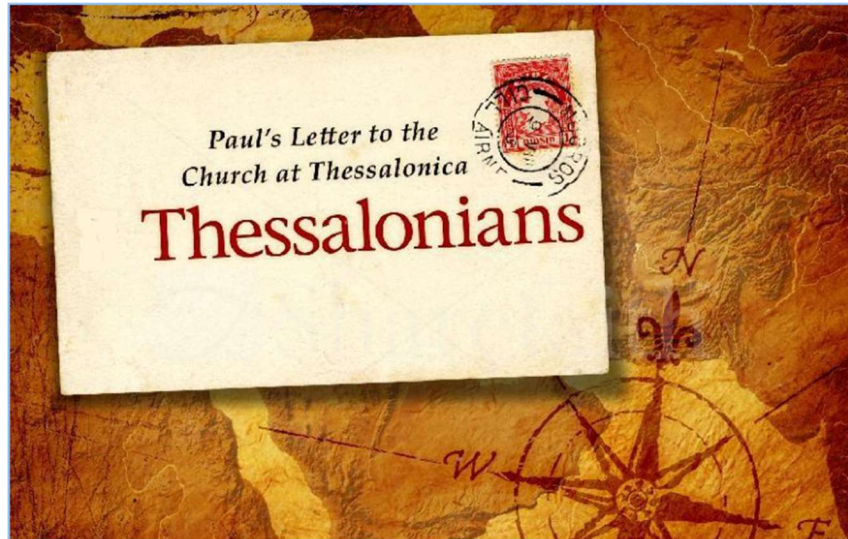


THESSALONIAN LETTERS



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INTRODUCTION

Paul's Letters to the Thessalonian Church

1 Thessalonians

Thessalonica was built by Cassander in 315 B.C. near the site of an ancient city called Therma, named for the hot springs in the area. He chose this place for its excellent location and named it after his wife, Thessalonica, who was a half sister of Alexander the Great. Cassander was a Greek general under Alexander. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

Many years later, when the Romans conquered the area (168 B.C.), they divided Macedonia into four districts and named Thessalonica the capital of one of these. In 146 B.C. the Romans reorganized Macedonia and made Thessalonica the capital of the new province which encompassed all four of the older districts. In 42 B.C. Thessalonica received the status of a free city from Anthony and Octavian (later called Caesar Augustus) because the Thessalonians had helped these men defeat their adversaries, Brutus and Cassius. The Romans ruled Thessalonica with a loose hand; though the Roman proconsul (or governor) lived there, no Roman troops were garrisoned in the city. The citizens were allowed to govern themselves, as in a Greek city-state, which they did through a group of five or six politarchs, a senate, and a public assembly. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

The city of Thessalonica flourished for hundreds of years, partly because of its ideal location. It was situated on the banks of a hospitable harbor in the Thermaic Gulf near the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea. In the Apostle Paul's day it was the chief seaport of the Roman province of Macedonia. Thessalonica ranked with Corinth and Ephesus, the main ports of the provinces of Achaia and Asia, as a great shipping center. Thessalonica also enjoyed another advantage. The Egnatian Way, the main Roman road from Rome to the Orient via



Byzantium (modern Istanbul), passed through the city. This put Thessalonica in direct contact with many other important cities by land as well as by sea. It was one of the most important

centers of population in Paul's day, occupying a strategic location both governmentally and militarily. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

Estimates of the population of Thessalonica in New Testament times place it at near 200,000. Most of the inhabitants were native Greeks, but many Romans also lived there. Orientals and Jews likewise populated the city. Wherever commerce flourished in the ancient world one would find Jewish businessmen. The Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica was influential; many Greek proselytes were present when Paul preached there (Acts 17:4). (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

First Thessalonians reflects the moral climate of the city. The pagan Greek religion of the largest segment of the population produced many forms of immorality but whetted the appetites of some for spiritual reality. Evidently the higher standards of Judaism attracted disillusioned Greeks, Romans, and Orientals to the synagogue. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

The Epistles of St. Paul fall naturally into four groups, each divided from the others by a considerable interval of time. In the earliest of these groups, written during Second Missionary Journey, the great central thought is the coming of Christ judge the world. The second group (1 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans), written during the Third Missionary Journey, has for its leading theme the reconciliation of man with God and with fellow-man by means of the Cross of Christ. The third group (Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon), written during the first Roman captivity, dwells the thought of Christ as the great King Head of the Church. The fourth group (1 2 Timothy, Titus), written at the close of Apostle's life, deals with practical questions of Church organisation. The Epistles to the Thessalonians together the first group. In them we have the earliest of St. Paul's writings, and, with the probable exception of the Epistle of St. James, the earliest books of the New Testament. (Dummelow)

1st Missionary Journey (45 - 47 A.D.)		
No books were written		
2nd Missionary Journey (51 - 54 A.D.)		
1.	1 Thessalonians (52 - 53 A.D.)	Written from Corinth
2.	2 Thessalonians (52 - 53 A.D.)	Written from Corinth
3rd Missionary Journey (54 - 58 A.D.)		
3.	1 Corinthians (Spring, 57 A.D.)	Written from Ephesus
4.	2 Corinthians (Autumn, 57 A.D.)	Written from Macedonia
5.	Galatians (Winter, 57 A.D.)	Written from Greece
6.	Romans (Spring 58, A.D.)	Written from Corinth
First Roman Imprisonment (61 - 63 A.D.)		
7.	Philemon (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
8.	Colossians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
9.	Ephesians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
10.	Philippians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
Between First & Second Imprisonments (63 - 67 A.D.)		
11.	1 Timothy (67 A.D.)	Written from Macedonia
12.	Titus (67 A.D.)	Written from Ephesus
Second Roman Imprisonment (68 A.D.)		
13.	2 Timothy (68 A.D.)	Written from Rome

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The Thessalonians inhabited the chief city of Macedonia. Macedonia was the first European country in which St. Paul preached, and he always regarded it with peculiar affection. In Acts 16,

17 we have St. Luke's wonderfully vivid narrative of the bringing of the Gospel to Macedonia. After some stay at Philippi the Apostle went through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, preaching first to the Jews as usual, and afterwards winning many converts among Gentile proselytes and women as well as among the heathen. Jewish intrigue at length drove him away. (Dummelow)

At the present time, under the slightly altered name of Saloniki (Thessaloniki), it is the second city of the Turkish empire, with a population of 814,000. It contained (and still contains) a considerable number of Jews, and had a large native population. It was from this latter class that St. Paul's converts were chiefly drawn, and it is plain that they had the characteristic virtues, as well as some of the characteristic defects, of their race, which was brave, independent, persevering, and liberty-loving. But the Thessalonian converts sometimes allowed their independence to degenerate into undue self-assertion and disregard of authority ([1 Thes 5:14](#); [2 Thes 3:6-7](#)). Yet, on the whole, St. Paul was proud and fond of them. Notwithstanding terrible persecution, they had remained firm. Though poor they were generous ([2 Cor 8:1-5](#)). Their influence was felt throughout Macedonia and Greece. Their faith, hope, and love filled the Apostle's heart with joy. (Dummelow)

The First Epistle was written towards the close of the Second Missionary Journey (? 51 a.d.), some time about the middle of the eighteen months' stay at Corinth (Acts 18). St. Paul had not long left Thessalonica, but had had time to visit Athens. Timothy had been to Macedonia and back, and Silas (Silvanus) who is never mentioned after the Second Missionary Journey, is now the Apostle's companion. There had been time for the influence of the Thessalonian Church to make itself felt. Some members of the Christian community had died. The Second Epistle must have been written towards the close of the same Corinthian stay, when St. Paul had received news that the teaching of his first letter had been misrepresented and misunderstood. Silvanus and Timothy were still with him. Persecution was still raging, and there was much excitement and increasing disorder on account of expectation of an immediate coming of Christ. (Dummelow)

These earliest of St. Paul's Epistles, short as they are, contain much of extreme interest to Bible students. They show us how St. Paul presented the gospel to heathen converts. They give us a vivid picture of Christian life in the first days before dissensions and false beliefs had vexed the peace of the Church, when teachers and taught loved each other, and faith and zeal were yet glowing. Incidentally they reveal to us much of the writer's mind and character. But, most important of all, they tell us what were the doctrines held and taught some twenty years after the Ascension. (a) Christ is frequently called 'the Lord,' 'our Lord.' He is addressed in prayer. He died, rose again, is in Heaven, and shall come to judge the world. He is the Redeemer and Deliverer. (b) The Holy Spirit is given to Christians. (c) The Church is already organised. The Apostles have authority. There is a regular ministry. Baptism may be alluded to in [1 Thes 4:8](#).

There were already meetings, probably for communion, where the 'holy kiss' was used ([1 Thes 5:26-27](#)). The local Church was united in bonds of brotherhood with other Churches, and with the faithful departed. Thus, these Epistles, besides giving a picture of Church life in early days, testify to the main articles of the Creed. (Dummelow)

The chief subject of the Epistle is, as has been said, the Coming (or, as St. Paul calls it, the Presence) of Christ—the Second Advent. And although he nowhere speaks definitely as to the time of this Coming, he certainly uses language which suggests that 'there was a reasonable expectation of the Lord's appearing soon.' The expectation is doubtless based on our Lord's great prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and of Judaism found in Matthew 24 and elsewhere. In the Second Epistle especially the language used often recalls that of our Lord, and the final Coming seems to be closely connected in St. Paul's mind with the overthrow of Judaism. In so far as he expected that these two events would happen together, or that the Final Coming would be soon after the overthrow of Judaism, he was doubtless mistaken. But it is to be observed that (a) the overthrow of Judaism by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was in very truth a Coming of Christ to Judgment. 'The destruction of Jerusalem was an event which has no parallel in history. It was the outward and visible sign of a great epoch in the divine government of the world. It marked the inauguration of a new order of things. The Messianic kingdom was now fully come. The final act of the King was to sit upon the throne of His glory and judge His people.' (b) St. Paul's mistake, if mistake it be, does not in the least affect the value of his ethical teaching on the subject. For he points out to the Thessalonians the true way of preparing for the Final Advent which Christ meant His Church to expect. They were to make ready for it, not by feverish excitement and restlessness, but by the quiet, steady performance of everyday duty as in His sight, with the assurance that His followers, whether living or asleep in Him, were in His safe keeping. (Dummelow)

Who was Paul in the Bible?

There is much we can learn from the life of the apostle Paul. Far from ordinary, Paul was given the opportunity to do extraordinary things for the kingdom of God. The story of Paul is a story of redemption in Jesus Christ and a testimony that no one is beyond the saving grace of the Lord. However, to gain the full measure of the man, we must examine his dark side and what he symbolized before becoming "the Apostle of Grace." Paul's early life was marked by religious zeal, brutal violence, and the relentless persecution of the early church. Fortunately, the later years of Paul's life show a marked difference as he lived his life for Christ and for the advancement of His kingdom.

Paul was actually born as Saul. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia around AD 1–5 in a province in the southeastern corner of modern-day Tarsus, Turkey. He was of Benjamite lineage and Hebrew ancestry ([Phil 3:5–6](#)). His parents were Pharisees—fervent Jewish nationalists who adhered strictly to the Law of Moses—who sought to protect their children from "contamination" from the Gentiles. Anything Greek would have been despised in Saul's household, yet he could speak Greek and passable Latin. His household would have spoken Aramaic, a derivative of Hebrew, which was the official language of Judea. Saul's family were Roman citizens but viewed Jerusalem as a truly sacred and holy city ([Acts 22:22-29](#)).

