355f).
- b. At his coming, Christ will be honored and glorified in and by his saints. "That is, the redeemed in that day will be the means of promoting his glory, or the universe will see his glory manifested in their redemption. His chief glory as seen in that day will be connected with the fact that he has redeemed his people; and he will come in order that all the appropriate honour of such a work may then be manifested. He will be 'glorified' then by the numbers that shall have been redeemed; by their patience in the trials through which they have passed; by the triumphs which religion shall have made on the earth; by their praises and songs, and by their ascent with him to the realms of blessedness" (Barnes, pp.73f).
  - c. In this life, as faithful saints serve and honor him, we perceive him as the Son of God, our Savior, the Messiah, and Redeemer, but when we shall see him at the second coming, our perception will be greatly enhanced! We will then see with full sight what we have heretofore only seen by faith. An oral description of the Grand Canyon is far less impressive than an actual, first-hand view. The great shout, the sight of the myriads of angels, the blast of the trumpet, and seeing the Son of God—all of these will vastly magnify his majesty, and our love for him will intensify!
  - d. All of the foregoing events will transpire *at that day*. They will not be spread over a span of years; they will not be separated by a thousand years; they will all occur on the same occasion. This is the same occasion described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, as well as in John 5:28-29 and 2 Peter 3:9-14.
    - 1) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
    - 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: "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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 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. 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
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Christ shall rise first: 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

- 3) 2 Peter 3:9-14: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
  - e. Notice the emphasis Paul places on the belief of the blessed ones. Paul had presented the gospel to these Thessalonians; they had accepted the message; they had remained faithful even in the face of fiery persecutions!
8. Verse 11: "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power." "To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and *every* work of faith, with power" (ASV).
- a. Returning to his reference in verse three to his thanking God for these brethren, the apostle states that he regularly prays for them. In this verse, Paul speaks of his praying that God would count them worthy of their calling, that he would render to them the good things intended for the redeemed, and reward every work of their faith.
  - b. He prayed that God would count them worthy of their calling. To "count worthy" is from the Greek term which is translated as "count worthy," "think worthy," "think good," "to think meet, fit, right," "to judge worthy, deem, deserving" (Strong's Concordance). The apostle simply desired that they would measure up to God's standard and thus be acceptable to him.
  - c. He prayed that every desire of goodness would be fulfilled. "He prays that God may perfect their pleasure in goodness" (Vincent, p.950). "The prayer of Paul is that God would so increase their goodness as to make these desires themselves perfect, irrespective of their results, and would enable them to maintain and perfect that activity and endurance to which faith had prompted them" (Lipscomb, p.92).
  - d. He prayed that God would reward every work of their faith. Faith without works is dead, thus is not productive of any good. If faith is present, it will be observed by the work it produces. The word "power" in the statement denotes the effectiveness of their faith. "The work was peculiar to their faith, by which it was characterized, inasmuch as it was something begun with energy and held fast with resoluteness, in spite of all obstacles and oppositions" (Lipscomb, p.92).
  - e. Faith is like love, in that both operate on the principle of action; if present, there will be activity.
    - 1) James 2:17-26: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith
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- wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
- 2) Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
  - 3) John 14:15: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (ASV).
  - 4) 1 John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
  - 5) 1 Thessalonians 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."
  - 6) 2 Thessalonians 1:3: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."
9. Verse 12: "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."
- a. "That is, that the Lord Jesus himself may be honoured among you; the name often denoting the person. The idea is that the apostle wished that the Lord Jesus might be honoured among them by the fair application and development of the principles of his religion" (Barnes, p.75).
  - b. "If Christians are thus faithful and worthy, then the name of Christ is glorified in them as his servants. When the servants of God are worthy, and are glorified in it, the Lord is glorified in them" (Lipscomb, p.92).
  - c. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. The depiction is different, but the connotation is identical. If we are in Christ, then his principles characterize us, and we partake of his blessings.
    - 1) Galatians 5:24-26: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."
    - 2) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."
    - 3) Ephesians 3:17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love."
    - 4) Colossians 1:27: "To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."
    - 5) Galatians 3:26-29: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
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## 2 THESSALONIANS 2

### A. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12: The Man of Sin.

1. Verses 1-2: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."
  - a. "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come" (NKJ). "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand" (ASV).
  - b. Having addressed the subject of the second coming of Christ, Paul now hastens to issue the warning that they be not deceived regarding the time of his appearance. He strongly taught in 1 Thessalonians five that the Lord's return would be "as a thief in the night." There will be no indications in nature or signs in the sky prior to that great event.
  - c. The event under discussion is the coming of the Lord and the final gathering together of the saints unto him, which he has covered in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. This gathering is also spoken of in:
    - 1) John 14:1-3: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."
    - 2) Matthew 25:31-32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats."
  - d. Paul appeals to them that they not be troubled by any message purporting to be from Paul which asserted that the day of Christ was at hand. Paul's statement here denies that the second coming was "just at hand." Evidently there were unscrupulous men in that age who were not above using deceitful, lying means to trick others into accepting false information.
    - 1) False doctrine can cause one to be shaken and troubled in his mind; it can so upset a Christian that he may be deceived and turned away from the truth. Some of the Thessalonian saints had become so-shaken that they had given up their secular work, in anticipation of the end of time.
    - 2) 2 Timothy 4:2-5: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
  - e. They were warned against being deceived by any *spirit*, a religious teacher or prophet. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). They were not to be troubled by the messages of these *spirits*. *Word* has reference to the spoken message of a teacher. They were warned against being deceived by some *epistle* claiming to be from Paul. No inspired apostle, prophet, or teacher would teach any-thing contrary to what Paul presented. Inspired preachers and writings are always in perfect unison.

2. Verse 3: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." "Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition" (NKJ). "Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (ASV).
  - a. Broadening the statement, Paul warns them against their permitting any man to deceive them by any means. They had been taught the truth, and any further information they were given which differed from what they had been taught was to be rejected as false. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8-9).
  - b. The day of Christ (the last day; the second coming; the end of the world; the resurrection) would not occur until some time after an apostasy took place, in which the son of perdition would be revealed. The seeds of apostasy were already being sown during the latter half of the first century, but the great apostasy Paul refers to did not take place for a good many more years.
  - c. The *falling away* is an apostasy from the truth. Paul was addressing a danger to Christians; the peril involved their understanding of the doctrine of the second coming of Christ; what they believed would have a direct effect on their behavior. The Greek word which is translated as "falling away" is *apostasia*.
    - 1) The apostle warned them lest they accept a false view of the Lord's coming; if they heeded his admonitions, they would not fall away; if they heeded the error of the false teachers, they would fall away from the truth. One can fall away from the truth and still think of himself as a faithful follower of Christ. Deception does that to a man.
    - 2) In the future, there would be a great many Christians who would take heed to false teachings, and would be turned from the truth.
      - a) 2 Timothy 3:1-13: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all *men*, as theirs also was. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."
      - b) 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth,

and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

- 3) At some undefined point of time in the future, subsequent to Paul's day, the church would apostatize. "A widespread apostasy from God, on the part of his followers, was to arise within the church. The foundation principle of the falling away is the assumption of the right to change or modify the laws and commandments of God" (Lipscomb, p.95).
  - 4) Paul plainly teaches here that Christ would not come until some time after this great apostasy had taken place. The New Testament does not teach that the coming of Christ was then imminent.
- d. Some unidentified "man of sin" would come on the scene in connection with the great apostasy. This personage is further described as "the son of perdition." No name is given to this personage.
- 1) *The man of sin* is properly described by the phrase for he will be a man who commits sin. He is aptly called the *son of perdition* [destruction] for he and those who heed his message will be *destroyed*, in the fashion Paul described in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
  - 2) This man of sin would be revealed, thus would be discernable to those with spiritual perception. These brethren were warned against him, which means they could identify him by his fruit. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:15-20).
  - 3) Although the man of sin is depicted as a particular man, the real point is that a certain spirit or movement is being personified. "A principle was at work that would set aside God's order and establish one of its own in its stead. It leads to ruin and perdition—is called the son of perdition" (Lipscomb, p.95).
- e. A very large number of warnings against apostasy is given in the New Testament, including these several passages:
- 1) Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
  - 2) Acts 20:25-32: "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."
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- Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."
- 3) 1 Timothy 4:1-3: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."
  - 4) 2 Timothy 3:1-8: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."
  - 5) 2 Timothy 4:3-5: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
  - 6) 2 Peter 2:1-2: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."
  - 7) 2 Peter 3:1-7: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."
3. Verse 4: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."
- a. "The highest, the most sacred right, and prerogative that God has reserved to himself is the right to make laws for his kingdom and to rule it. This he jealously guards because it lies at the foundation of his claims to be God, and out of this grows all other claims. It requires as great authority to repeal or change a law as it does to enact it; hence, the power that enacts laws for God's people repeals or changes the laws of God, exalts itself into a rival and an opponent of God" (Lipscomb, p.96).
  - b. Paul describes this personage as masculine and in the singular: the man of sin who exalts himself. On the surface of the statement, we might perceive that some particular historic man is meant. But this *man* was virtually on the scene already, and would be active until the end of time, when he is to be
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destroyed at the coming of Christ. It seems to be definite in this that a certain personality or series of men is meant, rather than only one single person. The singular is often used in the Scriptures to speak of more than one.