At age thirteen Saul was sent to Judea to learn from a rabbi named Gamaliel, under whom Saul mastered Jewish history, the Psalms, and the works of the prophets. His education would continue for five or six years as Saul learned such things as dissecting Scripture ([Acts 22:3](#)). It was during this time that he developed a question-and-answer style of teaching known in ancient times as "diatribe." This method of articulation helped rabbis debate the finer points of Jewish law to either defend or prosecute those who broke the law. Saul went on to become a lawyer, and all signs pointed to his becoming a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court of 71 men who ruled over Jewish life and religion. Saul was zealous for his faith, and this faith did not allow for compromise. It is this zeal that led Saul down the path of religious extremism.

In [Acts 5:27–42](#), Peter delivered his defense of the gospel and of Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin, which Saul would have heard. Gamaliel was also present and delivered a message to calm the council and prevent them from stoning Peter. Saul might also have been present at the trial of Stephen. He was present for his stoning and death; he held the garments of those who did the stoning ([Acts 7:58](#)). After Stephen's death, "a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem" ([Acts 8:1](#)). Saul became determined to eradicate Christians, ruthless in his pursuit as he believed he was acting in the name of God. Arguably, there is no one more frightening or

more vicious than a religious terrorist, especially when he believes he is doing the will of the Lord by killing innocent people. This is exactly what Saul of Tarsus was: a religious terrorist. [Acts 8:3](#) states, "He began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."

The pivotal passage in Paul's story is [Acts 9:1–22](#), which recounts Paul's meeting with Jesus Christ on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, a journey of about 150 miles. Saul was angered by what he had seen and filled with murderous rage against the Christians. Before departing on his journey, he had asked the high priest for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for permission to bring any Christians (followers of "the Way," as they were known) back to Jerusalem to imprison them. On the road Saul was caught in a bright light from heaven that caused him to fall face down on the ground. He heard the words, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He replied, "Who are you Lord?" Jesus answered directly and clearly, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (verses 4–5). As an aside, this might not have been Saul's first encounter with Jesus, as some scholars suggest that young Saul might have known of Jesus and that he might have actually witnessed His death.

From that moment on, Saul's life was turned upside down. The light of the Lord blinded him, and as he traveled on he had to rely on his companions. As instructed by Jesus, Saul continued to Damascus to make contact with a man named [Ananias](#), who was hesitant at first to meet Saul because he knew Saul's reputation as an evil man. But the Lord told Ananias that Saul was a "chosen instrument" to carry His name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel ([Acts 9:15](#)) and would suffer for doing so ([Acts 9:16](#)). Ananias followed the Lord's instructions and found Saul, on whom he laid hands, and told him of his vision of Jesus Christ. Through prayer, Saul received the Holy Spirit ([Acts 9:17](#)), regained his sight, and was baptized ([Acts 9:18](#)). Saul immediately went into the synagogues and proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God ([Acts 9:20](#)). The people were amazed and skeptical, as Saul's reputation was well known. The Jews thought he had come to take away the Christians ([Acts 9:21](#)), but he had in fact joined them. Saul's boldness increased as the Jews living in Damascus were confounded by Saul's arguments proving that Jesus was the Christ ([Acts 9:22](#)).

Saul spent time in [Arabia](#), Damascus, Jerusalem, Syria, and his native Cilicia, and Barnabas enlisted his help to teach those in the church in Antioch ([Acts 11:25](#)). Interestingly, the Christians driven out of Judea by the persecution that arose after Stephen's death founded this multiracial church ([Acts 11:19–21](#)).

Saul took his first of three missionary journeys in the late AD 40s. As he spent more time in Gentile areas, Saul began to go by his Roman name Paul ([Acts 13:9](#)). Paul wrote many of the

New Testament books. Most theologians are in agreement that he wrote Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thes, Philemon, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. These thirteen “letters” (epistles) make up the “Pauline Authorship” and are the primary source of his theology. As previously noted, the book of Acts gives us a historical look at Paul’s life and times. The apostle Paul spent his life proclaiming the risen Christ Jesus throughout the Roman world, often at great personal peril ([2 Cor 11:24–27](#)). It is assumed that Paul died a martyr’s death in the mid-to-late AD 60s in Rome.

So, what can we learn from the life of the apostle Paul? First, we learn that God can save anyone. The remarkable story of Paul repeats itself every day as sinful, broken people all over the world are transformed by God’s saving grace in Jesus Christ. Some of these people have done despicable things to other human beings, while some just try to live a moral life thinking that God will smile upon them on the day of judgment. When we read the story of Paul, we are amazed that God would allow into heaven a religious extremist who murdered innocent women and children. Today, we might see terrorists or other criminals as unworthy of redemption because their crimes against humanity are just too great. The story of Paul is a story that can be told today—he isn’t worthy in our eyes of a second chance, yet God granted him mercy. The truth is that every person matters to God, from the “good, decent,” average person to the “wicked, evil,” degenerate one. Only God can save a soul from hell.

Second, we learn from the life of Paul that anyone can be a humble, powerful witness for Jesus Christ. Arguably, no other human figure in the Bible demonstrated more humility while sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ as Paul. [Acts 20:19](#) tells us that he “served the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to [him] through the plots of the Jews.” In [Acts 28:31](#), Paul shares the good news of Jesus Christ: “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul was not afraid to tell others what the Lord had done for him. Paul spent all his days, from conversion to martyrdom, working tirelessly for the kingdom of God.

Finally, we learn that anyone can surrender completely to God. Paul was fully committed to God. In [Phil 1:12–14](#), Paul wrote from prison, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Despite his circumstances, Paul praised God and continually shared the good news (see also [Acts 16:22–25](#) and [Phil 4:11–13](#)). Through his hardships and suffering, Paul knew the outcome of a life well lived for Christ. He had surrendered his life fully,

trusting God for everything. He wrote, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" ([Phil 1:21](#)).
Can we make the same claim? (<https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Paul.html>)

Who was Timothy in the Bible?

Timothy, the recipient of the two New Testament letters bearing his name, was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. He joined Paul during one of Paul's later missionary journeys. Paul addresses Timothy as "my true son in the faith" ([1 Tim 1:2](#)). He was probably no older than late teens/early twenties when he joined Paul but had already distinguished himself as faithful, and the elders noticed him. He probably heard and responded to the gospel when Paul came through the area of Derbe and [Lystra](#) on his first missionary journey, but we don't know for sure. Timothy served as Paul's representative to several churches ([1 Cor 4:17](#); [Phil 2:19](#)). Timothy is also mentioned as being with Paul when Paul wrote several New Testament letters—2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thes, and Philemon.

Timothy was not a pastor type in the present day sense of the term. a) He was an official representative of the Apostle Paul whom he dispatched to various places or churches like Ephesus and Crete to act in an official capacity to deal with special situations and meet special needs. During the interim from the time of the apostles to the more complete transition to elders and deacons, men were sent by Paul as his apostolic representatives to deal with certain conditions and people who were threatening to hurt the work and ministries of these churches. b) Timothy undoubtedly possessed the gifts needed for pastoral ministry, and while there was an element of pastoral care in what they did (see 1 Tim. 4:8-16), he was not an elder or pastor who are given by the Lord to various churches for more long-term ministries (1 Pet. 5:1f). Rather, as official delegate of Paul, he was sent to assist churches in setting up their ministries in pastoral care as with the appointing of elders (cf. Tit. 1). (Bible.org <https://bible.org/question/was-timothy-pastor-or-evangelist>)

Paul says Timothy had a "genuine faith," the same as that which lived in his mother and grandmother ([2 Tim 1:1-5](#)). Eunice and Lois prepared Timothy's heart to accept Christ by teaching Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures and preparing him "from infancy" to recognize the Messiah when He appeared ([2 Tim 3:15](#)). When Paul came preaching Christ, all three accepted his teaching and committed their lives to the Savior. We, too, must prepare our children to be ready when Christ moves in their hearts. They must know how to recognize that pull on their spirits as coming from the Savior, and the only way to do that is to follow the example of Eunice and Lois and teach our children the Word of God.

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he gave him instructions and advice for leading the church. He also exhorted Timothy not to let others look down upon him due to his youth, but to set an example for other believers "in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" ([1 Tim 4:12](#)). Paul told Timothy to be devoted to reading Scripture, exhorting, and teaching, and to not neglect the gift that he had been given. Paul also counseled Timothy to keep a close watch on himself. These instructions remain pertinent to believers today. We, too, are called to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.

Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses" ([1 Tim 6:11–12](#)).

It seems that Timothy had a chronic illness that required some attention ([1 Tim 5:23](#)). Paul counseled him on a change of diet to aid the relief of his condition. From this example we learn that it is not always God's will to heal a person miraculously; sometimes, healing comes through more "natural" means, if it comes at all.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul warned Timothy about the false teachers that he would encounter and tells him to continue in the things he has learned because he knows the character of those he learned them from, namely Paul himself and his mother and grandmother ([2 Tim 3:14–15](#)). The truths Timothy was taught from infancy—truths about sin and our need for a Savior—were able to make him "wise for salvation" ([2 Tim 3:15](#)). As parents, we are to prepare our children to distinguish truth from error. And as believers, we are to stand firm in the truth we have learned, not being surprised or swayed by opposition and false teachers.

Paul also told Timothy, to "do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" ([2 Tim 2:15](#)). This advice is crucial for all Christians. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" ([2 Tim 3:16–17](#)). Paul counseled Timothy, his "dear son" ([2 Tim 1:2](#)), from a heart of love, wanting Timothy to stand firm in his own faith and to lead the other believers well. Timothy certainly seems to have been faithful; we should follow his example. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Timothy.html>)

Who was Silas in the Bible?

He was a Hellenistic Jew who, it seems, was also a Roman citizen ([Acts 16:37](#)). He is also referred to as “Silvanus” in Paul’s Epistles (e.g., [1 Thes 1:1](#)).

When we first meet Silas in Scripture, he is a leader and teacher in the Jerusalem church ([Acts 15:22, 32](#)). After the [Jerusalem Council](#), Silas was chosen to help communicate the council’s decision to Antioch, along with the apostle Paul. Soon afterwards, Paul set out on his second [missionary journey](#), and he chose Silas to accompany him ([Acts 15:40-41](#)).

On this journey, [Paul and Silas](#) traveled to Greece. In Philippi, the missionaries were arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. But “about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” ([Acts 16:25](#)). God then miraculously released them, and the jailer, having witnessed their faith, asked them, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (verses 30-31). The jailer was saved that night and he and his family were all baptized. The next day, the city officials learned that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, and they were immediately fearful; their mistreatment of Paul and Silas the day before had violated Roman law. The city leaders immediately released Paul and Silas from custody. The missionaries left town, but they left behind a body of believers—the first church in Europe.

The start of the Philippian church is a great reminder that, even in extremely difficult times, God can bring about great things. God will glorify His name, even though our trials and tribulations. Paul and Silas had this perspective, and that’s why they were able to sing at midnight.

The fact that the prisoners were “listening” to Paul and Silas singing hymns is not a detail to be skipped over lightly. As followers of Jesus Christ, we, too, have people watching how we react to life’s circumstances. If Paul and Silas had been griping or protesting or whining about the injustice of their situation, the jailer would have never been drawn to believe in the Lord Jesus. But they responded to their situation gracefully and with joy—their actions were completely foreign to how others expected them to react. Because they were “salt” and “light” ([Mat 5:13-14](#)), others had their hearts opened to the gospel.