- 1) We are told to "honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). This is not in reference only to one particular king, but to all kings to whom Christians through the ages would be subjects.
  - 2) We are told to agree with our adversary lest we be delivered to the judge, and the judge should deliver us to the officer, and we be imprisoned (Matt. 5:25). "Who is that adversary, that judge, and that officer—or, is it all the individuals who fit that description and fill that particular office? To ask it is to answer it, and for the same reasons...the 'man of sin' is parallel to 'the judge,' and 'the officer'" (Moffitt, ADL, p.521).
- c. The descriptions given fit the papal authority of the Roman church. The pope, by his very office, conduct, and teachings, opposes and exalts himself above even the authority of God, despite his many protestations to the contrary.
- 1) "But the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff as to God Himself" (*Great Encyclical Letters*, 193; Quoted by Lambert, p.245).
  - 2) "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty" (*Great Encyclical Letters*, 304; Quoted by Lambert, p.245). "And pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical, *The Reunion of Christendom* (1885), declared that the pope holds 'upon this earth the place of God Almighty'" (Boettner, p.127).
  - 3) "When the triple crown is placed on the head of a new pope at his 'coronation' ceremony the ritual prescribes the following declarations by the officiating cardinal: 'Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and know that thou are the Father of Princes and Kings, Ruler of the World, the Vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ....' (*National Catholic Almanac*)" (Boettner, p.127).
  - 4) "The Vatican Council which met in Rome, in 1870, defined the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope as follows: '...We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrines regarding faith and morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff of themselves—and not by virtue of the consent of the Church—are irreformable'" (Boettner, p.235).
- d. The pope, of course, does not sit in the temple of God (the Lord's church), but he claims to do so. What he claims and the real facts of the case are distinctive. In the eyes of his followers and before the world in general, he is seen to be the very epitome of the church. The church of which the pope is head is the apostate church of Christ.
- e. The pope is worshiped by his subjects. "The kissing of the pope's foot—the characteristic act of reverence by which all the faithful do honor to him as the Vicar of Christ—is found as early as the eighth century' (*Cath. Ency.*, VI, 788)" (Lambert, p.252). Worship that the Roman pontiff happily receives, neither the apostle Peter nor an angel was willing to accept.
- 1) Acts 10:25-26: "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man."
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- 2) Revelation 22:8-9: "And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."
- f. "Whoever or whatever claims the right to legislate for the children of God exalts himself or itself against all that is God and sits in the seat of God. This principle, that claims the right to change the order of God and to legislate for the church of God, is the man of sin. The principle develops different bodies or forms, according to surrounding circumstances. Roman Catholicism, I have no doubt, is one development or outgrowth of this man of sin. But the same principle manifests itself in many different forms in the history of the church" (Lipscomb, p.96).
4. Verses 5-6: "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time." "Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time" (NKJ). "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season" (ASV).
- a. Paul had told them that this would come to pass when he was with them in person. Now, with this additional information, their understanding of this future phenomenon was as full as possible.
- b. What the restraining force was that held this great apostasy in check for a time is not clearly defined in the text; in his wisdom, God saw fit to express it as he did. Various suggestions have been made, including the pagan Roman Empire, the apostle Paul, and the word of God. Either of these, or a combination of the three, could be considered a restraining force on the workers of iniquity.
- 1) When the Roman Empire collapsed about 476 A.D., the apostate church was so-organized and sufficiently powerful to take over the reins of civil government; its corrupt control grew and spread until the Reformation began to stymie its power. The power of the pagan empire of Rome had a checking effect over the apostate church for a time.
- 2) The apostle Paul's courageous work in spreading the gospel and defending the truth likewise held the workers of error in check, but after his death, their errors and evils spread freely.
- 3) As long as the brethren held on to the pure word of God, the workers of error were unable to do their greatest evil; but with the corruption of the eldership, error and sin began to multiply. The first great departure from the truth was when one member of the local eldership was exalted above the other elders, and appropriated unto himself the title of *bishop*. As the apostasy gained greater control, it was able to deprive the people of the Bible, keeping it locked up in dead languages, and maintaining that only the priests (those whose objectivity had been destroyed by indoctrination) were the only ones capable of interpreting the Bible.
- c. "The disposition to amend and change the appointments of God was at work and was restrained in its growth by Paul's authority as an apostle of the Lord; but when he was taken out of the way it had free course and developed rapidly. It is not difficult to trace its growth through the succeeding centuries, culminating in the hierarchies for which God's word made no provision. But that principle is not confined to one or two churches. Its presence is manifest in a greater or lesser degree in all the churches, in the changes in the order of worship, in the ordinances of the church; and in the multiplication of societies and organizations that seem for a time to add to its beauty and activity, but which in the end, as parasites, sap the life out of the churches. This principle is manifest especially in the organizations of the churches themselves into societies and ecclesiasticisms that first usurp the work of the churches and then control them and come between man and God" (Lipscomb, p.97).
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5. Verse 7: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way." "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way" (NKJ). "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way" (ASV).
- "In the Greek, the restraining power is spoken of, both as 'he' and as 'it,' as when a man might speak of the law as 'it,' and the enforcer of it as 'he'" (Coffman, p.101).
  - "The influence is called 'the mystery of lawlessness' because it is not open in its work, is not seen, and is of the spirit that sets aside the law of God. It is not regulated by the law, has no law to guide or control it. It was already at work, spreading among the children of God, when this Epistle was written" (Lipscomb, p.98).
  - "The restraining power of anything controlled by an individual, or of any government, or the restraining power of God, would meet all that the phrase implies. The most natural interpretation is that which refers it to civil power, meaning that there was something in the form of the existing administration which would prevent this development until that restraint should be removed" (Barnes, p.85).
  - The word *let* had the meaning of "to hinder" when the KJV was first published. The word is rendered *restraineth* in the ASV and *restrains* in the NKJ. The word *let* in modern English means "to permit or allow," a reversal of its earlier definition.
6. Verses 8-9: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders" (NKJ). "And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (ASV).
- The wicked one [the man of sin] is doomed to be consumed by the Lord at his coming. This indicates that more than one individual is meant; the whole line of popes will meet this fate; the entire spirit of apostasy, which characterized those involved in it, will be punished.
  - The spirit (breath) of the Lord's mouth is his all-powerful word. "And take the ... sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17; cf. Rev. 1:16). His word is the standard by which we are to live in this world, and it will be the standard by which we shall all be judged in the last day. One who ignored or rejected it in this life will be condemned by it in the Judgment. Those who loved and obeyed it as God's will, may expect to be blessed in the Judgment.
    - John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
    - Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
- "When the New Testament was stripped out of the dead languages in which it had been concealed,
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in the times of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, and others, there was a sense in which the man of sin received a mortal wound" (Coffman, p.102). The final, death-dealing blow will be administered by the Lord at the Judgment.

- d. The man of sin operates by the power of Satan, with signs and lying wonders. There are no genuine miracles involved in his activities; there are many fake miracles. Signs and wonders in the Bible are miraculous works. A sign was a miracle which was intended to convince unbelievers of the truth of the gospel; wonders were miracles which were designed to produce awe and amazement.
  - 1) The signs and wonders reported in the Bible were genuine; those asserted by the false teachers of the apostasy are counterfeit. Catholics have long claimed that they have seen miracles, such as various appearances of Mary, images which bleed on special occasions, and birds and fish congregating to hear preaching when the people were uninterested. Protestant errorists make many claims to producing and seeing miracles. All of these are empty assertions, which have the devil as their ultimate source.
  - 2) During Bible times, Satan had certain powers which he used, as in dispatching his demons to take over the bodies of unfortunate people. Since the end of the miraculous age, around the end of the first century, this capability on the devil's part has been taken away. "And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:13-14).
  - 3) The evil magicians in Pharaoh's court were able to produce snakes by their trickery, which aped the genuine miracle done by Moses and Aaron (Ex. 7). Paul speaks of these men in severe tones. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:8). These men were later properly impressed with the greatness of the real miracles which God produced through Moses and Aaron; they saw that these mighty works could not be duplicated by their sorcery.
  - 4) The personage described would be doing the work of Satan, while claiming to be serving God. Every religious false teacher has always maintained to be a teacher of God's true way. "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15; cf. Matt. 7:15-20; Phil. 3:17-19).
7. Verses 10-11: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." "And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie" (NKJ). "And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie" (ASV).
  - a. The ones involved in the great apostasy, personified as *the man of sin*, would use deceit of every kind in order to gain followers and retain authority over them. These are themselves deceived, and they deceive any who will listen to them.
    - 1) But despite their being deceived, they are responsible for their evil actions and words. They and their dupes face the penalty prescribed in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus

- Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Ignorance and deception will not erase disobedience.
- 2) The deception involved leads inevitably to unrighteousness; unrighteousness is a failure to obey the will of God; one can fail to obey because he does not know or has been deceived, but in either case, he has been disobedient, for which a penalty is prescribed by the immutable will of God.
- b. Many warnings against being deceived are recorded in the Bible.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 6:9: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind."
  - 2) Galatians 6:7: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
  - 3) 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (NKJ).
  - 4) Colossians 2:8,18: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ....Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind."
- c. These who are being described by Paul did not have a love for the truth; a love for the truth could have led them to salvation, but since they did not love the truth, they are doomed to banishment from God in eternity.
- 1) The truth of which Paul speaks is the truth of God's word.
    - a) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
    - b) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
  - 2) The truth is precious. "Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23:23).
  - 3) The truth can be known; it is attainable: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).
  - 4) Even a Christian can depart from the truth and lose his soul. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19-20).
- d. Error and those who espouse error can be identified. Those who preach error are to be rejected, along with their false doctrines.
- 1) Deuteronomy 13:1-5: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to
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- thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee."
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil."
  - 3) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
- e. Because these people did not love the truth, God would send them a strong delusion, so that they would believe a lie. The truth provides salvation; falsehood provides condemnation.
- 1) If one genuinely loves the truth, he will obey its demands. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:2-3).
  - 2) When one learns the truth, but, through indifference, procrastination, or influence of others, does not obey it, its appeal to his heart will gradually lessen. God will permit him to accept a way of his own choosing, which will lead to his damnation (verse 12).
  - 3) Isaiah 66:3-4: "He that killeth an ox *is as if* he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, *as if he offered* swine's blood; he that burneth incense, *as if* he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not."
  - 4) "There are two words Paul used for 'strong delusion' or 'working of error.' The first is *energo*, from which we get 'energy.' Just as the Word of God 'works' in us (1 The. 2:13, *energeo*), so now God gives them an energetic delusion. Regarding the second word, *plane* is used. The ancients looked into heaven and noted that some stars moved. They called them planets or 'wandering stars' for *plane* in Greek means to wander. When these sensualists love pleasure and despise Truth, God sadly says, 'All right. I will let you do as you wish; I will give you an energy-filled mind of wandering and let you spend your time roaming hither and thither, straying in the wilderness of wrong opinion and religious error.' Their pleasure is not *hedone*, gratification of the natural desire. Nor is it *apolausis*, enjoyment. It is *eudokia*, 'lit., good pleasure (*eu* well, *dokeo*, to seem)...with the idea of a resolve...' It is the pleasure in doing whatever seems good. They are resolved that 'if it feels good, do it!' That is the philosophy of most in our day. What can God do with fellows like that? It is no use; He may as well become their adversary and be done with it. He gives them what they are bound and determined to have in spite of all" (Moffitt, ADL, pp.254f).
  - 5) When men and societies reach a certain level of rebellion, he turns them over to their own foolish notions. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their*
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- knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:21-28).
- 6) The Northern Kingdom of ancient Israel had corrupted itself with the abominations of idolatry. Since they were beyond the pale of teaching and repentance, God turned them over to their own foolishness. "Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone" (Hos. 4:17).
8. Verse 12: "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." "That they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (NKJ). "That they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (ASV).
- a. If one desires to learn and do the will of God, he will be able to do so. "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*" (John 7:17, NKJ).
    - 1) "If a man at heart desires to do the whole will of God, God's will in its fullness will be opened to him that he may do it. God does not cast pearls before swine. When a people desire not to do the will of God, God withdraws the knowledge of himself from them. We may infer that when men wish to do only a part of his will, he permits only partial knowledge of himself to be known. This doubtless explains why so many professed Christians seem never able to see portions of the will of God; they do not desire to do it all. They see only what they wish to do" (Lipscomb, p.101).
    - 2) Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
    - 3) Acts 13:44-46: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
  - b. Those the apostle is describing in the context did not have a desire to know the truth; they did not love it and would not believe it. Therefore, they would be condemned.
    - 1) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
    - 2) Matthew 25:30: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - 3) Matthew 25:41: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."
    - 4) 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
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- c. Rather than to believe the truth, and obey it, they had pleasure in unrighteousness. They had greater desire to gratify their own selfish appetites, than to do the will of their Creator.
  - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
  - 2) Compare: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:24-25).
  - 3) Romans 1:32: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

B. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17: God Calls Us Through the Gospel.

1. Verse 13: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."
    - a. Paul begins this verse with a reference to his gratitude to God for them; he had expressed the same thought in 1:3. The apostle speaks of the fact that they are loved by the Lord. Christ had expressed his love for them in making it possible for them to obtain salvation. God had chosen them unto this condition.
    - b. God has willed that all of those who believe the truth are to be saved; the choice he made did not extend to picking out the individuals who were to believe, for that would cause him to show respect of persons, a practice which is manifestly denied.
      - 1) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
      - 2) Romans 2:11: "For there is no respect of persons with God."
    - c. God's great plan for the gospel was for both Jews and Gentiles to be offered access to his blessings provided in the gospel. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17).
    - d. They obtained the salvation which God provides through the process of sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. These Thessalonians had examined the truth; they believed the truth; and they were saved by the truth (John 8:32; 17:17). Their salvation is ascribed to the sanctification of the Spirit and their belief of the truth.
      - 1) Their sanctification (being set apart; separated; dedicated to God's holy purposes) is attributed to the Spirit (the Holy Spirit). No specific reference is made in the statement identifying the means by which the Spirit set them apart. However, Jesus taught that sanctification is accomplished by God's word (John 17:17).
      - 2) Their belief of the truth is involved in their salvation. Paul has already shown that one who does not love and believe the truth will be condemned. James (2:14-26) teaches clearly that a faith that does not obey is a dead faith. Faith that obeys is essential to salvation.
    - e. Both God and man are active in the salvation process.
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- 1) On the divine side, God developed the plan by which salvation is made possible, Christ executed that plan by dying on the cross, and the Holy Spirit revealed, confirmed, and preserved the plan for all generations. These activities represent the grace (unmerited favor) of God.
  - 2) On the human side, man hears, believes, and obeys the message of God's grace. Unless man learns and accepts the divine plan, he cannot be saved. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).
- f. Other passages make the plan manifestly clear.
- 1) John 3:16-17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
  - 2) John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."
  - 3) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
  - 4) Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
  - 5) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
  - 6) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
  - 7) 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
2. Verse 14: "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- a. The salvation which God provided (verse 13) was offered to them by the gospel of Christ, which Paul preached. The gospel has a built-in call. It summons men and women to leave behind the ways of sin and degradation, and come to Christ.
    - 1) Romans 10:13-18: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."
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- 2) Acts 2:36-41: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls."
  - 3) 2 Timothy 3:13-17: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."
  - b. The result of responding to the call of the gospel is to obtain the glory of Christ. "They were called by the gospel to school and fit them to share the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. [The glory of the saints will be complete and secure in the completeness of his glory. 'We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.' (1 John 3:2.)]" (Lipscomb, p.103).
    - 1) 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."
    - 2) 2 Peter 1:3-4: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."
    - 3) 2 Peter 1:5-11: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
    - 4) Romans 8:17-18: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
    - 5) Matthew 25:34: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."
    - 6) 2 Timothy 1:9: "Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."
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- 7) Titus 1:2: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."
3. Verse 15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
- a. In view of the information preceding, Paul admonishes the brethren to stand and hold fast to the traditions which they had been taught.
    - 1) "Traditions were handed down from one to another or taught, and is used in both a good and a bad sense in the Scriptures. The people were warned against the traditions of the elders which displaced and made void the commandments of God" (Lipscomb, p.103).
    - 2) "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do" (Mark 7:7-8).
  - b. The traditions to which Paul refers in the text are those which had been taught to them by inspiration. There is a vast difference between the traditions which have been developed by man and those which have been revealed by God.
  - c. One method of revealing an inspired message was not superior to another method. While it would be an honor to sit at the feet of the apostle Paul and learn the precious truths of the gospel, to read the same great truths directly from the printed page is no less instructive. These brethren are told to hold fast to the truth, regardless of how they learned it.
  - d. Many of them had learned God's will from the spoken word of Paul; others had read (or heard read) the inspired written message he had sent to them (the epistle of 1 Thessalonians). The written word is not one whit less authoritative than the spoken word.
    - 1) Psalms 33:6-9: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast."
    - 2) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
4. Verses 16-17: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."
- a. In closing this chapter, Paul expresses his desire that Christ and God should comfort their hearts, and establish them in every good word they should speak and every good work they should seek to do.
  - b. He describes Christ as our Lord (Master); he depicts God as our Father. The love God has for his people is beyond doubt; it goes beyond full description in human language. The love of God has provided for the faithful an everlasting consolation (comfort) and good hope. There are things for which we may hope which are not good.
    - 1) The everlasting comfort of the passage is that comfort which is to be found in its ultimate measure in heaven. But even on earth, there is a cheering degree of comfort the faithful derive from being loyal to Christ, and even in suffering for him. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:41-42).
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- 2) Hope for heaven sustains us through all kinds of earthly trials and afflictions. With the knowledge of the resurrection and eternal life in heaven, Christians are able to bravely face whatever life or the enemy might bring against us. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).
  - 3) Hope relates to the future; the object of our hope is not presently possessed. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*" (Rom. 8:24-25).
- c. It was his wish that their hearts should be comforted. God is able to do that, through the powerful encouragement offered through his word, and by the assistance of other saints. "Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:3-4).
- d. It was his wish that God and Christ should establish them in every good word. This was his way of saying that he wanted them to be mature in the words they speak. The tongue is a powerful tool, for either good or evil.
- 1) Proverbs 18:21: "Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."
  - 2) Matthew 12:34-36: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."
  - 3) James 3:2-5: "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"
  - 4) If we are able to subdue the tongue, and use it for good purposes, to the best of our ability, this demonstrates our ability to master every other feature of our human nature. This is the point in James 3:2-5.
- e. It was his wish that God and Christ should establish them in every good work. Human endeavor is directly involved in our preparations for heaven.
- 1) Matthew 10:22: "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
  - 2) Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
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## A Statement Concerning the *Parousia* and *Epiphaneia* of Christ's Coming

by Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

"There will be no period of time between the two stages of his coming, sometimes called the 'parousia' and the 'epiphaneia'—his 'presence' and his 'manifestation.' The premillennial theory provides for a twofold coming of Christ which they say is taught by two distinct words in the New Testament, words which they say were specially inspired to teach this particular thing. These words are 'parousia' and 'epiphaneia.' The first word, 'parousia,' we are told means his 'presence,' while the second word, 'epiphaneia,' means his 'manifestation.' The theory is that when the Lord comes down 'for his saints,' it will be the time of his 'presence'—the *parousia*. But when he comes 'with his saints,' it will be the time of his 'manifestation'—the *epiphaneia*. And it is argued that there will be a seven year period between the *parousia* and the *epiphaneia*. This period is what is called the 'rapture' of the saints in the heavens with the Lord, while the tribulation is blasting out its fury on the earth. So Christ comes 'for the saints'—*parousia*—at which time his coming is not manifested; then after the 'tribulation,' he comes 'with his saints,' which is the manifestation—*epiphaneia*—at which time the millennium begins.

"That is quite a pretty theory, but the difficulty of it is that it is not true. The New Testament does not support any such distinction in the use of the two words mentioned. In the first place, the translators of our two accepted versions—the King James and the American Standard versions—make no such distinction in the translations of these words. The one hundred and forty-eight translators did not know of such a distinction; hence, they translated both terms in the word 'come' and the word 'coming.' Had there been such a distinction they would doubtless have so translated it into the English text.

"But in positive proof that there is no distinction, and that the two words are used interchangeably in reference to the coming of the Lord, I submit a few passages from the New Testament where these words occur.

"2 Thess. 2:8: 'And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.' The word 'brightness' in the passage is the word *epiphaneia*; and the word 'coming' is the word *parousia*. So we have both words in one passage. That helps us to understand their use. Now read it: 'Whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness (*epiphaneia*) of his coming (*parousia*).' So the coming of the Lord in this passage is called the *epiphaneia* of his *parousia*. He will destroy that Wicked—the wicked one—with the 'epiphaneia' of his 'parousia.' There is not one split second between the time of his 'brightness' and his 'coming,' or his 'manifestation' and his 'presence,' in this passage. It shows that the 'epiphaneia' and the 'parousia' will be at the same time, and the words are used to describe the same coming.

"1 Thess. 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 word 'coming' in this verse is the word 'parousia.' Here it says that Jesus Christ will come 'with all his saints' at the *parousia*. But the millennial theory is that he comes 'for his saints' at the *parousia*, and 'with' the saints at the *epiphaneia*. So Paul made a slip—he has the Lord coming 'with' the saints when he should be coming 'for' them. Paul has the Lord coming 'with' his saints seven years too early to fit the millennial theory. Paul was not a premillennialist, and did not use these words as the

premillennialists use them—Paul used them interchangeably with reference to the one coming of Christ. And that is right, because the coming of Christ will be his presence and it will be his manifestation—but it is the same coming, at the same time.

"1 Thess. 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.' When the Lord comes the apostle says he will 'bring with him' those who 'sleep in Jesus'—the dead in Christ. But this coming of Christ, when he is to 'bring with him' these saints who died 'in Jesus,' is the very time that the theory says he will come 'for his saints'—so they have him coming '*for*' his saints 'with' his saints!

"2 Tim. 4:8: 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.' In this passage Paul says that the Lord shall give to him 'the crown of righteousness' at his 'appearing'—*epiphaneia*. When will Paul receive the crown of righteousness? At the 'appearing' of the Lord—at the Lord's *epiphaneia*. This is proof that 'parousia' and 'epiphaneia' are used interchangeably, and do not teach the distinction which premillennialists attempt to make.