Later, Silas and Timothy ministered in Berea ([Acts 17:14](#)), and Silas spent extra time in Corinth, ministering after Paul left that city. Silas served with Peter as well; in fact, he is thought to have delivered the epistle of 1 Peter to its recipients ([1 Pet 5:12](#)).

Silas is a great example of someone who used his gifts to serve the Lord and others with all his heart. The apostles called him “faithful,” and he was known as one to “encourage and strengthen the brothers” ([Acts 15:32](#)). Multitudes in the early church were blessed by Silas, and Paul and

Peter were heartened by his faithful companionship. Silas was "a brother . . . born for adversity" ([Prov 17:17](#)). (<https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Silas.html>)

Acts 17

Preaching Christ in Thessalonica

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Luke now drops the pronoun of the first person, in which he has spoken of the apostolic company since they left Troas, and resumes the third person, which shows that he remained in Philippi after the departure of Paul and Silas. He also speaks of these two brethren as if they constituted the whole company, until they are about to leave Berea, when Timothy is again mentioned. This leads to the presumption that Timothy remained with Luke, to still further instruct and organize the infant congregation in Philippi. (McGarvey)

They journeyed westward along the great military road called the Via Egnatia. The fact that they passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia indicates that Paul was following the definite plan of planting the Gospel in strategic cities. He did not aim simply to preach the Gospel wherever he could find an audience. (Wycliffe Bible)

The existence of a synagogue in a Gentile city was always an indication of a considerable Jewish population. Thessalonica, on account of its commercial importance, was then, and continues to be, under its modern name Salonica, a great resort for Jews. It was a knowledge of this fact, no doubt, which hastened Paul to this city, anticipating, through the synagogue, a more favorable introduction to the people than he had enjoyed at Philippi. (McGarvey)

2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, **3** explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." **4** And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

- A. As always, Paul first addressed the beloved chosen people, turning away from them only when compelled to do so by their rejection. "To the Jew first" (Romans 1:16) was a controlling principle with Paul. (Coffman)
- B. His preaching, it seems, was chiefly expository, and designed to establish from the Old Testament Scriptures, first, that the predicted Messiah was to be a suffering and dying, and therefore a rising Messiah; and next, that this Messiah was none other than Jesus of Nazareth. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- C. Paul begins his argument with the Thessalonian Jews, by showing that the writings of the prophets themselves made it necessary that the Messiah "should suffer and arise from the dead." Having demonstrated this proposition, it was an easy task to show that "this Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." It was well known that he had suffered death, and Paul had abundant means of proving that he had risen again. (McGarvey)
- D. The expression "some of them" refers to the Jews, and indicates but a small number. Of the "devout Greeks," who were such Gentiles as had learned to worship God according to Jewish

example, there was a "great multitude," and not a few of the "chief women," who were also Gentiles. The great majority of the converts, therefore, were Gentiles; and Paul afterward addresses them as such, saying, "You turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God." (McGarvey)

Assault on Jason's House

5 But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. **6** But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king--Jesus."

8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

- A. Such jealousy is easily understood. The devout Jews had been teaching in that city for generations with minimal results; then Paul and Silas in the space of three weeks or a little longer had moved a "great multitude" to accept the gospel. The unbelieving element in the synagogue retaliated by organizing a mob and assaulting the house of Jason. (Coffman)
- B. In the accusation preferred by the Jews there were two specifications, each one of which had some truth in it. Nearly everywhere that Paul and Silas had preached, there had been some public disturbance, which was in some way attributable to their preaching. The apostolic method was to fearlessly preach the truth, and leave the consequences with God and the people. The other specification that the brethren acted contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there was another king, Jesus. He represented him, indeed, as the "King of kings, and Lord or lords." These Jews knew very well, as their predecessors before the bar of Pilate knew, that Jesus claimed to be no rival of Cæsar. (McGarvey)
- C. The house of Jason - Where Paul and Silas were, [Acts 17:7](#). Jason appears to have been a relative of Paul, and for this reason it was probable that he lodged with him, [Rom 16:21](#). (Barnes)
- D. And when they had taken security of Jason - This is an expression taken from courts, and means that Jason and the other gave satisfaction to the magistrates for the good conduct of Paul and Silas, or became responsible for it. Whether it was by depositing a sum of money, and by thus giving bail, is not quite clear. The sense is, that they did it in accordance with the Roman usages, and gave sufficient security for the good conduct of Paul and Silas. (Barnes)

Ministering at Berea

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. **11** These were more fair-minded (Noble) than

those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

A. This city lies about sixty miles south-west of Thessalonica. It contains, at the present day, a population of fifteen or twenty thousand, and was, doubtless, still more populous then. Here again the apostles find a synagogue, and make it the starting point of their labors. (McGarvey)

The apostles always affirmed that the doctrines which they maintained respecting the Messiah were in accordance with the Jewish scriptures. The Bereans made diligent and earnest inquiry in respect to this, and were willing to ascertain the truth. (Barnes)

The great sin of the Jews was a refusal to examine, candidly and patiently, the claims of the gospel. Having fallen into error by their traditions, they resisted, with passion and uproar, every effort that was made to give them additional light, or to expose their errors. There is no greater insult to the majesty of heaven than to stop our ears when God speaks, or to close our eyes against the light which he causes to shine around us. If the claims of Jesus are false, an honest and thorough investigation of them is the best way to prove them so. If they are true, such an investigation will be certain to convince us and to bless us. (McGarvey)

One of the epic principles in evidence here is that even the word of an apostle is properly studied and verified in the light of the Bible, the same being not the word of men, but of God. In these days when religious people are solicited to accept the word of so-called "successors" to the apostles regardless of obvious conflict with the sacred Scriptures, the example of these Bereans has an amazing relevance. (Coffman)

12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. **13** But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. **14** Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. **15** So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

A. From the manner in which they heard, received, and examined the word preached to them, it was not likely they could be deceived. And, as it was the *truth* that was proclaimed to them, it is no wonder that they apprehended, believed, and embraced it. (Clarke)

B. The fundamental antipathy between darkness and light, the implacable hatred of Satan for the truth, was there evidenced by those relentless foes of the gospel, who at such trouble and expense to themselves exploited every opportunity to slander and oppose Paul's preaching of the gospel. They tracked him from city to city; and, as Paul thought upon this, he must have remembered his own days as a persecutor. (Coffman)

C. In the ancient world there were two distinct species of civilization, both of which had reached their highest excellence in the days of the apostles. One was the result of human philosophy; the other, of a divine revelation. The chief center of the former was the city of Athens; of the latter, the city of Jerusalem. (McGarvey)

Unto Athens - This was the first visit of Paul to this celebrated city; and perhaps the first visit of a Christian minister. His success in this city, for some cause, was not great, but his preaching was attended with the conversion of some individuals. No city of Greece, or of the ancient world, was so much distinguished for philosophy, learning, and the arts. (Barnes)

It appears from [1 Thes 3:1](#) that Timothy and Silas did actually join St. Paul at Athens according to his instructions, but the Apostle being filled with anxiety about the state of the Macedonian Churches which he had just founded, sent them back again to confirm them, and to bring him accurate tidings concerning them. Timothy was sent to Thessalonica, Silas (apparently) to Philippi, so that St. Paul was left alone in Athens. On returning from their mission, Timothy and Silas found that St. Paul had gone on to Corinth, and there they rejoined him ([Acts 18:5](#)).

(Dummelow)

1 Thessalonians 1

1 Thessalonians - This is probably the first epistle written by Paul and perhaps the first written document of the Christian religion. It is not doctrinal, has no element of controversy and is one of the most gentle and affectionate of Paul's letters. It is notable for its special salutations and refers to their expectations of the immediate return of Jesus. Its main idea is *consolation* (4:17-18), its keynote *hope* and its leading words *affliction and advent*. Its purpose was: (1) to send affectionate greetings, (2) to console them in their afflictions, (3) to correct their wrong, their mistaken views of Christ's second coming, (4) to exhort them to proper living as against certain immoral tendencies. (Coffman)

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. The inclusion of Paul's distinguished helpers, Silvanus and Timothy, in this salutation was not intended as designation of them as co-authors with Paul of this letter, but rather as a mark of friendship and courtesy on the part of the apostle for these faithful workers who had so frequently labored and suffered with him on the mission field. Silas was beaten and imprisoned with Paul at Philippi (Acts 15:19), and Timothy's imprisonment is mentioned in Hebrews 13:23. Timothy's father was a Greek, and Silas was a Roman citizen. Silvanus was chosen by Paul following the dispute with Barnabas (Acts 15:40), and Timothy was recruited from Lystra where Paul had been stoned (Acts 16:1); thus both were identified with Paul on the second missionary journey and extensively thereafter. (Coffman)

Neither in this Epistle nor in that to the Philippians does Paul speak of himself as an apostle. In other Epistles he affirms his apostleship because, in the case of the Epistle to the Romans, he wrote to strangers, and in other cases his apostleship had been challenged. (McGarvey)

The name "Lord" as it appears in this compound title of Jesus Christ "is the great Old Testament word which expresses the sovereignty of God, personally and legitimately exercised over the whole universe, animate and inanimate. (Coffman)

Paul joins the extension of grace and peace. Just as the church was composed of both Greek and Jews so he uses the word grace (Greek) and the word peace (Jewish). Grace referred to God's unmerited favor or his lovely kindness in action. Peace referred to that inner degree of contentment and serenity that only right relationship with God and man can produce. Grace and peace, descended upon human heart from the Almighty, and from his son. (Taylor. Jr)

Their Good Example

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

A. Thanksgiving was always a cardinal aspect of Paul's sterling character as a survey of his epistles quickly reveals. Paul's gratitude was basically spiritual, in its noble nature, and its

ardent application. It was a thanksgiving for their acceptance of God's gospel, and for their current stance as sons and daughters of God. It was a thanksgiving expressed in God and revealed to the Thessalonians. Paul wanted them to know of his gratitude. Paul never had trouble letting brethren know of his devout gratitude for them. (Taylor. Jr)

- B. Paul was quite fond of associating faith, hope and love in the same context. He mentioned faith, love and hope in Colossians 1:4-5. He does the same in the opening verse of Romans 5. This famous Pauline triad of noble graces is best known from 1 Corinthians 13:13. There Paul affirms, that abiding nature of faith, hope, and love and declares love to be the greatest of the three. (Taylor. Jr)

Their faith was not formal, barren and dead ([Jam 2:20](#); [Jam 2:26](#)); but it actively worked, bringing their wills into obedience to the will of God ([Rom 1:5](#); [Rom 16:26](#)); their love was not idle, but caused them to employ themselves in heartfelt toil for the welfare of others; and their hope in Christ sustained their souls, so that they endured all trials and persecutions, and were unyielding in their conflict with temptation and doubt. Thus, each in its own way, the three graces manifested themselves, and in such a way that it was evident that these graces were centered in, inspired by, and renewed of Christ, and viewed with approval by the Father (McGarvey)

[4](#) knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. [5](#) For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