"1 Thess. 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.' Here the apostle assures the Thessalonians of what God will do 'at the coming of the Lord with all his saints'—at the *parousia* of Christ *with all the saints*. The millennial theory is that the *parousia* will be when he comes *for* the saints seven years before he comes *with* the saints, and therefore contradicts the passage.

"As the argument stands, in 2 Thess. 2, the return of Christ is called the brightness of his parousia—the manifestation of his presence; but this will be when he brings 'with him' those who have died in Jesus, according to 1 Thess. 4:14; but it will be the time when Paul receives the crown of righteousness, which will be at his 'appearing,' or *epiphaneia*; and finally, according to 1 Thess. 3:13, it will be at the *parousia* when he shall come 'with all his saints.'

Now, since the premillennial theory teaches that the *parousia* will be when Christ comes 'for the saints' and will take place seven years before the *epiphaneia* when he shall come 'with the saints'—but Paul plainly says in 1 Thess. 3:13 that Christ will come 'with all his saints' at the *parousia*—it follows that the premillennial theory is a flat denial of the statement of Paul, and to believe the theory is to deny the word of God." (*God's Prophetic Word*, pp.241-243).



## 2 THESSALONIANS 3

### A. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5: Paul Solicits their Prayers for Him.

1. Verse 1: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you."
  - a. As he begins to draw toward the close of this epistle, Paul requests that they remember him in their prayers. His plea does not indicate a selfishness on his part, but rather for the success of the gospel. "Pray for us" so that the word of Christ might proceed without hindrance. The apostle was not concerned about any personal advancement, but he was exceedingly zealous that the gospel might have its greatest possible effect in the world.
  - b. "How much a Christian teacher's power, increasing as time goes on, comes from the accumulation of intercession from his spiritual children!" (Lipscomb, p.105). The apostle had an undying trust in the efficacy of prayer. He requested the prayers of his brethren wherever he went.
    - 1) Romans 15:30: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me."
    - 2) 2 Corinthians 1:11: "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf."
    - 3) Ephesians 6:18-19: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel."
    - 4) Colossians 4:3: "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."
    - 5) 1 Thessalonians 5:25: "Brethren, pray for us."
    - 6) Philemon 1:22: "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you."
  - c. For the gospel to have "free course," it must to be allowed to be spread without restraint. In a society where the consciences of men have not been corrupted by unbelief and false religions, the word of Christ will be happily accepted.
    - 1) "The idea is, that it might meet with no obstruction, but that it might be carried abroad with the rapidity of a racer out of whose way every hindrance was removed. The gospel would spread rapidly in the earth if all the obstructions which men have put in its way were removed; and that they may be removed should be one of the constant subjects of prayer" (Barnes, p.96).
    - 2) But it must be preached and taught (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 10:13-18). Paul and his company were the leading edge of evangelism in Gentile lands; for the gospel to have its best effect, they (and others) must be active, and must have opportunity to teach. He was asking them to pray that he might be permitted to prosecute his work.
    - 3) The marginal alternative to "free course" is "may run" (it is so-translated in the ASV). "He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth: his word runneth very swiftly" (Ps. 147:15). Prayers of the faithful are essential for the progress of the gospel.
    - 4) Even when Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he was still able to spread the gospel. He was allowed to have visitors (Acts 28:30-31), instruct his co-workers, and write letters. Although he was bound,

- he found ways to continue his work. "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. 2:9).
- d. Another purpose for their prayers was to the end that the gospel might be glorified. Only the most foolish and ignorant person would refer to the gospel as a dead and lifeless message. Its truths do not lie dead and lifeless upon the page. "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12; cf. 1 Pet. 1:22-25).
    - 1) We are neither to worship the Bible nor give to it worldly applause. God's word is not glorified by our bowing down before it in worship, as men do before some idol.
    - 2) Thayer defines the verb *glorified* as "to make renowned, render illustrious, i.e., to cause the dignity of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged" (p.157). The gospel of Christ is exalted in the thinking of men when they perceive its inherent power to save souls (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16-17; Jas. 1:21), to transform the conduct of men to make them more like the Savior (2 Cor. 3:18), and thus to change the character of a man, a family, a city, and a society.
    - 3) In this process God is glorified, precious souls are saved, and the word of God is exalted in the thinking of men. There was a time in our country when there were few who would openly repudiate the Bible—there are many today who do so, and some of these are in our own ranks.
  - e. The gospel had been learned and accepted by the Thessalonians; it had modified their thinking and their lives, and was held in the highest of esteem by them.
    - 1) 1 Thessalonians 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, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."
    - 2) Compare: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).
2. Verse 2: "And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith."
- a. Paul was presently encountering the strong opposition of wicked men in the place he was then working. He was in Corinth, a city widely known for its open decadence. Acts 18 reports some of the troubles he experienced there. So strong and daunting were the obstacles, that the Lord saw fit to speak to the apostle in a vision, giving him encouragement. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10).
  - b. It was his desire that they pray for his deliverance from this obstruction to his work. "Both the use of the aorist tense in the verb 'delivered' and the article with 'unreasonable and evil men' point to a particular situation. Paul evidently had in mind a specific band of assailants" (Vestal, ADL, p.276). The apostle was able to do two things by this request: he would elicit their prayers in his behalf and encourage them in their persecution by showing that they were not the only ones in that situation.
  - c. The ones who opposed Paul are called "unreasonable" men.
    - 1) "The Greek word (*atopos*) means, properly, *out of place*; then absurd, unusual, strange; then improper, unreasonable, wicked. It is rendered in Luke 23:41, *amiss*; in Acts 28:6, *harm*....It refers here to men who acted amiss or improperly; men who were not found in the right place, or who had not the right views of things.... They gave an undue prominence to certain things, and less importance to others than they deserved" (Barnes, p.97).
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- 2) "Vine gives this information: "'Out of place' (*topos*, 'a place'), is translated 'unreasonable' in 2 Thess 3:2, where the meaning intended seems to be 'perverse, truculent.'"
- d. Those who opposed Paul are also called "wicked men." They were actively evil. "There are those evil people who may be content to perish in their own corruption, but the kind of individual here is not content unless he is corrupting others as well, and drawing them into the same destruction as himself" (Vestal, ADL, p.276). "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause *some* to fall" (Prov. 4:16).
- e. The apostle closes the verse by stating that not everyone has faith. The Greek text has the definite article "the" before faith. Paul is saying that "all men have not the faith."
- 1) **The faith** is the gospel. "*There is one...faith...*" (Eph. 4:4-5).
    - a) "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).
    - b) "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed" (Gal. 1:23).
    - c) "Beloved...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).
  - 2) The gospel has no appeal to worldly-minded and sinful men; nor does it appeal to those who have accepted some other religion. The unbelieving Jews had no interest in the gospel; the Muslims of today have no interest in the gospel.
  - 3) It seems strange that some who reject the gospel are not content to let others enjoy it, but will oppose the truth at every turn.
    - a) "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2).
    - b) "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:8).
- f. On the other hand, there are those who happily accept the truth. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:36-42).
3. Verse 3: "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from evil."
- a. While evil men reject the gospel, refusing to have faith, God is faithful to his word. He will live up to what he promised and will hold men accountable to the requirements he has placed on them.
    - 1) Romans 3:3-4: "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."
    - 2) 2 Timothy 2:12-13: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny
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- us: If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."
- 3) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
  - 4) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
- b. Because God is faithful, he will establish the Thessalonian saints; he would make it possible for them to be firm, strong, and stable. He would provide them with the necessary guidance and motivation through the inspired gospel, which would provide them with spiritual food, exercise, and strength to remain faithful.
- 1) Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
  - 2) 1 Peter 2:1-2: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
  - 3) Psalms 19:7-14: "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward. Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."
- c. God would also keep (guard) them from the evil one. The definite article *the* is before *evil* in the Greek text, indicating that a specific evil personage is meant. "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one" (2 Thess. 3:3, NKJ). We are given everything we need in the Scriptures to be able to resist the devil.
- 1) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
  - 2) 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
  - 3) James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
- d. "Verse 3 is a powerful statement that God's providence serves as a tremendous blessing in our struggle against 'the evil one' (ASV). Grammatically, the expression may be either neuter, 'from evil' (KJV), or masculine, 'the evil one,' the devil. While either makes good sense, most commentators agree that the masculine form fits the context better and is thus more probable here" (Vestal, ADL, p.279).
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4. Verse 4: "And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you."
  - a. "Having expressed confidence in the faithfulness of the Lord, Paul now expressed his confidence, a confidence that rested 'in the Lord,' that the Thessalonian brethren would continue in obedience to God. The verb 'have confidence' is in the perfect tense, indicating an enduring confidence. Paul's assurance concerned the converts but was not founded in them; it was grounded in the trustworthiness of God. The confidence was not so much in the reliability of human nature but in the Lord, who would work their willingness to obey voluntarily the commands given them to his glory (Psa. 118:8)" (Vestal, ADL, p.280).
  - b. Since God is certain to do his part in providing for the faithfulness of these Thessalonians, if they were faithful in their part of the arrangement, then all would be well with them; Paul could rest with the confidence that all would be well with them.
  - c. The apostle expressed his conviction that they were presently living up to their obligations before God, and that they would continue to do so. These obligations he describes as "the things which we command you." God revealed his will to them through the apostle.
    - 1) As he exercised his apostolic office, the message of the gospel was presented; the Thessalonians accepted it as the word of God; and the further messages he delivered to them in the form of the epistles were likewise the word of God.
    - 2) 1 Thessalonians 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, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."
5. Verse 5: "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."
  - a. "The prayer of the apostle was, that they might have the love of God in their hearts, and 'the patience of Christ;' that is, the same patience which Christ evinced in his trials. They were then suffering affliction and persecution. They needed patience, that they might endure their trials in a proper manner. It was natural for the apostle to refer them to the Saviour, the great example of patience, and to pray that they might have the same which he had. That it does not mean that they were to wait patiently for the *appearing* of Christ, as our translation seems to imply, is quite clear, because the apostle had just been showing them that he would *not* appear until after a long series of events had occurred" (Barnes, p.98).
  - b. "This verse serves as an important link to what has already been said and to what follows. This fourth mention of 'the Lord' in the first five verses of this chapter underscores Paul's firm conviction of Christ's presence in the lives of the saints despite the plots of evil men and the present imperfections of God's people. It was Paul's hope that the Lord would 'direct' their hearts. The word signifies the removal of all obstacles so the way is cleared (cf. 1 The. 3:11)" (Vestal, ADL, p.281).
  - c. "The love of God" can be understood to be either the love of God for mankind or the love of mankind for God. The love God has for us is intended to create love for God within us.
    - 1) 1 John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."
    - 2) 1 John 4:8: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."
  - d. The marginal rendering of "the patient waiting for Christ" is "the patience of Christ." As Barnes noted, the marginal translation better fits the context since the brethren were clearly told that the Lord's return would not occur for a long time, evidently after they had lived out their lives. However, either understanding is acceptable, for at the time, no one knew how much time would be required for the

apostasy to take place; for all they knew, it could occur within their lifetime.

B. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15: Instructions Regarding Discipline and Other Exhortations.

1. Verse 6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."
  - a. The issue of what to do to those who walk disorderly in a congregation is next addressed by Paul. Every congregation has wayward members at some time, so this is a vital subject.
  - b. The apostle first gives the source of the following requirement. The command is issued through Paul but it came from Christ. The apostles operated by divine inspiration.
    - 1) Mark 13:11: "But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" (NKJ).
    - 2) 1 Corinthians 2:9-13: "But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (NKJ).
    - 3) Ephesians 3:3-8: "How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (NKJ).
    - 4) To do anything in the name of Christ is to do that activity by his authority. Every doctrine and practice in religion must have his authority before it can be taught or done. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).
  - c. The Greek term for "withdraw" is defined as "to bring together, gather up (used of furling sails), hence in the Middle Voice, signifies to shrink from a person or thing" (Vine, Vol. 4, pp.223f).
    - 1) "It is not primarily that of cutting a man off, or denouncing him, or excommunicating him; it is that of *withdrawing* from him. We cease to have fellowship with him. We do not regard him any longer as a Christian brother. We separate from him. We do not seek to affect him in any other respect; we do not injure his name or standing as a man, or hold him up to reprobation; we do not follow him with denunciation or a spirit of revenge; we simply cease to recognize him as a Christian brother, when he shows that he is no longer worthy to be regarded as such. We do not deliver him over to the civil arm; we do not inflict any positive punishment on him; we leave him unmolested in all his rights as a citizen, a man, a neighbour, a husband, a father, and simply say that he is no longer one of us as a Christian. How different is this from *excommunication*, as it has been commonly understood! How different from the anathemas fulminated by the Papacy, and the delivering of the heretic over to the civil power!" (Barnes, p.99).

- 2) 1 Corinthians 5:9-13: "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; not even to eat with such a person. For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person" (NKJ).
  - 3) The brother who is withdrawn from is not to be considered as an enemy; he is not to be the object of vengeance; he is to be admonished as a brother, as Paul will teach in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother."
- d. This withdrawal of fellowship is to be directed toward any brother who walks disorderly. Vine gives the following definition of the Greek term:
- 1) Adjective: "Ataktos (*ataktos*) signifies not keeping order (*a*, negative, *tasso*, to put in order, arrange); it was especially a military term, denoting not keeping rank, insubordinate; it is used in 1 Thess. 5:14, describing certain church members who manifested an insubordinate spirit, whether by excitability or officiousness or idleness."
  - 2) Adverb: "Ataktos (*ataktos*) signifies disorderly, with slackness (like soldiers not keeping rank), 2 Thess. 3:6; in ver. 11 it is said of those in the church who refused to work, and became busybodies (cp. 1 Tim. 5:13)."
  - 3) Verb: "*Atakteo* (*ataktew*) signifies to be out of rank, out of one's place, undisciplined, to behave disorderly: in the military sense, to break rank; negatively in 2 Thess. 3:7, of the example set by the Apostle and his fellow-missionaries, in working for their bread while they were at Thessalonica so as not to burden the saints" (Vol. 1, p.320).
- e. To walk disorderly is to be out of step with the "tradition which he received of us." The tradition which Paul delivered was the inspired gospel.
- 1) 2 Thessalonians 2:15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
  - 2) "This shows that by the word 'tradition' the apostle did not mean *unwritten* doctrines handed down from one to another, for he evidently alludes to what he had himself taught them, and his direction is not that that should be *handed down* by them, but that they should obey it" (Barnes, p.99).
- f. The Bible speaks of different kinds of tradition.
- 1) The traditions of men. These are practices and beliefs, invented by men, and handed down to and through the following generations. These traditions are unnecessary and unscriptural and sinful. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).
  - 2) The traditions of Judaism which were also of human design. These were the inventions of ancient Jewish commentators and teachers, and were bound as if they were the oracles of God. Christ denounced these severely, declaring that to follow such was to nullify worship (Mark 7:7-13). "A modern example of exalting tradition is expressed by Bertrand Conway, a Roman Catholic spokesman, who declared that his church 'receives and venerates, with an equal affection of piety, all the books of the Old and New Testament and also the said traditions preserved in the Catholic
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- church" (Wacaster, ADL, p.287).
- 3) The text speaks of another kind of tradition, that which was delivered by divine revelation to the apostles and prophets of Christ. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8-9). We are not permitted to go beyond or stop short of these inspired traditions; these are the word of God.
2. Verses 7-8: "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you."
    - a. Paul reminded the brethren that they ought to follow the example he set for them when he was in their city; his conduct had been most becoming of the gospel. "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. Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:9-10). His example was to be imitated by all of those who knew him.
      - 1) 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ."
      - 2) Philippians 4:9: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."
    - b. The apostle affirmed that he had properly behaved himself while he was there. This was his normal way of living. While he would not claim to be sinlessly perfect, yet he could truthfully say that there was nothing blameworthy about his life. They could safely comport themselves after his example, and they would not go astray. His excellent example of Christian living was especially important at the time when the full revelation of the gospel in written form had not yet been delivered.
    - c. While in their midst, Paul did not obtain his daily support from the brethren, but worked with his own hands in order to provide for his needs. This was his common practice. It denied his enemies any semblance of a complaint that he preached only for money.
      - 1) 2 Corinthians 11:8-12: "I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them*, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we."
      - 2) Philippians 4:15-17: "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account."
      - 3) Acts 18:1-3: "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."
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3. Verses 9-10: "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."
    - a. "While it is true that the apostle had the right to expect support from the brethren, he often waived that right in order that he might be more effective (1 Cor. 9:1-18). We must keep in mind that it is no discredit to a man who desires to support himself while preaching the Gospel. Many a pioneer preacher was self-supported, laboring with his hands that he might not burden the brethren....Those who preach the Gospel and are supported by their brethren should take care that they give them an honest day's labor" (Wacaster, p.289).
    - b. Paul did not avail himself of the right to partake of their material bounties for his own support in order that he might leave them an example. Apparently he perceived a tendency on the part of some of the brethren toward idleness. These needed a positive example of industry.
    - c. They also needed to be taught the elementary truth regarding work. While he was there, he taught them that those who do not work, forfeit their right to eat. He specifies this doctrine again here. The church has no obligation to support a man who will not work for his own bread. This presupposes that he has both the ability and the opportunity to earn his living.
      - 1) Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return."
      - 2) "They should not be supported by the church. This was a maxim among the Jews....The maxim is founded in obvious justice, and is in accordance with the great law under which our Creator has placed us, Gen. 3:19. That law, in the circumstances, was benevolent, and it should be our aim to carry it out in reference to ourselves and to others. The law here laid down by the apostle extends to all who are able to work for a living, and who will not do it, and binds us *not* to contribute to their support if they will not labour for it....No one can be justified in assisting a lazy man. In no possible circumstances are we to contribute to foster indolence. A man might as properly help to maintain open vice" (Barnes, p.100).
      - 3) "The philosophy of doing less and less for more and more is a blight upon mankind....Gross laziness will destroy any people foolish enough to indulge in it. Without depreciating any of the marvelous social gains of the current generation, one may truly say that America was not built by a forty-hour, five-day week; and the issue has not yet been determined whether or not such a work-week will be sufficient to preserve our nation and hand it down to posterity....How deplorable it is that government has tipped the scales to the advantage of the loafer and freeloader who claim, as a right, the privilege of being supported in idleness. It is hard to decide which is the more reprehensible—the professional shirker, or the government which harbors and sustains him" (Coffman, p.125).
    - d. "Paul saw that the gospel was to be propagated chiefly by its splendid effects on the lives of all classes of society, and he realized that almost the first duty of the church was to be respected, and so he not only exhorts the individual members to independence, but he lays down the principle that no economic parasite is to be tolerated in the church. This forms an important complement to the teachings of Jesus" (Lipscomb, p.110).
  4. Verse 11: "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies."
    - a. The apostle states that he has learned that some members of the Lord's church at Thessalonica were walking disorderly, who were not working, but who were busybodies. Timothy most likely brought
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- this report: "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; 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" (1 Thess. 3:1-2).
- b. One who will not work will be involved in something, often something evil. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop" [an uninspired proverb].
    - 1) 1 Timothy 5:13: "And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not."
    - 2) 1 Peter 4:15-16: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."
  - c. These Christians had quit working because they thought Christ's return was imminent; that this is so is seen by the specific statement (2 Thess. 2:1ff) that the Lord was not going to return for a considerable period of time, plus the command Paul issued that the church had no right to support those who will not work (3:10).
  - d. These offenders had nothing at which they were employed, but they were busy about the affairs of other people. They have no business, and yet they are busy with other people's business. Paul uses a play on words.
  - e. In verse six, the apostle commanded that fellowship was to be withdrawn from those who walked disorderly, and did not follow the will of God. He declares in verse eleven that the ones he describes were walking disorderly. Therefore, the church was to discipline them. There were at least three sins of which these people were guilty.
    - 1) They had accepted the false doctrine that the return of Christ was imminent. It was not imminent then, and we cannot know that it is imminent today.
    - 2) By refusing to work, they were in rebellion against one of God's most basic requirements, which applies to all people, throughout time.
      - a) Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return."
      - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:12: "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."
    - 3) Their practice of meddling in the affairs of other men violated God's will.
      - a) 1 Timothy 5:14-15: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan."
      - b) 1 Peter 4:15: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."
5. Verse 12: "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."
- a. Notice the strong way Paul stated this requirement: He commanded them to work and eat their own bread. They were not permitted to be maintained by the labors of other men. If they did not heed this command, they were obviously fixed in their rebellion, and were to be disciplined (cf. 2 Thess. 3:14-15).
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- b. The command did not originate with Paul; he was an apostle of Christ, and was given revelations of the divine will. The word "command" (and its cognates) is used four times in this chapter.
    - 1) 2 Thessalonians 3:4: "And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you."
    - 2) 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."
    - 3) 2 Thessalonians 3:10: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."
    - 4) 2 Thessalonians 3:12: "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."
  - c. Paul both commanded and exhorted them to follow these instructions. He mixed entreaty with a command. He pleaded with them to obey God's will.
  - d. They were to work quietly and eat their own bread. This was the opposite of their present practices. "Paul had already bidden these mischief-makers to quietly do their own work and eat their own bread (1 Thess. 4:11), and not that of their honest and laborious brethren. Honesty, industry, attention to one's own business, freedom from tattling, and mischief-making are cardinal and essential virtues in the religion of Jesus Christ. To follow these adds so much to the happiness of a community" (Lipscomb, p.112).
6. Verse 13: "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing."
- a. Lest they should get the idea that he was discouraging their giving assistance to the poor, the apostle hastens to add that they were not to be weary in well doing.
    - 1) "Paul commands all who are able to eat their own bread, be quiet, and not meddle, he cautions them not to cease to render assistance to the needy, to do good to all, as the opportunity affords. This is in perfect harmony with the foregoing instructions. Nothing discourages giving to the needy like having the lazy and meddlesome seeking support" (Lipscomb, p.112).
    - 2) There are so many idlers, pan-handlers, and spongers in modern society that we may tend to ignore every needy case. This extreme must be avoided.
  - b. Galatians 6:9-10: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
  - c. 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
  - d. Galatians 2:10: "Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do."
7. Verses 14-15: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother."
- a. A man's obedience to the things Paul writes is made the test of whether he is to continue in the fellowship of the faithful. A faithful Christian has the right to fellowship only other faithful saints.
    - 1) 1 John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."
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- 2) 2 John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
  - 3) These passages also show that only those who are obedient to the will of God have fellowship with God and Christ.
- b. The inspired Scriptures are the standard of our acceptance with God; only those who are obedient to the Scriptures have the right to fellowship with the redeemed. If a Christian ceases to faithfully obey the word of God, the other saints are to withdraw their fellowship from him. They are not to have company with him.
- 1) This is true if the offender is a false teacher. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18; cf. 2 John 9-11).
  - 2) This is true if the offender is a fornicator, covetous, extortioner, idolater, or railer. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:9-11).
  - 3) This is true if the offender will not repent. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:15-17).
  - 4) This is true if the offender is disobedient in any other way. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6).
- c. There are purposes this withdrawal of fellowship is intended to accomplish.
- 1) It keeps the faithful from being contaminated by the evil of the sinful member.
  - 2) It lets unbelievers know that the church does not condone the evil actions of the wayward one.
  - 3) It shows the unfaithful member that his wickedness is known, and that it is not accepted.
  - 4) It marks the wayward member as an unfaithful child of God, and that he is under condemnation.
  - 5) It is intended to make the sinful member ashamed, so that he will repent.
- d. The offender is to be *noted*. The individual is to be identified as an unfaithful member so that fellowship is not extended to him. If he is retained in fellowship with the faithful, that would denote to him that he is guilty of no sin, thus he would be encouraged to continue in his wicked ways.
- 1) Unless the faithful identify him as an unfaithful Christian, he will be allowed to continue in their fellowship.
  - 2) Taking "note" of the individual necessarily requires a public action in which his sins are identified
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- and the faithful are admonished to withdraw their fellowship from him.
- e. Paul cautions the brethren against considering the disciplined member an enemy; rather, they were to admonish him as a brother.
    - 1) They were to have no *company* with him. "The Greek word here means, to mix up together; then to mingle together with; to have intercourse with. The idea is that they were not to mingle with him as a Christian brother, or as one of their own number. They were not to show that they regarded him as a worthy member of the church, or as having a claim to its privileges. The extent of their discipline was, that they were to withdraw from him..." (Barnes, pp.101f).
    - 2) "Though deprived of church privileges, and shut out from fellowship with the members of the church, he was not to be counted hopeless. This discipline was to be expected to terminate in his repentance and restoration. And for this end, he was to be admonished as a brother" (Lipscomb, p.113).
    - 3) The faithful are to use every means and opportunity available to cause the wayward member to repent.
      - a) Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
      - b) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
  - f. There are many knotty questions and situations that arise in connection with the matter of discipline.
    - 1) What is the faithful wife to do when her husband becomes unfaithful and is withdrawn from by the church? What are faithful parents to do in the case where their offspring (still at home) is disciplined? In these cases, there are other relationships that also pertain. The wife does not cease to be a wife when her husband is disciplined; the same principle is true with parents whose child is disciplined. The natural relationship is to continue, but the spiritual fellowship is broken.
    - 2) This is also the case in the workplace situation. If the employer is disciplined, the Christian employee can still work there—it is the spiritual relationship that is broken. The same is true of a fellow-worker on the job who is disciplined—a faithful saint can still work with the wayward member—provided he does not give the disciplined brother the notion that his sin is being condoned.

C. 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18: Closing Salutation.

1. Verse 16: "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord *be* with you all."
    - a. Paul expresses here his heart's desire that the Lord might give peace to the brethren by every possible means. This peace would include the outward peace that would give them freedom from tribulation. It would include the inner peace that is so necessary for their health and happiness.
    - b. "The Lord of peace signifies not only that he can bestow peace, but also and primarily that it is his own attribute. He has peace because he sees the end from the beginning, and is unassailable in his righteousness and sovereignty" (Lipscomb, p.113).
    - c. John 16:33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
    - d. Ephesians 2:14: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall
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of partition *between us.*"

- e. Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
2. Verse 17: "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write."
    - a. Paul inscribed this final statement with his own hand, which he says, is the token in every epistle. Some have concluded that this means he did not write the book of Hebrews, since no such inscription is given there.
    - b. However, the epistles to the Thessalonians are the oldest of his letters in the Bible; it is by no means certain that he intended to say that every epistle he would ever write would have his personal note at the end. Also, he could write the closing note without identifying himself by name.
    - c. His statement here might simply be a reference "to some mark or method which Paul had of signing his name, which was well known, and which would easily be recognized by them" (Barnes, p.102).
  3. Verse 18: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen."
    - a. In bringing the epistle to its conclusion, Paul expressed his wish that the grace of Christ would be upon them all. What greater blessing could he have pronounced upon them than this!
    - b. He closes all of his other epistles with similar references:
      - 1) Romans 16:24: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen."
      - 2) 1 Corinthians 16:23-24: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."
      - 3) 2 Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen."
      - 4) Galatians 6:18: "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen."
      - 5) Ephesians 6:24: "Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."
      - 6) Philippians 4:23: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen."
      - 7) Colossians 4:18: "The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen."
      - 8) 1 Thessalonians 5:28: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen."
      - 9) 1 Timothy 6:21: "Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace *be* with thee. Amen."
      - 10) 2 Timothy 4:22: "The Lord Jesus Christ *be* with thy spirit. Grace *be* with you. Amen."
      - 11) Titus 3:15: "All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace *be* with you all. Amen."
      - 12) Philemon 1:25: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen."
      - 13) Hebrews 13:25: "Grace *be* with you all. Amen."
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# The Bible Doctrine of Church Discipline

## A. INTRODUCTION.

1. The title implies that church discipline is a Bible subject.
  - a. Our study shall establish this fact, as we investigate the subject.
  - b. If it is a Bible doctrine, it is the will of God expressed on the subject.
  - c. By church discipline, reference is to the Lord's church, not to some denomination.
  - d. By discipline, we mean that plan or process by which erring members of the Lord's church are corrected, especially because of misconduct.
2. By definition, discipline falls under two headings.
  - a. **Preventive Discipline.** This is done through teaching and training. It tends to prevent Christians from straying from the way of holiness by instilling God's will in their minds.
    - 1) Matthew 28:20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen."
    - 2) Acts 20:20,26-27: "*And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house....Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
    - 3) 2 Timothy 4:2-3: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."
  - b. **Corrective Discipline.** This is the plan or process by which an erring Christian is shown his sins and encouraged to turn from them. If he will not repent, withdrawal of fellowship is invoked. This study deals with Corrective Discipline.