- A. Paul frequently employs the affectionate term of brethren in the Thessalonian epistles. He uses it seventeen times in 1 Thessalonians. He uses it seven times in 2 Thessalonians. It richly suggests the deep personal relationship Paul sustained towards these converts. They and he were children of God and that made them brethren. There is no dearer term in all the New Testament suggestion of the relationship we sustain towards fellow Christians than in their term brethren. (Taylor. Jr)
- B. Here, as elsewhere, election derives from God's love; election to damnation is not found in the New Testament. Such views as this derive from the failure to understand that God's election works both ways, both to eternal life and to eternal death. And who are they who are thus "elected"? Those people who will love God and choose to serve him are "the elect" foreordained before all time to inherit eternal salvation; whereas, those who will not love God and who choose to disobey him are "elected" to eternal death. God never "elected" any individual either to eternal life or eternal death, apart from the individual's choice of the kind of election he desired. (Coffman)
- C. To elect means to choose, and the choosings of God do not annul the free will or agency of man. Thus Israel is chosen ([Deu7:6](#)); yet afterwards cast off because of unbelief ([Mat 8:11-12](#)). Election is not made absolute by God; on the contrary, the choosing of God requires that we ourselves make our calling and election sure ([2 Pet 1:10](#)). (McGarvey)
- D. Not in word only ... Paul's preaching was accompanied by the exhibition of miraculous apostolic powers (Romans 15:19) of "signs and wonders and mighty deeds in the Holy Spirit";

such things, of course, having been the Father's way of confirming the gospel he preached. (Coffman)

- E. The apostle evidently refers not to any miracles that were performed there, but to the effect of the gospel on those who heard it. It is possible that there were miracles performed there, but there is no mention of such a fact. There was great power manifested in the gospel in its leading them to break off from their sins, to abandon their idols, and to give their hearts to God. (Barnes)
- F. Paul describes a powerful manner of how the gospel came into Thessalonian heart. He refers to it as our gospel. It was not his by right of ownership. It was his and others by right of proclamation. They had been its human messengers. Paul says it did not come just in word. It was powerfully backed up by potent credentials from heaven and by the character of zealous messengers. Throughout his journeys Paul's message defended and confirmed its heavenly derivation by the performance of miracles. His message was proclaimed within a miraculous framework that came from inspiration of the holy spirits (Taylor. Jr)
- G. Verse 1:5 is frequently appealed to in our day by men who claim to possess modern miraculous powers. But the appeal is a vain one. All they have are words, Words, WORDS, and their words are empty of power Power POWER. They cannot back up what they say with genuine, supernatural signs with bona fide miracles. They do not speak by inspiration. They do not even respect what inspired writers penned in the New Testament about Jehovah will! They cannot speak a message of truthful assurance for what they say, is false. Men like Paul, Silas, and Timothy coupled sincerity with truth. (Taylor. Jr)

6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

- A. It was always Paul's wish for brethren to follow or imitate him only as he followed and imitated the Lord. Paul says their reception of the gospel came with both affliction and joy. Externally they experienced afflictions and persecution: internally they reaped the jubilant joy produced by the Holy Spirit in the medium of the gospel of Christ. (Taylor. Jr)
- B. Upon conversion, every Christian receives the earnest of the Holy Spirit; and the very first fruits of the Spirit are "love" and "joy" (Galatians 5:22). The overwhelming joy that attends one's obedience to the gospel is frequently mentioned in Acts, "he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39) being absolutely the normal experience following one's baptism into Christ. (Coffman)
- C. As Thessalonica was very conveniently situated for traffic, many merchants from thence traded through Macedonia, Achaia, and different parts of Greece. By these, the fame of the Thessalonians having received the doctrine of the Gospel was doubtless carried far and wide. And it appears that they had walked so conscientiously before God and man, that their

friends could speak of them without a blush, and their adversaries could say nothing to their disgrace. (Clarke)

- D. Having received the word in much affliction - That is, amidst much opposition from others; see [Acts 17:5-8](#). It was in the midst of these trials that they had become converted - and they seem to have been all the better Christians for them. In this they were imitators of the Saviour, or shared the same lot with him, and thus became his followers. (Barnes)
- E. The Thessalonians became a powerful pattern to show what conversion to Christ will do for people. That influence spread throughout both Macedonia and Achaia. At this time Greece was divided into two geographical provinces. Macedonia was the northern part and Achaia the lower portion. What the gospel had done for the Thessalonians had spread throughout both areas. Their marvelous faith and the transforming power of the gospel was being radiated far and wide. People that Paul met in other places actually were telling him of the gospel's entrance into the Thessalonians hearts what its fervent fruit in their lives had done. Is that not amazing? (Taylor. Jr)

[9](#) For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, [10](#) and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

- A. Paul had gone from Thessalonica to Athens, and from Athens to Corinth. He may have done considerable missionary work in the smaller villages about Corinth. Now, as he went about through Corinth and through these villages he found that instead of being permitted to tell of the good work which he had done at Corinth, he himself had to become a listener while strangers told him how he had preached the gospel there, and how those who had been for generations worshipers of dead idols had turned unto the living God (McGarvey)
- B. The living and true God - as opposed to the dead and false gods ([1 Cor 8:4](#)) from which they "turned." Had they been Jews, it would have been, 'ye turned to the Lord' ([Act 9:35](#)).
- C. To wait for the Lord's coming patiently is characteristic of a true believer, and was prominent amidst the graces of the Thessalonians(1 Cor 1:7-8). As joy is the characteristic feature of the letter to the Philippians, so hope, of this letter. His coming is seldom called His return (John 14:3); because the two advents are different phases of the same coming. The second coming shall have features altogether new, so that it will not be a mere repetition of the first, or a mere coming back. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- D. The Thessalonians had turned FROM something; they had turned TO someone. They turned from idols. Remember, they lived almost in the very shadow of Mount Olympus in the mythical center of Greek gods and goddesses. They turned to God. They turned to deal idols to serve th true and living God. Turning from, turning to and serving in and waiting for - all describe very vividly with Christian conversion and sanctification are all about in the Bible. (Taylor. Jr)
- E. It is significant that the second coming of Christ is mentioned in the closing sentiments of each of the five chapters which composed first Thessalonians. About one of every 25 verses

in the New Testament speaks of this thrilling theme. Since they're nearly 8000 verses in the New Testament, that means an excess of 300 versus project the prophecy of a second coming (Taylor. Jr)

1 Thessalonians 2

The intense opposition toward the newly begun movement, had experienced no abatement. No doubt the persecuting Jews and the opposing gentiles did everything in their infamous power to kill the budding movement. Apparently one of the diabolical devices employed had reference to the subtle attempts to discredit the messengers of Calvary- Paul, Silas, and Timothy. This seemingly forms the background of much revealed in the second chapter. If the enemies of Christianity could be successful in convincing the newly converted Thessalonians that Paul and his co-laborers were deceivers, were practitioners of uncleanness, were personalities filled with guile, were time-servers, were flatterers, were covetous, and were selfish seekers of glory, then it would only be a short step to discrediting the message they proclaimed. There is no finer passage in all the Bible about how Paul lived and labored in this intensely moving chapter beginning to end. (Taylor, Jr)

There are three clear topics in this chapter, the first dealing with what is usually referred to as Paul's defense against criticism, the second stressing the fidelity of the Thessalonians under persecution, and third a warm expression of Paul's affection for them. (Coffman)

Paul's Conduct

1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. **2** But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

A. Paul's coming to Thessalonica had not been vain or fruitless was proved by the fact that in this pagan city a church of Christ was now found. (McGarvey)

True to his refusal to boast about anything, in the personal sense, Paul, instead of magnifying the success, chose to dwell rather upon the character of the missionaries as it had been tried and proved through hardships and persecutions. (Coffman)

The Thessalonians were cognizant of the type of suffering and shameful treatment that Philippi had extended to the soldiers of Calvary. This sad chapter of sorrow did not deter Paul from a bold proclamation and a courageous conveyance of the gospel. They preached what they believed, and they believed what they preached. (Taylor, Jr)

The Thessalonians remembered how Paul and Silas had come to them fresh from Philippi, ([Acts 16:23](#)) with the evidences of persecution yet apparent on their bodies--a persecution which was indeed shameful because it was wholly undeserved and contrary to law--but they also remembered that they were in no way terrified or deterred either by these present tokens of past suffering, or by the storm of persecution which threatened their speedy repetition, from preaching the gospel boldly. (McGarvey)

In our God ... This expression also appears in 1 Thes 3:9; 2 Thes 1:11,12, and 1 Cor 6:11. In the greater sense, all things are in God, for as Paul said, "In him we live and move and have our being"; but something more specific is meant here. Those who are in Christ and are working in

harmony with the will of God are in a most beneficent and specific sense said to be "in God."
(Coffman)

3 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. **4** But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

- A. The Thessalonians were familiar with the pretensions, deceit and gross immorality which marked the pagan worship throughout the world of those days, especially among the Gentiles; and it is the contrast with paganism, not Paul's defense of himself from slander, which shines in a passage like this. (Coffman)
- B. Paul was neither deceived, nor was a deceiver. He received the gospel not from men, nor by men, but by revelation from the Lord. Paul brought a message of purity. Paul recognized the gravity of the sacred trust that had been conveyed to him. He was a God pleaser he was not a man pleaser. He did not preach for the fame and acclaim that might come to him as a messenger of Calvary. Had Paul been interested in fame and in earthly glory he never would have become a preacher of the gospel of Christ. (Taylor, Jr)
- C. Instead of preaching the old falsehoods which had so long pleased the wicked of Thessalonica, Paul had come as a trustee of God commissioned to preach the gospel, and he had preached it realizing his accountability as to the trust imposed upon him. (McGarvey)
- D. We are not to suppose that he desired to offend people; or that he regarded their esteem as of no value; or that he was indifferent whether they were pleased or displeased; but that it was not the direct object of his preaching to please them. It was to declare the truth, and to obtain the approbation of God whatever people might think of it; ([Gal1:10](#)). (Barnes)
- E. Paul and his fellow missionaries were veterans; they had been tried and tested for years. Paul saw himself as a steward entrusted by God to carry His message of salvation to lost men and women ([1 Cor 9:17](#)). Paul did not choose his work; God selected him for the high calling of proclaiming the gospel. This responsibility was most significant to Paul, who viewed himself as under God's constant scrutiny. So he would not dare serve with the wrong motives. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. **6** Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

- A. He is disclaiming any desire for human praise, pointing out that his whole life and character denied any such ambition on his part. Paul here showed them, and reminded them, how it is with a true Christian and a true preacher of the word of God. ... disclaiming even the meager support that might have been available to him had he consented to take it, this mighty apostle moved across the horizon of the first century with the strides of a spiritual giant. There has hardly been another like Paul. (Coffman)
- B. As the apostle had not preached for money, neither had he preached for fame. Though he might have stood upon his dignity, and magnified his office as an ambassador of God, yet he

had not done even this. He had not preached the gospel because he held high office in the kingdom, and so would be exalted by its enlargement; but he had preached to save souls. (McGarvey)

7 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. **8** So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. **9** For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. **10** You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; **11** as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, **12** that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

A. They chose to minister rather than to be ministered to for the sake of the Thessalonian converts. Paul and his companions cared for their converts as a nursing mother gently cares for her little children. This instructive illustration provides a good example for all who are responsible for the care of new believers. If a nursing mother does not feed herself, she cannot feed her baby. If she eats certain foods, her baby will get sick. Similarly the spiritual diet of a parent Christian is vitally important to the health of a newer Christian. The gentleness and unselfishness of Paul as a spiritual parent shines through in this illustration.

(Bible Knowledge Commentary)

B. Night and day... Night precedes day in Jewish reckoning the phrase denotes incessantly, continually. (Coffman)

Probably Paul and his companions worked with their hands by day, and spent a considerable part of the night, or evenings, in preaching Christ to the people. (Clarke)

Each one of you ... This shows that converts were not made in masses, but that the slow, toilsome application of the gospel to individuals, one by one. (Lipscomb)

Their Conversion

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, **15** who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men,

16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

A. Paul and all the other apostles declared repeatedly their absolute and invariable conviction that what they delivered to us was not their word, but the word of Almighty God. Those who do not believe this is true do not believe the New Testament. (Coffman)

It was Jewish persecution which first broke against the infant church; and it was conspicuously against their own countrymen; here Paul compared the persecutions of the Thessalonians which they had endured at the hands of their Gentile countrymen to that of the Jewish-Christians in Judea, noting that both had bravely and courageously endured. The Jews were those who had instigated and promoted the persecution in Thessalonica, even though the details of it were executed by Gentiles. ([Acts 17:13](#)) (Coffman)

The fullest visitation of wrath has already begun. Already, in 48 A.D., a tumult had occurred at the Passover in Jerusalem, when about 30,000 were killed: a foretaste of the whole vengeance which speedily followed in the destruction of Jerusalem within 15 years ([Luke 19:43-44; 21:24](#)). ([Josephus Account](#)) (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

Longing to See Them

[17](#) But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. [18](#) Therefore we wanted to come to you--even I, Paul, time and again--but Satan hindered us. [19](#) For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

[20](#) For you are our glory and joy.

A. It was very probably represented by the enemies of Paul and his fellow-laborers, that they had fled from Thessalonica on the slightest danger, and had no regard for the church there, or they would have remained there in the time of peril, or, at least, that they would have returned to visit them. Their continued absence was probably urged as a proof that they had no concern for them. The apostle meets this by stating that they had been indeed "taken from them" for a little time, but that their hearts were still with them, and by assuring them that he had often endeavored to visit them again, but that "Satan had hindered" him. He had, however, given them the highest proof of interest and affection that he could, for when he was unable to go himself, he had, at great self-denial, sent Timothy to establish them in the faith, and to comfort their hearts; ([1 Thes 3:1-3](#)). (Barnes)

B. How Satan hindered, we are not told, but we find that his emissaries had so little disposition to let Paul return that they drove him from Beroea onward to Athens. (McGarvey)

There seems to have been something particularly frustrating about Paul's being checkmated in his intention to return to Thessalonica. Perhaps it was there that he finally saw, for the first time, that the opposition of Israel would never cease. They had been blinded by Satan. (Coffman)

Thought Questions - Robert Taylor, Jr.

1. Just how seriously did Paul treat the Gospel which God had entrusted to him?

2. What would it do for most preachers if they dealt with all people they preach to as a nursing mother deals with her children and as a concerned father deals with his children by means of exhorting, comforting and charging them?

3. Why is it so very vital for a gospel preacher to make his personal deportment into a matter of top priority?

4. Why is it a serious mistake when the Bible is review just as another book?

1 Thessalonians 3

Concern of Their Faith

1 Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, **2** and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, **3** that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

- A. Paul growing anxiety relative to conditions at troubled Thessalonica finally became unbearable. As much as Paul needed Timothy's presence and aid in Athens yet Paul preferred to be deprived of his help and thus dispatched him to Thessalonica. (Taylor, Jr)
- B. The significance of Paul's being left alone derives from the fact of his enemies seeking to kill him, the threat being so serious that an escort guarded his journey to Athens. The poignant mention of "alone" in this verse suggests that Paul recognized the danger of his unguarded exposure; and as his name was already known throughout Athens following his address on Mars Hill, he must have been very apprehensive of what could easily befall him. Thus his consent to be left alone derived from a genuine love of converts and the utmost unselfishness on his own part. (Coffman)

There were several reasons for sending Timothy (or Silas) to visit the Thes. Not only was Paul most urgently concerned in knowing how they were doing, there would also be definite benefits to the Thessalonians as well. They would be: (1) established and (2) comforted. They needed both. Young converts facing a storm of persecution might fall away unless established and comforted. (Coffman)

4 For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. **5** For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

- A. The concern throughout these epistles is the spiritual rather than the physical welfare of the believers. Timothy's purpose was to establish (strengthen) and comfort (actively encourage) them concerning their faith. Timothy's purpose is further explained: to prevent their seduction by Jews, who might seize the opportunity afforded by affliction to try to lure the believers from their faith. (Wycliffe)

Paul sent Timothy to engage in the great work of edification. This is what the second part of the great commission is all about. It is what the New Testament epistles have as their major thesis - the building up of the saints in the faith that is most holy. (Taylor, Jr)

If Paul subscribed to the Calvinistic position of "one saved always saved" or the total impossibility of apostasy the statement in verse five would never have been penned. This is one of some 2,500 warnings placed in the Holy Writ. (Taylor, Jr)

Encouraged by Timothy

6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you **7** therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.

- A. This is the utterance of profound and overpowering emotion. Paul loved the young converts to Christ with a pure and holy passion; and this is even more impressive when understood in context of Paul's schooling and racial background, those being so fervently loved being citizens of a once hated and despised race, degraded by centuries of idol-worship, and contaminated by pagan value-judgments. (Hendriksen)
- B. We have already seen that Timothy and Silas stayed behind at Thessalonica, when Paul was obliged to leave it; for the persecution seems to have been principally directed against him. When Paul came to Athens, he sent pressingly to Timothy and Silas to come to him with all speed to that city. We are not informed that they did come, but it is most likely that they did, and that Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to comfort and build up these new converts. After Paul had sent away Timothy, it is likely he went himself straight to Corinth, and there Timothy soon after met him, with the good news of the steadiness of the Thessalonian Church. (Clarke)
- C. Since Paul would be comforted as to the Thessalonians by the good news of their condition brought by Timothy, the "distress and affliction" must have referred to other matters which disturbed the apostle's rest. These were doubtless the failure at Athens, and the troubles which he had at Corinth before the negative protection afforded him by Gallio, when that official refused to interfere, either to aid or hinder him ([Acts 18:5-12](#)). Thus the good news from Thessalonica lightened the apostle's burdens at Corinth (McGarvey)

8 For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. **9** For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, **10** night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

- A. Did ever a finer statement leave the pen of a more totally unselfish man than did the remark of verse eight? Paul saying that we continue to live. Of course, it was all contingent upon their remaining in a steadfast condition. If your faith remain strong and unshaken then we shall continue to live with purpose of heart and contentment of spirit. (Taylor, Jr)

This prayer was answered years afterward ([Acts 20:1,2](#)), indicating that, even in the case of such a holy one as Paul, prayers were sometimes not answered at once, but after long delay. The great admonition is always to pray and not to faint. (Coffman)

Other than the Lord Jesus, there is no character of the entire Bible, who exhibits greater gratitude than does Paul. He not only believed in persistent prayer, but also he believed in the eloquent expression of genuine gratitude. His was a joy that reflected his full confidence in God and genuine felt gratitude for his beloved brethren. (Taylor, Jr)

Paul said he prayed for them day and night. It was a prayer of moving earnestness. They were not lip prayers. They were loving prayers. They were not surface prayers. They were prayers born upon the wings of deep spirituality. They were prayers were deep personal feelings expressed to the God of heaven, who hears prayer. (Taylor, Jr)

Prayer for the church

11 Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.

12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, **13** so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

- A. These three verses are "a prayer to Christ as co-equal with the Father." (Dummelow)
- B. The Christology of Paul is not something which "developed," but was implicit and explicit in all that he wrote, even in this letter, one of the very first epistles from his pen. "Here we have an express prayer directed to Christ, thus necessarily implying his divine nature." (Gloag) (Coffman)
- C. *To the end he may establish your hearts* — Without *love* to God and man, there can be no establishment in the religion of Christ. It is *love* that produces both *solidity* and *continuance*. And, as *love is the fulfilling of the law*, he who is filled with love is *unblamable in holiness*: for he who has the love of God in him is a partaker of the Divine nature, for *God is love*. (Barnes)
- D. God is coming to judge the world; every hour that passes on in the general lapse of time is advancing his approach; whatsoever he does is in reference to this great event: and whatsoever we do should be in reference to the same. But who in that great day shall give up his accounts with joy? That person only whose heart is established in holiness before God; i.e., so as to bear the eye and strict scrutiny of his Judge. Reader, lay this to heart, for thou knowest not what a moment may bring forth. When thy soul departs from thy body it will be the coming of the Lord to thee. (Clarke)
- E. Faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. God tries our faith, not to destroy it, but to develop it. Had Abraham not learned to trust God in the famine, he could never have trusted Him in the other difficulties. Paul prayed that the suffering Christians in Thessalonica might grow in their faith, and God answered his prayer. Paul wrote in his second letter, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren ... because that your faith groweth exceedingly" (2 Thess 1:3). (Bible Exposition)
- F. There is not a word here of any "soon-coming" so frequently alleged as "the mistake" both of our Lord and of his holy apostles. True, some of the Thessalonians got that impression, but it was from their dull understanding, not from any statement Paul had made to that effect. If this were not the case, Paul could not have written 2 Thessalonians so soon afterward for the specific purpose of correcting their false notions. (Coffman)
- G. With all his saints ... It is difficult to know exactly what this means. The word for "holy ones" is that commonly used for all Christians in the New Testament. On the other hand, the angels of heaven are frequently associated with Christ in the Second Advent. See Matthew 24:41,49; 25:31; Mark 8:38, etc. Of course, the angels are also called "holy." Christ will bring "them that

have fallen asleep" with him (1 Thess 4:14); and his holy angels shall likewise attend the event (2 Thess 1:7); and, upon the basis of these Scriptures, the view is preferable that holds "saints" in this passage as including both. (Coffman)

Thought Questions - Robert Taylor, Jr.

1. What is the second part of the Great Commission all about and how do the New Testament epistles help execute this?
2. How important is the second coming to the overall doctrine of Christianity?
3. Why is the possession of gratitude such an imperative part of real spiritual character?