## B. DISCUSSION.

1. The need for discipline is obvious.
    - a. It is needed in every home. In the modern American home, there seems to be too little time for positive training or for corrective discipline. We are presently harvesting the consequences of permissiveness and lack of control on the part of many parents.
      - 1) Children who are brought up without respect for parental authority are not apt to respect the authority of the nation, the school, or the Bible.
      - 2) Adding to the problem is the abuse some parents and others inflict upon young people, which in turn causes laws to be passed restricting parental discipline.
    - b. It is needed in the school. No doubt school officials have abused some rebellious students in the past, but it is certain that the vast majority of students who were disciplined were made better people, and others learned from their discipline.
    - c. It is needed in the nation. In our time, we have seen many laws relaxed, which has resulted in an increase in crime. No one wants a repressive government, but neither does anyone want to live in a society where law and order is not enforced.
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- d. It is needed in the church. For a generation, across our great brotherhood, concerted efforts have been raised against the authority of elders in the local congregation. One purpose of this effort was to weaken opposition to innovations, modernism, and liberalism which the few were seeking to impose on the many. Godly, strong elders had to be removed, or have their authority weakened or eliminated.
- 1) As long as the preacher and elders were sound in the faith, and were aware of the current movements within the church, the local congregation where they served was insulated against error. But when the preacher was scripturally weak (but had a good personality), he could influence the eldership and members; when there was an unsound elder, he could undermine the influence of the godly men in the leadership.
  - 2) When unsound men rule in a congregation, the apostasy of the majority of the members is assured. Unless preventive and corrective Bible discipline are exercised, the congregation will most assuredly fall away into sin and error. If sin is winked at, it will soon be embraced by others; where false teaching is allowed, false teaching will be embraced by the many; where the truth is not set forth with authority, both sin and error will be embraced.
  - 3) Even where godly elders serve and sound preachers preach, there will be those in the church who will need to be disciplined. Friction between brethren often leads to sinful divisions; religious error finds its way into congregations; members are frequently enticed into committing sin. In every congregation, there are times when corrective discipline must be practiced.
  - 4) Preventive discipline hinders sin and error because it promotes truth and holiness; corrective discipline removes the evils of sin and error that have entered the individual and the congregation.
  - 5) 1 Timothy 3:15: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
  - 6) Revelation 2:5: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."
  - 7) 1 Corinthians 5:5-6: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"
- e. God exercised discipline in the Old Testament, and requires it under the gospel.
- 1) Examples: He punished Adam and Eve, Cain, Noah's generation, the people of Sodom, and even the people of Israel. Hard, immediate punishment was often inflicted, but not because of hatred on God's part, but rather because of love for the innocent.
  - 2) In cases of Private and Personal Offenses: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:15-17).
  - 3) In cases of Religious Error: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18). The word translated "avoid" is elsewhere translated "eschew" (1 Peter 3:11: "Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.")
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- 4) In cases in Public Knowledge of Gospel Violations: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us....And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15).
  - 5) A Case History: "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ....But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:3-4,13).
  - 6) No one who believes the Bible will deny the rightness of discipline. God never did anything or commanded anything that was unimportant!
2. Why then is corrective discipline not being widely exercised in the church?
- a. In many cases, its absence is due to ignorance of the Bible. How many sermons have you heard devoted entirely to this subject? How many classes have you studied in which the subject was carefully examined? What we do not study, we cannot learn; and what we do not know, we are not apt to practice. But if we understand the serious nature of the subject, only then will we be apt to practice corrective discipline.
  - b. Friendship and kinship within a congregation often hinder discipline. If you were an elder, would you be willing to withdraw fellowship from your father or mother, or son or daughter, or some very close friend? One faithful Christian would have no fellowship with his unfaithful son-in-law; another withdrew from his own liberal brother. But another exploded in anger when a committee asked him if he would be willing to withdraw from his unfaithful father if he were appointed to the eldership. God's law cannot be ignored with impunity!
  - c. Lack of love for God will cause us to ignore this great Biblical commandment. Our only means of expressing our love is by obedience: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:2-3).
  - d. Lack of love for the offending member will cause us to ignore this Bible command. We can express our love for our children in no more effective way than by disciplining them when they err; we can show no greater love for a wayward saint than by trying to bring him to repentance. We show no love for him by ignoring his sin.
  - e. Sin in the lives of those who are to lead in the discipline process keeps them from doing what they know ought to be done. While no one is entirely free from instances of sin, those taking part in discipline must be as holy as they can be; there must not be any continuing practice in their lives that is blameworthy. We must be as consistent as possible with our profession.
    - 1) Matthew 7:1-5: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."
    - 2) Romans 2:1: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."
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- 3) Romans 2:19-22: "And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"
- f. Procrastination is probably the most common reason for the absence of discipline. We dislike to do unpleasant tasks, and the most unpleasant and painful thing you will ever do as a Christian is to apply the withdrawal process. "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?....Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:9,11). It is painful to both parties.
- g. Fear of legal repercussions discourages some from applying church discipline.
  - 1) In the early 1980s, a congregation in Oklahoma withdrew from one of its members who had been found guilty of adultery. Her guilt was established, the elders followed biblical procedures, and fellowship was withdrawn. The woman sued the church, and won a large judgment. She appeared on a national television talk show, and received strong support from the host and most of the audience. Garland Elkins ably defended the truth on the program. The jury verdict was later overturned by the Oklahoma Supreme Court.
  - 2) The prospect of such an ordeal as this undoubtedly dampens the enthusiasm of some members and elders in exercising their God-given obligation to withdraw from wayward members.
3. What purposes are to be gained by corrective discipline?
  - a. The first and primary purpose is to obey God. This lies foremost in the reasons for corrective discipline. We are to do it because God says for us to do it! If we can recognize this vitally important element in the subject, we will be able to overcome our reservations to it.
  - b. The purpose, as far as the offender is concerned, it to restore him to faithfulness and save his soul. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).
    - 1) To restore our health, it is sometimes necessary to have an operation. Surgery is an unpleasant and painful process, but it is for our own good. We discipline our children for their good, even though it is unpleasant and painful.
    - 2) Applying corrective discipline to an erring saint is unpleasant and painful, but it is the last means we have to save his soul.
    - 3) 1 Timothy 1:19-20: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."
    - 4) 1 Corinthians 5:5: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."
    - 5) 2 Thessalonians 3:14: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."
    - 6) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know,

- that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
- 7) Hebrews 10:23-31: "Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
- c. Church discipline is essential in order to maintain the purity of the church.
- 1) It is sometimes necessary to remove a diseased limb or organ from our physical body for the good of the whole body. An infected appendix can poison and kill.
  - 2) Sin is like a cancer, or leaven, or a disease. It must be isolated and controlled to prevent its spread throughout the congregation.
  - 3) The Lord used great wisdom in the organization of the church. He permitted no controlling body to govern the whole church; that would have made it easy for the church to be led into apostasy. He arranged it so that each local group has its own leaders, being guided by the Bible.
  - 4) A large, single plate glass window can be destroyed by one brick, but if the same opening is covered by many panes, the brick will destroy only a part of the whole. It is more difficult for error to infect the entire church under the Lord's arrangement. The Communist governments of China and Russia looked with greater favor toward the churches of Christ than to the sectarian churches because we have no central headquarters. They saw no great threat from us, and the people liked us because we do not carry the banner of a human authority.
- d. Discipline is necessary in order for us to do our primary work of saving the world by preaching the gospel.
- 1) We can never teach the gospel to the lost if they can accurately accuse us of condoning sin in our own midst.
    - a) Philippians 2:14-16: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."
    - b) Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
    - c) Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
    - d) 1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
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- e) Titus 2:1,8: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine....But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate."
  - f) 1 Peter 2:12: "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."
- 2) Inconsistency between theory and practice is one of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the gospel. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21).
- e. Discipline is essential in order to uphold fear (reverence) for God in the church and before the world.
- 1) Acts 5:11,14: "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things....And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."
  - 2) Acts 13:10-12: "And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."
  - 3) Acts 19:17: "And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."
  - 4) Romans 11:22: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."
  - 5) 1 Timothy 5:20: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."
- f. Discipline is necessary in order for us to show our love for God and for the one in error.
- 1) Proverbs 13:24: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."
  - 2) 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
  - 3) Hebrews 12:6: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."
4. The Bible identifies those it is our duty to discipline.
- a. Those who cause offenses and will not repent are to be disciplined.
    - 1) Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."
    - 2) This case covers a situation in which one brother does evil to another brother in Christ. Efforts are to be made privately by the offended party to rectify the situation by bringing the offender to repentance. If those efforts do not work, the church is to withdraw fellowship from him.
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- 3) Some have misused this passage to assert that when a brother preaches error in a public assembly, that the only way he can be corrected is to go to him privately first, before exposing his error publicly. However, this passage covers private offenses; public offenses are to be handled publicly. If we allow a grievous error to go unopposed, we may be allowing precious souls to be destroyed.
- b. Any saint who walks disorderly is to be disciplined. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us....And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15).
- 1) *Disorderly* is a military term designating those who break ranks or desert their posts, so that they cannot perform their duty (MacKnight).
  - 2) 2 Thessalonians 3:6 uses "disorderly" in contrast with walking after the inspired traditions:
    - a) "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, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 The. 2:13).
    - b) "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 The. 2:15).
  - 3) "Whatever one may be doing that is contrary to the teachings of the Apostles is disorderly conduct and sufficient grounds for withdrawal if the guilty brother will not repent" (Guy. N. Woods).
  - 4) The usual offenders are those who are guilty of committing works of the flesh, of which about 100 are identified in the New Testament (Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Tim. 3:1-5, etc.).
  - 5) *Disorderly* naturally includes those who forsake the assemblies (they are in direct violation of Hebrews 10:25-31).
  - 6) Those who gossip, backbite, spread discord, or otherwise misuse the tongue are walking *disorderly* (James 3:1-12).
- c. Those who teach or practice false doctrine are to be disciplined.
- 1) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
  - 2) Titus 3:10: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject."
  - 3) 1 Timothy 6:3-5: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." The word translated "withdraw" here is *aphistemi*.
    - a) The word is defined by Strong to mean: "usually to desist, desert, depart, draw (fall) away, refrain, withdraw self."
    - b) The word is defined by Thayer: (intransitively) "to stand off, stand aloof....To keep one's self away from, absent one's self from anyone's society or fellowship."
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- c) The word is used in 1 Timothy 4:1: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall **depart** from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."
- 4) Those who advocate modernism walk *disorderly* by rejecting the inspiration and authority of the Bible, by denying the Virgin Birth of Christ, or repudiating Bible miracles. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph. 5:11).
- 5) Those who advocate liberalism walk *disorderly* by denying the authority principle of the Scriptures, following practices that have no New Testament authority (e.g., instrumental music in worship), fellowshipping sectarianism, Bales' doctrine of marriage-divorce-remarriage, etc. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into *your* house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11, ASV).
- 6) What we believe and what we practice in religion is important; the salvation of our souls depends on our attachment to the truth.
- a) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
- b) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
- c) Galatians 1:6-12: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
- d) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
- e) 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
- f) 2 John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
- g) Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book."
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5. When and how should withdrawal of fellowship be done?

- a. Not many details are furnished by the Scriptures, hence a large measure of wisdom must be employed. Rash or premature action can do more harm than good. In usual cases, the congregation has elders who oversee the flock, operating by the authority of the New Testament.
- 1) These men must have met the qualifications, and be capable of seeing to the discipline of the members who need it.
    - a) 1 Timothy 3:1-7: "This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."
    - b) Titus 1:5-9: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."
  - 2) They have been given responsibility and authority in the congregation, and are to be the ones who lead the church in all its work.
    - a) Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
    - b) 1 Peter 5:1-3: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."
  - 3) The members are to follow their leadership: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation....Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:7, 17).
- b. The individual's guilt must be clearly established. Compare Deuteronomy 17:2-7: "If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; And it be told thee, and thou hast heard *of it*, and inquired diligently, and, behold, *it be* true, *and* the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought in Israel: Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, *even* that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. At the mouth of two
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witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; *but* at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."

- 1) Paul did not rebuke the Corinthians for their strife until he had clear evidence of their guilt: "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you" (1 Cor. 1:11).
  - 2) Both Testaments required witnesses.
    - a) Matthew 18:16: "But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."
    - b) John 8:17: "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true."
    - c) 2 Corinthians 13:1: "This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."
  - c. The offending brother is to be amply warned and admonished.
    - 1) 1 Thessalonians 5:14: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are **unruly**, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*." [Note: *Unruly* is the same in the Greek as *disorderly* in 2 Thessalonians 3:6].
    - 2) Titus 3:10: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject."
  - d. Sincere, concerted efforts are to be made to restore the fallen saint. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Only after much effort, and only if he refuses to repent, should fellowship be withdrawn. This is the last step we can take; God's condemnation then rests upon him.
  - e. The procedure given by the Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 sheds some light on the process. Keep in mind, Christ is here giving a case of a private offense; however, the same procedure will fit other cases in which a sinful saint's salvation is being sought.
    - 1) Talk with the individual face to face. In the case of a private offense, the innocent party is to initiate the action; in the case of a fallen saint, those who are spiritual can call on the erring brother and show concern over his sin. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).
    - 2) If the offending person remains unrepentant, take one or two others in order to reinforce your appeal to him, and to serve as witnesses.
    - 3) If the individual stills remains unrepentant, report the matter to the church. This would require that the details be given, including his name, his offense, and the efforts that had been made to this point. The church is to exert its influence in the matter, seeking the offender's repentance. Reporting to the church is to be done by presenting the full details to the elders (or the men of the congregation if there are no elders). The elders or the men are then able to appraise the church of the problem. [This does not give a female member who has followed the initial procedure the right to stand before the church and present the information—1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Cor. 14:34-35]. After the report has been made to the church, the elders and other members are to make appeals to the sinful Christian to repent. If he does not, an announcement is to be given to the church that the erring member is no longer in fellowship with the faithful.
    - 4) If repentance is not forthcoming, and a reasonable amount of time and effort have been expended,
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step four is to follow. This final step is, in the Lord's terminology, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." That is, have no fellowship with him henceforth, unless he repents.