1 Thessalonians 4

As in practically all of the apostle Paul's letters, the doctrinal foundation is followed by practical exhortations; although, of course, there is an overlapping in both sections. This chapter begins the second section of the epistle and contains an exhortation to sanctification, admonitions concerning mutual love among the Christians, and encouragement regarding the status of their Christian dead. (Coffman)

Plea for Purity

- 1** 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;
- 2** for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.
- A. In the Lord Jesus ... This is Paul's great phrase used so frequently in his writings (169 times) to indicate the status of believers in relationship to Christ. Here the thought is that all of his instructions have been conveyed to them in respect of their common bond "in Christ,". Paul was making it clear that his orders were actually those of the Lord, a fact further emphasized by the use of the great Old Testament word for "Lord." (Coffman)
- B. *Please God more and more* — God sets no bounds to the communications of his grace and Spirit to them that are faithful. And as there are no bounds to the graces, so there should be none to the exercise of those graces. No man can ever feel that he loves God too much, or that he loves man too much for God's sake. (Clarke)
- C. There is no finality to progressive holiness while the believer remains on earth. Life is marked by either growth or decay. (Lipscomb)
- D. The design of the gospel is to teach men not only what they should believe, but also how they ought to live; not so much to fill men's minds with notions as to regulate their temper and behaviour. The apostle taught them how to walk, not how to talk. To talk well without living well will never bring us to heaven. The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ were only commissioned by him to teach men to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them, [Matt 28:20](#). Though they had great authority from Christ, yet that was to teach men what Christ had commanded, not to give forth commandments of their own. (Henry)
- E. Relating Christianity to a walk was a favorite comparison. When one is walking he is not standing still: he is making spiritual progress. This matter of walking and pleasing God was not to become just a static or saturation state with no further development in evidence. Paul wanted them to abound more and more. There is always ample room in Christianity for growth and development. (Taylor, Jr)
- 3** For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;
- 4** that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,
- 5** not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; **6** that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such,

as we also forewarned you and testified. [7](#) For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. [8](#) Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

- A. Paul was about to cite three things which entered into sanctification: (a) abstaining from fornication; (b) possessing one's vessel in a state of honor; and (c) refraining from defrauding a brother. Behold then the true definition of sanctification, which may be summed up in a word, moral living. Sanctification is not therefore some kind of special or second blessing, but an achieved status of upright character. One is truly sanctified when he is converted, believing, repenting and being baptized into Christ (Coffman)
- B. Paul's use of the term "defraud" suggests business dealings; but it should not be overlooked that all sexual dishonesty and indulgence is a fraud perpetrated against another. (Coffman)
- C. Some might be disposed to say that these were merely the precepts of man, and that therefore it was not important whether they were obeyed or not. The apostle assures them in the most solemn manner that, though communicated to them by man yet they were really the commands of God. (Barnes)
- D. Paul tells them that the will of God demands their sanctification. Sanctification means to be set apart for the service of God, to be set aside as holy. Paul affirms in 1 Cor 6:11 that sanctification, washing and justification occur at conversion. But sanctification is a lifetime proposition for the child of God also. (Taylor, Jr)

A Brotherly and Orderly Life

[9](#) But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; [10](#) and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;

- A. Two things have marked Christians from the beginning--the purity of their lives and the warmth of their love. Brotherly love is singled out by Jesus as the hallmark of discipleship ([John 13:35](#)). Nothing about the Christians impressed the heathen more than this quality of love. (Contending for the Faith)
- B. A strong bond of affection had sprung up among the Macedonian Christians struggling against the pagan culture to maintain the faith and purity to which they were committed. A similar bond automatically exists wherever faithful souls are striving to maintain faith and purity in the midst of divisive and contrary influences. (Coffman)
- C. Paul has talked about lust in action. Paul now talks about real love. This is brotherly love. The Greek word for this is *philadelphia* and is dynamically descriptive of love within the brotherhood. When we stop growing in real Biblical love, we stop growing as dedicated Christians. (Taylor, Jr)
- D. Though their love already reached beyond the large confines of Thessalonica, and took in all Macedonia, Paul exhorts them to extend it to even a larger compass. Christian love must embrace the world (McGarvey)

11 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, **12** that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

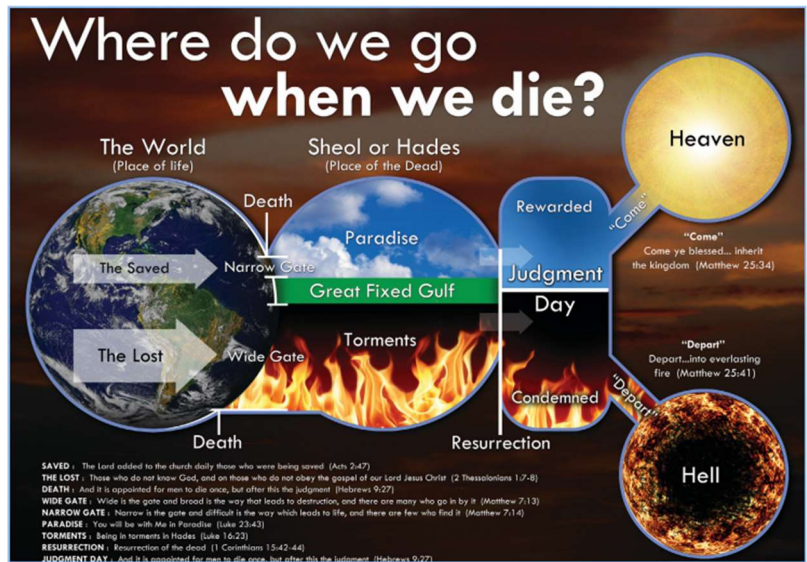
- A. Instead of spending their time in restless gadding about or idle meddling with other people's affairs, Paul expected them to heed his warning, and earn their own living. These Thessalonians were mostly of the laboring class. If they were idle, they would quickly be reduced to dependence or beggary, and the unbelieving world without ([Col 4:5](#)) would quickly say of the new religion that it made men idle and worthless. (McGarvey)
- B. Paul was concerned that the Thessalonians have a good reputation among the non-Christian population, a goal which should be of concern to Christians of all generations. 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)

The Comfort of Christ's Coming

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

- A. Paul begins a new discussion by employing an expression that is uniquely Pauline. Certain expressions in the Bible belong uniquely to certain penmen. Mathew is very fond of using "the kingdom of heaven." Mark is fond of using "anon" or "straight-way." Luke is fond of using the word "certain." John uses the double "Verily, verily" some twenty five times. Paul is fond of expressing a wish that his brethren be not ignorant. (Taylor, Jr)
- B. *That ye sorrow not, even as others* Not natural mourning for dead friends is forbidden; for the Lord Jesus and Paul sinlessly gave way to it (John 11:33,35; Phil 2:27): but sorrow as though there were "no hope," which indeed the pagan had not (Eph 2:12). The Christian hope, is the resurrection. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

C. When we die, our spirit and body separate. Even though our body dies, our spirit—which is the essence of who we are—lives on. Our spirit goes to the spirit world. The spirit world is a waiting period until we receive the gift of resurrection, when our spirits will reunite with our bodies. Our future resurrected body cannot die and will be perfect—free from pain, sickness, and imperfections. It is because of the infinite love of Jesus Christ that everyone will be resurrected. (World Video Bible School)



- D. Paul here finds an affirmation on the intimate relation which exists between Christ and his people; a relation which he elsewhere likens to the union between the head and the body (Eph 4:15-16); the argument being that if the head enjoys a resurrection, the body must likewise share in it. "With him" does not here mean that Jesus will bring the disembodied spirits from heaven to the resurrection, but that God, who brought Jesus from the grave, will also bring from the grave, in conjunction with Jesus, all those who entered it with their lives spiritually united with Jesus. But the bringing from heaven is taught at 1 Thess 3:13] (McGarvey)
- E. Paul supremely desired the Thessalonians to be knowledgeable relative to their Christian dead. It is clearly set forth in this context that they were in a state of utter confusion. Paul refers to the Christian dead as being asleep. Sleep suggest rest, repose and ardent anticipation of awaking to renewal of activity. Paul in not speaking of soul sleeping. The soul does not cease to exist at the point of death. The immortal spirit of man is not unconscious from death to judgement. (Taylor, Jr)

Watch video [Where Do We Go When We Die? https://whereafterdeath.org/](https://whereafterdeath.org/)

15 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. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

A. The leading topic of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica having been the coming kingdom (Acts 17:7), some perverted it into a cause for fear as to friends lately deceased, lest these would be excluded from the glory which those found alive alone should share. This error Paul corrects (1 Thess 5:10). (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

- B. Many Thessalonians entertained the crude notion that only the living would participate in the joys of Christ's coming, and that all those who were so unfortunate as to die before that event, would thereby forfeit their share in it. It is not strange that such a doctrine should spring up among those who had been so hastily instructed as the Thes, especially when we may safely surmise that many new converts had been added to their number since Paul's departure (McGarvey)
- C. The metaphor of death being like sleep is not a uniquely Christian usage, being found in many cultures. Yet, it acquires a new emphasis among Christians inasmuch as death has been transformed. It is no longer an enemy to be feared but a friend to be welcomed. It is not a terminus but a new beginning. There is no hint that the dead are annihilated or that they cease to exist. As a sleeper awakens with the coming of a new day, even so the dead will experience resurrection at the coming of the Lord. It should be noted that this passage offers no support for the belief that the soul sleeps. It is the body, not the soul, which is under consideration here. (Contending for the Faith)
- D. This passage does not deny the general resurrection of all the dead, but the general resurrection of unbelievers is not mentioned. The glorious promises of this passage are for them that sleep Jesus. (Coffman)
- E. In correcting this false view as to the dead, Paul had not thought it needful to specify that all would likely die before the Lord came, since in his teaching while in Thessalonica he had shown that the events which God had decreed should intervene before the coming of the Lord, were of such a nature as to necessarily require much time. Thus the idea that the Lord's return would take place in the near future remained uncorrected by him, for he was not really aware that it prevailed. (McGarvey)

Thought Questions.

1. What is the relating of Christianity to a walk (v4) so very appropriate?
2. What is Hades and what is its relationship to Heaven and Hell?

1 Thessalonians 5

This chapter continues, significantly, the teaching on the Second Advent, but with a difference of purpose. Whereas in 1 Thes 4 the purpose was reassurance with reference to deceased Christians, in this it is rather an admonition to be ready for the event when it occurs. Then follows a paragraph of instructions directed especially to the elders of the church (Coffman)

The Day of the Lord

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. **2** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

- A. When Christian hopes are thus vividly pictured forth, our human nature naturally asks, "When?" ([Luke 21:7](#)). The Thessalonians had been fully taught by Paul that the time of the Lord's coming was unrevealed ([Matt 24:36](#); [Acts 1:7](#)), and that therefore Paul could not enlighten them on this point. (McGarvey)
- B. No truth seems to have been more clearly and fully taught than that the Son of man would come when not looked for by the world. Yet there is no scriptural question upon which men bestow more attention, and no question that they seek more earnestly to determine. The time has often been set, and as often proved a mistake. Only by a righteous and pure life can one be ready for his coming. We should not only be ready for him, but should love his appearing and desire earnestly the day of his coming. (Lipscomb)
- C. Paul points out that the WHEN of that coming is unrevealed. Such things belong to the hidden things of God. (Deut 29:29) (Taylor Jr.)

3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. **4** But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. **5** You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

- A. The impenitent and wicked world will regard themselves as safe. They will see no danger. They will give no heed to warning. They will be unprepared for his advent. So it has always been. So it was in the time of the flood; in the destruction of Sodom Gomorrah, and Jerusalem; in the overthrow of Babylon. One of the most remarkable facts about the history of man is, that he takes no warning from his Maker; he never changes his plans, or feels any emotion, because his Creator "thunders damnation along his path," and threatens to destroy him in hell. (Barnes)
- B. This points out, very particularly, the state of the Jewish people when the Romans came against them; and so fully persuaded were they that God would not deliver the city and temple to their enemies, that they refused every overture that was made to them. All that

was specifically known was this: their destruction was coming, and it should be sudden, and they should not escape. (Clarke)

- C. Christians live in a different sphere of life from non-Christians; it is the difference between day and night ([Eph 5:8](#)). Christians are sons of the light; they are also sons of the day. That is, they have illumination, and they also live in a realm characterized by light, warmth, and growth. Paul brought himself into the picture (we) to prepare for his following exhortation which would be more true to life and readily received if he included himself, than if he directed it only toward the Thes. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

[6](#) Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. [7](#) For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. [8](#) But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

- A. This refers to a state of spiritual deadness in which the whole pagan world of that era slumbered. It did not seem so, of course, to them that slept. As regarded the age of debauchery in which they lived and the signal of the summary end of it in the preaching of the good news of Christ; of that they were totally unaware. They slept through it! Only that person who is spiritually aware, having regard to the will of the Creator, and possessing a sharp consciousness of the moral and spiritual state of humanity - only such a person is truly awake. The person thus awake is heeding Paul's admonition here to "watch and be sober." (Coffman)
- B. Immorality, drunkenness and debaucheries of every kind are practiced principally at night. Long before the Christian era, the association of drunkenness with night was so universally accepted that when Peter defended the apostles against a charge of being filled with new wine on Pentecost, he appealed to a universally accepted truth, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day" (Acts 2:15). There has always been something about wickedness which makes it inappropriate to indulge in it in the daytime. Night is the time for the deeds of darkness. (Coffman)
- C. Paul used the metaphor of a soldier, one of his favorite illustrations of the Christian ([Eph 6:10-18](#)). Standing on the threshold of an event that will mean sudden translation for some and sudden destruction for others, Christians should arm themselves for action with self-control. A Roman breastplate covered a soldier from his neck to his waist and protected most of his vital organs. That is what Christians' faith and love do. Faith in God protects inwardly and love for people protects outwardly. These two graces cannot be separated; if one believes in God he will also love other people ([1Thess 1:3](#)). These attitudes equip Christians to stand ready for the Rapture. In addition, the hope of salvation guards their heads from attacks on their thinking. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- D. Paul warns against their sleeping. This is not the natural sleeping, it is the spiritual sleeping, a sinful slumber. Quite to the contrary Christians are to watch and be sober. Watching implies active and ardent alertness; sobriety means proper control of self. In the exhortation

Paul also includes himself, Sila and Timothy as the pronoun US in verses six and eight fully indicate. (Taylor Jr.)

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

- A. When the apostles exhorted people to "work out" their own salvation, and to "save yourselves" from a perverse generation, such were not idle words but present urgencies. Nor did any of them pause to explain with every mention of what people were to do, that of course man cannot be his own saviour. Our own generation has stressed the latter fact (and it is a fact) to the extent of failure to make it clear to every man that if he desires to be saved there are definitely some things he must do, the same being neither optional, unessential or unnecessary. Such a truth is inherent in what is said in this ninth verse. (Coffman)
- B. In view of the gravity of all these weighty and wonderful words Paul commands a mutual comforting of each other. Paul was quick to comment the good that was being done as he was to condemn the wrong. Paul did not mean that they were to comfort and edify only once or twice, but that they should keep on with these practices. (Taylor Jr.)
- C. The responsibility of Christians is to do, practice, say and engage in only those things that contribute constructively to the building up (the figure is that of a building) of fellow Christians. It is not enough merely to refrain from saying what will discourage or damage another, or from practicing what will offend another, or from doing what may tempt another. The mandate is to do what will help the spiritual life and growth of fellow-Christians. (Coffman)

Various Exhortations

12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, **13** and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

- A. It is evident that the church was not left without appointed persons to minister to it when its founders should be away. We know that there were presbyters ordained over the church at Ephesus, and over the churches in Crete ([Acts 20:17](#)), and that there were bishops and deacons at Philippi ([Phil 1:1](#)), and there is every reason to believe that similar officers would be appointed in every newly organized church. (Barnes)
- B. Over you... Paul says to exhibit proper respect for them. They work hard for your spiritual benefit. Those who labor among you would certainly be inclusive their elders, their teachers, their preachers and all others who aided their spiritual growth and their development in dedication to the Lord. The elders are the overseers. (Taylor Jr.)

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. **15** See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

A. The word "disorderly (unruly)" describes the soldier who does not remain in the ranks; it is the following out of the military figure introduced at verse 8. The whole is an admonition against a too strictly disciplinarian spirit. The disorderly are not to be too hastily considered apostates, nor are the fainthearted to be regarded as cowards, nor the weak called backsliders, nor are any to be hastily cast out; but the church, being slow to condemn, is to bear with offenders, and seek to reclaim them. (McGarvey)

Christianity first taught this. The British triad defines three classes: the man of the devil returns evil for good; the man of men returns good for good, evil for evil; the man of God returns good for evil ([Rom 12:17](#); [1 Peter 3:9](#)). (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

This verse is closely akin to Galatians 6:10 which states, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Taylor Jr.)

For terseness of thought and conciseness of expression there is no other set of verses in the New Testament quite the equal of the closing thirteen verses of the First Thessalonians 5. The verses are packed with power and are compact with courageous counsel. (Taylor Jr.)

16 Rejoice always, **17** pray without ceasing, **18** in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

- A. These exhortations - dealing with attitudes - are addressed to believers as individuals concerning their personal lives before God. God wants His people to be joyful and He gives them every reason to be. But Paul knew human nature well enough to sense the need for a reminder to rejoice at all times ([Phil 3:1](#)). This is a command. A Christian's joy does not spring from his circumstances, but from the blessings that are his because he is in Christ. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- B. Few things about the New Testament are more remarkable than this continual stress on joy. The whole of the letter to the Philippians is dominated by it (Coffman)
- C. Rejoice always... It is of interest to observe that even though John 11:35 "Jesus wept" is the shortest verse in our English bible, that First Thessalonians 5:16 the in the original Greek is shorter by two letters. (Taylor Jr.)
- D. Pray without ceasing ... This cannot mean the constant and unintermittent utterance of petitions to God, but means "maintain the good habit of frequent prayers." (Coffman)
- E. We can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning. (Barnes)

19 Do not quench the Spirit.

- A. Quench not the Spirit - This language is taken from the way of putting out a fire, and the sense is, we are not to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Possibly there may be an allusion here to fire on an altar, which was to be kept constantly burning. Fire may be put out by pouring on water; or by covering it with any incombustible substance;

or by neglecting to supply fuel. If it is to be made to burn, it must be nourished with proper care and attention. (Barnes)

- B. Regarding quenching the Spirit: The reference here is most certainly to the earnest of the Holy Spirit given to every Christian upon his obedience to the gospel of Christ (Acts 2:38f and Ephesians 1:13). Just as fire may be smothered by an element such as earth or water, so the spirit of God may be quenched in people's hearts by things which the Spirit cannot abide. The cares, riches and pleasures of life choke out the word and quench the Spirit. The blessed fire can be put out by the cold drizzle of worldliness, by the heavy blanket of selfishness, or by the companionship of evil people. The negligent student of the holy scriptures can let the fire go out. The stormy winds of false doctrine can blow it out! (Coffman)
- C. The prophets were inspired. To despise or set at nought the content of their messages was a sin of the deepest dye. (Taylor Jr.)

20 Do not despise prophecies.

- A. Prophecyings were instructions given through inspired men, and included moral and spiritual precepts as well as predictions as to the future. Such instructors stood next in rank to the apostles ([1 Cor 12:28](#)). Compare also [Eph 2:20](#); [1 Cor 14:1-5](#); [1 Cor 14:39](#) . They were neither to neglect to hear nor refuse to obey prophecy (McGarvey)
- B. By prophecyings here we are to understand the preaching of the word, the interpreting and applying of the scriptures; and this we must not despise, but should prize and value, because it is the ordinance of God, appointed of him for our furtherance and increase in knowledge and grace, in holiness and comfort. We must not despise preaching, though it be plain, and not with enticing words of men's wisdom, and though we be told no more than what we knew before. It is useful, and many times needful, to have our minds stirred up, our affections and resolutions excited, to those things that we knew before to be our interest and our duty. (Henry)
- C. There may have been a tendency in the early church, and perhaps in the Thessalonian church in particular, to underrate the value of prophetic utterances. The gift of prophecy was the ability to receive and communicate direct revelations from God before the New Testament was completed (1 Cor 13:8). By way of application, Christians should not disparage any revelation that has come to the church and has been recognized as authoritative and preserved by the Holy Spirit in Scripture. The temptation to put the ideas of men on an equal footing with the Word of God is still present. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. (Prove all things KJV)

- A. Sift the bad from the good ([1 John 4:1-13](#)), and cherish the good. To this corresponds the "unwritten saying" attributed to Jesus, "Show yourselves approved money-changers;" i. e., distinguish between the true coin and the counterfeit. Surely such advice has always been pertinent, when false teaching of every kind abounds (McGarvey)

- B. Subject everything submitted to you to be believed to the proper test. The word here used is one that is properly applicable to metals by which the true nature and value of the metal is tested; ([1 Cor 3:13](#)). This trial was usually made by fire. They were carefully to examine everything proposed for their belief. They were not to receive it on trust; to take it on assertion; to believe it because it was urged with vehemence, zeal, or plausibility. They were to apply the appropriate tests from reason and the word of God, and what they found to be true they were to embrace; what was false they were to reject. Christianity does not require people to disregard their reason, or to be credulous. It does not expect them to believe anything because others say it is so. ([Acts 17:11-12](#); [1 Pet 3:15](#)). (Barnes)
- C. As rash men and deceiving spirits frequently pass off their trifles under the name of prophecy, prophecy might by this means be rendered suspicious or even odious, just as many in the present day feel almost disgusted with the very name of preaching, as there are so many foolish and ignorant persons that from the pulpit blab out their worthless contrivances, while there are others, also, that are wicked and sacrilegious persons, who babble forth execrable blasphemies. As, therefore, through the fault of such persons it might be, that prophecy was regarded with disdain, nay more, was scarcely allowed to hold a place, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to prove all things, meaning, that although all do not speak precisely according to set rule, we must, nevertheless, form a judgment, before any doctrine is condemned or rejected. (Calvin)

22 Abstain from every form of evil.

- A. Despite the traditional usage of this verse (as in the KJV) to warn against "the appearance of evil," the actual meaning, in this context, is that, having tested what is true and false, the believer should cling to the true and abstain from the false. (Coffman)

Not only from evil itself, but from that which seems to be wrong. There are many things which are known to be wrong. There are many things which, in themselves, may not appear to us to be positively wrong, but which are so considered by large and respectable portions of the community. There are things, also, where, whatever may be our motive, we may be certain that our conduct will be regarded as improper. The safe and proper rule is to lean always to the side of virtue. (Barnes)

Blessed and Admonition

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. May God, who makes peace between himself and mankind, himself prepare you for his judgment-day, making your entire being, in all its threefold nature, fit to be preserved, and wholly above all censure. (McGarvey)

- B. Sanctification is God's will for us ([1 Thes 4:3](#)). The word *sanctification* is related to the word *saint*; both words have to do with holiness. To "sanctify" something is to set it apart for special use; to "sanctify" a person is to make him holy. (Got Questions)
- C. The spirit connects us to God and enables us to worship God and to fellowship with Him. The soul is the seat of emotions and makes us conscious of our being. The body connects us to our environment. We need to be kept faultless by God in our worship of Him and in our fellowship with Him.

[24](#) He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. [25](#) Brethren, pray for us.

- A. A request which the apostle often makes. He was a man of like passions as others: liable to the same temptations; engaged in an arduous work; often called to meet with opposition, and exposed to peril and want, and he especially needed the prayers of the people of God. A minister is in great danger if he has not the prayers of his people. (Barnes)

[26](#) Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

- A. It was common in Paul's culture as in many cultures today, to greet friends with a kiss on the cheek. The men greeted other men this way, and the women did the same with other women. Such a kiss communicated personal affection, not romantic love. By urging this practice Paul was encouraging an outward physical expression of true Christian love in a form that was culturally acceptable in his day. The kiss was to be holy, not passionate or fleshly. An acceptable alternative in Western culture today might be an embrace, a pat on the back, or a handshake. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

[27](#) I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

- A. As a considerable portion of this epistle was directed to the elders at Thessalonica, Paul, by this powerful, even blunt, adjuration served notice upon them that the epistle did not belong to the elders, but to the church. They were to be selective neither in the matter of what was read nor the individuals to whom it was read. One cannot resist the conviction that these words were written prophetically with regard to the times which, soon after the decease of the apostles, resulted in the officialdom in Christianity taking over the scriptures and arrogating to themselves the sole right, either of reading or of interpretation. (Coffman)

[28](#) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Thought Questions (Taylor Jr.)