- f. Other New Testament passages give the following information on the nature of the withdrawal:
- 1) Second Thessalonians 3:6,14,15: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us....And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother."
    - a) *Have no company with him* is defined by Vincent to mean, "place one's self away from" the impenitent member (p.955).
    - b) The purpose is to cause him to be ashamed of his evil conduct, and seek to be restored into the favor of the Lord and the saints.
  - 2) First Corinthians 5 gives the case of the adulterous man in the Corinthian church: "It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles; that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; not even to eat with such a person. For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person'" (5:1-13, NKJV).
    - a) They were to deliver him unto Satan. That is, to turn him from the communion with the saints back into the realm under the power of Satan, where he loses the esteem and association of the church.
    - b) Paul describes the action as a purging out of the old leaven. The church is cleansed by the removal of the offending party and by avoiding further fellowship with him (until he repents).
    - c) With this person, the saints were not to eat. If they had social fellowship with the man, their contact would encourage him in his evil, and would subject themselves to contamination, and would encourage other saints to have fellowship with him. Thus, the withdrawal of fellowship would be nullified.
    - d) Put away the wicked man.
  - 3) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not
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- our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
- a) The inspired apostle gave order that the brethren mark and turn away from false teachers within the brotherhood (and all others).
  - b) They were to have no dealings with them; they were not permitted to fellowship them or in any way to encourage them in their evil deeds. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11).
- 4) Titus 3:10: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." One who has been found guilty of heresy (one who causes division in the church by a factious attitude or false teaching) is to be rejected after the first and second admonition. He is to be refused (ASV); he is to be avoided.
- 5) Matthew 18:17: "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."
- a) The Jewish people had no fellowship with publicans and Gentiles. Their only association with them was necessary business and official contact; there were no social dealings.
  - b) One who is withdrawn from by the church is to be avoided, with no fellowship extended to him by any faithful member.
- g. What is a faithful Christian lady to do if her unfaithful husband is withdrawn from by the church? What if the unfaithful parent of a faithful member is disciplined? What if one's employer or employee is withdrawn from? In these cases, what is the faithful saint to do about the relationship?
- 1) In the case of a marriage, God does not require that a Christian be married only to another faithful Christian in order for the marriage to be scriptural. Paul dealt with this in 1 Corinthians 7:12-14: "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."
    - a) The marriage is still a relationship which God sanctions, even if one party is not a Christian or is an unfaithful Christian. The case at hand is one in which the Christian wife has two different relationships with her husband: in the marriage and in the spiritual realm. The spiritual bond can be broken and the marital bond still be in place.
    - b) She can still be a good wife to her husband (who has been withdrawn from), but she is not to encourage him in his unfaithfulness to the Lord. She is to use whatever opportunities she may have to admonish him to return to faithfulness.
  - 2) This same rationale pertains to the workplace. If the employer falls away from the Lord, the faithful worker can maintain his work relationship; but he is not to encourage the employer in his spiritual infidelity; he may have opportunities to admonish him to return to the Lord.
  - 3) The same approach must be taken in the case of a parent or child who has been disciplined by the church.
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- a) If the child is still at home when the parent is disciplined, he has no choice but to remain in the home; if it is the offspring who is disciplined by the church, the faithful parent is still under obligation to the Lord to take care of the child until such time that the child leaves home. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8).
  - b) In the case of a man whose parent (s) has been withdrawn from by the church, he retains his obligations to his parents to tend to their needs when they are unable to take care of themselves. "But if any widow hath children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety towards their own family, and to requite their parents: for this is acceptable in the sight of God" (1 Tim. 5:4).
- h. What should be the faithful Christian's attitude and relationship toward an erring Christian who has not been withdrawn from by the church? If the church has not or will not withdraw from a sinful member, may individual Christians withdraw from the wayward member?
- 1) Nothing should be done by any faithful Christian that would encourage the wayward saint in his rebellion. To encourage someone to continue in sin is to partake of his sin (cf. 2 John 9-11). This applies if the sinful Christian is a fleshly relative or a relative stranger to us.
  - 2) An individual Christian should have no fellowship with an unfaithful Christian. Family or work contacts may be unavoidable (as noted above), but we must not give the backslider the idea that we support his unfaithful conduct.
  - 3) What should we do in the case of a Christian (relative or non-relative) who deserts the Lord's church and joins a sectarian church? The individual may honestly believe that he is still faithful, but that does not change the fact that he has given up the truth and has taken up error.
    - a) To practice religious error is sinful (2 The. 2:10-12; 2:15; 3:6), and we are warned against encouraging anyone who promotes error (2 John 9-11; cf. Eph. 5:11).
    - b) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
    - c) 1 John 5:17: "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."
    - d) Any violation of God's word is sin; a violation can be in the realm of morality or in the realm of doctrinal truth.
- i. Each member of the church is to participate in the withdrawal of fellowship in order for it to be effective. But the one withdrawn from is not to be counted as an enemy. He is to be admonished as a brother. "Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother." (2 Thess. 3:15).
- 1) We cannot avoid all contact with the individual; we might work with him; he might be a neighbor; we might meet him on the street. Whenever such contact is had with him, as opportunity comes, we are to admonish him to return to the Lord.
  - 2) The purpose of the withdrawal is not punishment; neither is it excommunication. It is designed to drive home to the erring saint what he has lost.
6. There are some objections brethren raise against corrective discipline.
- a. There is the "wheat and tares" objection (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). This position argues that only the Lord is able to separate the saints from the sinners, and that that separation will not occur until the end of time.
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- 1) But in the parable, the field is the world. The seed was planted in the world, and the product was gathered out of "his kingdom." The kingdom here is the world. Christ simply teaches in the parable that until his second coming, his people will be in the world, scattered among the unbelievers. He will make the separation in the Judgment.
  - 2) Thus, the parable of the tares does not even touch the subject of church discipline.
- b. "We are not to judge." Matthew 7:1-5 is misused to teach that we are not to practice discipline: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." The claim is that since all of us are imperfect, none is capable of passing such judgment.
- 1) But other passages require us to discipline disorderly members:
    - a) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
    - b) 1 Corinthians 5: "It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."
    - c) 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."
    - d) Titus 3:10: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject."
  - 2) And other passages require that we pass judgment:
    - a) Matthew 7:6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." This passage
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immediately follows the section that speaks against judging. This verse requires that we judge whether another person is a spiritual “dog” (or “swine”). It follows that only certain judgments are prohibited by Matthew 7:1-5 and that other judgments are required.

- b) Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
  - c) John 7:24: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."
  - d) 1 Corinthians 5:12-13: "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."
  - e) 1 Corinthians 6:5: "I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?"
- 3) Matthew 7 does not forbid the casting out of motes; it does demand that we remove the beams from our own eyes first. Matthew 7:5 demands that righteous judgments be made. What is forbidden are harsh, hypocritical, unfair judgments: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."
- c. "We cannot withdraw from those with whom we have no fellowship." For example, a brother deserts the Lord's church, and joins a man-made denomination; he departs from our midst with bitterness, berating the brethren for supposed offenses. What is to be done? He has cut off his fellowship from us. Are we still obligated to go through the mere motions of withdrawal?
- 1) The Lord's commandments are still in the Bible, and they must be obeyed. Are our obligations removed if we presume that withdrawal will have no effect? If so, why should we ever practice corrective discipline, for one who is so hardened in his sin to reject our attempts to restore him, is not likely to repent after the withdrawal takes effect. With that reasoning, we could refuse to use corrective discipline in every case that develops! Or to preach to the lost.
  - 2) In the case suggested, the withdrawal of our fellowship would likely have no effect on the sinful brother. But several things will have been accomplished:
    - a) We will have been obedient to the express commandment of God: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Th. 3:6).
    - b) He will know that the church does not countenance his behavior.
    - c) The world will know that we do not condone his actions.
    - d) Other weak members will know that the church as a whole is determined to do what the Savior requires, regardless of the consequences. Thus, they will be admonished to straighten up their lives.
- d. "If we start corrective discipline, where will we end? We might not be able to meet our financial obligations."
- 1) The objection evidences a lack of faith. It is true that when we follow the Lord's will explicitly, many times some sacrifices will be required. In the case cited, it would be the preacher who would
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- bear the brunt of the sacrifice (in losing part of his salary or by having to move). Would a congregation fare any better financially and spiritually if it refuses to do what the Lord plainly requires?
- 2) Where will it end? That is a good question. How much good is done if the result is the destruction of the congregation? But another good question is, "What will become of a congregation which refuses to do what the Lord commanded? Will it not, by that very omission of duty, cease to be a part of the Lord's people?
  - 3) Where would discipline end once it is begun? Logically, the "worst" offenders are to be dealt with first. Hopefully, the "lesser" offenders will take heed!
  - 4) The strength of a congregation is not measured by the size of its membership or amount of its contribution; its strength is determined by its faithful adherence to the word of God and its sincere devotion to his cause.
- e. There may be many other objections that are raised against corrective church discipline, but they are all empty; anything that seeks to set aside what Christ has required in his gospel is without serious merit.

### C. CONCLUSION.

1. We have considered several major aspects of this Bible subject.
    - a. We have shown that it is a Bible requirement which has application to our time.
    - b. We have seen the need for it, and identified some reasons why it is not practiced.
    - c. We have shown the purposes it is intended to accomplish.
    - d. We have identified the kinds of persons who are to be disciplined.
    - e. We have shown the procedures involved in the process of withdrawal.
    - f. We have answered the major objections against discipline today.
  2. The questions Christians need to be concerned about are:
    - a. Does God mean what he has said in the Bible?
    - b. Are his people today minded to do what he requires in this matter?
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