1. Why is it so vital that every preacher and teacher preach and teach to self as well as others?

2. Just how valuable is peace in the life of a Christian and in the successful functioning of an entire congregation?

3. What is basically wrong with "the saint only" doctrine in a congregational program of benevolence as practiced by some in our day?

2 Thessalonians 1

2 Thessalonians - The main subject of the second epistle is the same as in the first one: the coming of the Lord. While the first epistle deals mainly with the rapture of the believers the second epistle centres on Christ's appearing in this world. This letter was also written from Corinth and during the same year. It is the shortest letter Paul wrote to any church and is characterized by its lack of special salutations and for its general idea of patient waiting for our Lord. The occasion seems to be to correct their wrong views of the second coming of Christ and the errors of life growing out of it. It may be that they had misunderstood his own teaching to be that the day of the Lord was already at hand (2:2). (Coffman)

That the second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written very soon after the first is apparent from the fact that the two Epistles show that practically the same conditions existed in that church, and also from the fact that Silas and Timothy join with Paul in both letters; and it can not be shown that these three men were ever together after the earlier part of Paul's ministry in Corinth. We would therefore date this letter in the latter part of A. D. 52 or the early part of A. D. 53. (McGarvey)

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:**2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. In God ... Just as human beings live in the atmosphere, and at the same time the atmosphere is in them, just so the spiritual life of Christians is "in God" and "in Christ," both God and Christ also being likewise in them. (Coffman)
- B. Lord Jesus Christ ... "This is the full title." "Lord" means sovereign, ruler, authority, head and chief, fully entitled to adoration, honor and worship of all creation. "Jesus" is the name bestowed by the archangel before Christ was born; it is the historical name by which the citizens of Nazareth and Jerusalem recognized him, "the sweetest name on mortal tongue." "Christ" is the Greek form of "anointed," meaning Messiah, Son of David, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, etc. (Ward)
- C. The Church of the Thessalonians designates its location and not its ownership the church belongs to deity. Grace is God's unmerited favor. It is his rich love reflected in benevolent brightness and in kindly kindness. Peace is that inner serenity of soul that enables a person to be right with God above and man below (Taylor Jr.)

God's Final Judgment and Glory

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,

- A. Paul acknowledged himself obliged to give thanks because his prayer at [1 Thess 3:12-13](#) had been answered by the Thessalonians doing the things which he prayed they might do. Thus

he very forcefully recognizes the good in his converts that he may be listened to with patience when he begins to correct their faults (McGarvey)

- B. The faith of Christians should keep growing all their lives; they should trust God more consistently and more extensively as they grow older in Christ. Faith in God is not a static thing. Since it is trust in a Person, it is always increasing or decreasing. A growing faith indicates a growing Christian. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- C. It was uniformly the practice of Paul to be grateful. With the exception of Christ there has never been a finer personification of genuine gratitude than was the apostle Paul. The spirit of Thanksgiving as a golden thread is beautifully interwoven throughout his sacred writings. Our ungrateful generation needs to capture a portion of this powerful Pauline quality of abounding appreciation of genuine gratitude. (Taylor Jr.)

4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

- A. From [Acts 17:5](#); [Acts 17:13](#), and from [1 Thess 2:14](#), we learn, that the people of Thessalonica had suffered much persecution, both from the *Jews* and *their own countrymen*; but being thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Gospel, and feeling it to be the power of God unto salvation, no persecution could turn them aside from it. And having suffered for the truth, it was precious to them. Persecution never essentially injured the genuine Church of God. (Clarke)
- B. We should observe that the churches are commonly called, by Paul, as here, churches of God, though sometimes churches of Christ (McGarvey)

5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; **6** since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, **7** and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, **8** in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. Paul pointed out to them by way of encouragement that God is just. When God would judge the Thessalonians they would be declared worthy of God's kingdom. Endurance in trials does not make one worthy of heaven; one does not earn heaven by suffering. But endurance in trials does demonstrate one's worthiness. A Christian is made worthy by God's grace, which he receives as a free gift by faith in Jesus Christ. His trials simply expose what is there already and since the character that emerges through the fire of testing is God-given, God receives all the glory. The grace of God that makes it possible for a Christian to withstand the fires of human experience, which destroy non-Christians, is a Christian's only claim to being worthy of God's kingdom. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- B. The purpose of the Thessalonians' sufferings was to bring glory to God by manifesting His grace in the way they bore up under their trials. Their suffering demonstrated that they were

considered worthy of God's kingdom. In another sense they were suffering as soldiers of Christ. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

- C. Paul affirms that it is a righteous thing for Jehovah God to wreck recompense tribulation to them that trouble. They deserve such. They have earned it. There are multiples of people today who possess such warped views of God injustice that they argue that it will be highly unjust for God in judgment to recompense tribulation or punishment to the wicked and disobedient. They would fill heaven with all the filth that has abounded in our world. They word slight justice and make a mockery of every good work that men have done in order to cultivate themselves as approved recipients of heaven. (Taylor Jr.)
- D. The sufferings of the just and the triumphs of the wicked in this life are a sure proof that there will be a future judgment in which the wicked shall be punished and the righteous rewarded (Clarke)
- E. The rest in view here is the final rest that remains for the redeemed and which will be theirs only when the Lord has come to reward his saints. (Coffman)
- F. At that time the Lord Jesus Christ will punish two classes of people: those who are ignorant of God ([Rom 1:18-32](#)), and those who.., do not obey the gospel (Cf. [John 3:36](#)). The guilt of those in the latter group is the greater because their privilege is greater. God's judgment is perfectly just. Willful rejection of God's revelation spurns God. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- G. Verse 8 puts to rest forever the baseless theory that Jehovah's grace in judgment will cover the sins of the rebellious and the disobedient and thus permit them to wear the crown of life. This verse should put the final rest the theory that people can be saved without obeying the gospel of God. (Taylor Jr.)

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, **10** when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

- A. What this everlasting destruction consists in we cannot tell. It is not annihilation, for their being continues; and as the destruction is everlasting, it is an eternal continuance and presence of substantial evil, and absence of all good; for a part of this punishment consists in being banished from the presence of the Lord-excluded from his approbation, for ever; so that the light of his countenance can be no more enjoyed, as there will be an eternal impossibility of ever being reconciled to him. (Clarke)

Much as true believers may marvel at, and much as they admire the perfections of the Redeemer of mankind, and much as they wonder at his amazing condescension in becoming a man, and dying for the sins of the world; all their present amazement and wonder will be as nothing when compared with what they shall feel when they come to see him with all his glory, the glory that he had with the Father before the world was. (Clarke)

At the second coming Jesus will be glorified in his saints. No room is allowed for all the long drawn out events of the rapture and pre millennium. According to Peter the earth will be burned up on this day. A destroyed earth leaves no room for the events of the rapture, the millennium

reign of an earthly Messiah for a thousand years or for renovated earth for Jehovah Witnesses to live on eternally. (Taylor Jr.)

11 Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, **12** that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Paul prays that the Thessalonians may be counted worthy of the gospel invitation, so that they may receive, according to the fullness of God's limitless power, all the blessings to which they have been invited; viz.: all the graces and glories that ever the goodness of God desired to bestow, and every aspiration or heavenly ideal for which their own faith prompted them to strive; that thus their lives might glorify Christ, and be glorified by Christ, according to the gracious purposes of God in Christ. Jesus is glorified in his saints by their reflection, and the saints are glorified in Jesus by his impartation of his divine excellencies. (McGarvey)

2 Thessalonians 2

The apostle writes on their anxiety as the Thessalonians had started to believe that the day of Christ was at hand. Paul gives a short but exact overview on the events preceding that day. Thus he proves that the day of Christ had neither dawned nor can even dawn before the rapture of the believers. The Christian therefore neither awaits the day of Christ nor the tribulation preceding it but the coming of the Lord to gather the believers into heaven. (Coffman)

The Great Apostasy

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, **2** 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.

- A. The great feature of the final day will be the uniting of believers with the Lord. The expression "gathering together" is found nowhere else in the New Testament except in Hebrews 10:25, where it signifies the gathering together of the Christians for worship. (Coffman)
- B. Jesus had left the world about twenty-three years before, promising to return at an indefinite date. This indefiniteness gave free scope to the conjectures of his early followers, until the clear tea they were not to be shaken or troubled by spirits the false teachers who were peddling this era possibly contended that they had received a revelation of God ching of his apostles brought about a better understanding. (McGarvey)
- C. 1. They were not to be shaken or troubled by spirit. The false teachers who are peddling this error possibly contended they had received a revelation of God. 2. They were not to be shaken or troubled by word. Perhaps the false teachers were alleging that had even heard Paul teach that the second advent is right now on our threshold. 3. Paul says not to be shaken or troubled by a letter that purports to be from us. Paul warns against a forged letter. False doctrine still uses the same approach as it did in the 1st century. So-called revelations of a modern day nature, misapplication of apostolic council and outright attempts to forge authoritative documents of a religious nature are still part and parcel of Satanic devices in the our era (Taylor, Jr)

3 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,

- A. There is no hint here regarding the length of the time interval between the time Paul wrote and the actual coming of Christ in the Second Advent. In the light of intervening events, we now know that centuries and millenniums of time were to elapse before the final judgment; but as regards the actual date, we are no better off than were they. The event is still

scheduled for a time yet future; and, as the mystery of lawlessness was working then, so it is now; but no man can know how long it will be before the Lord comes. (Coffman)

- B. Without professing to set forth all the events which would intervene between the date of his Epistle and the Lord's coming, the apostle enumerates three: 1. A great apostasy. 2. The removal of that power which hindered the manifestation of the lawless one. 3. The manifestation of the lawless one, and his reign. The full outline of prophecy covering the Christian dispensation is given in Revelation. (McGarvey)
- C. This apostasy, or falling away, may be defined to be a desertion of the true religion and the true God. The title "son of perdition" is used twice in the New Testament. The phrase simply means "man doomed to destruction" and is not reserved for any one individual. In fact, there are two people to which the title "son of perdition" is applied. In context, John 17:12 is referring to Judas Iscariot, while 2 Thes 2:3 is referring to the "man of lawlessness"—the Antichrist—who will appear in the end times before Christ's return. (Got Questions)
- D. The man of sin is identical with the antichrist of 1 John 2:18. The language clearly shows that he is a person, but there is nothing to forbid us from regarding him as an official rather than an individual personality, as, for instance, a line of popes rather than an individual pope. (McGarvey)
- E. Paul was not a subscriber to the baseless theory that it is impossible for a child of God to fall. If apostasy is impossible how could there be any type of future following from fate? If the doctrine that denies the possibility of apostasy is so then Jesus Christ will never come back again. Second coming cannot occur until there has first a falling away. This is one of the certain consequences of this fatal Calvinistic era that has swallowed hook line and sinker by the masses of religionists now. (Taylor, Jr)

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

- A. The meaning of the word "Antichrist" is "against Christ" or "instead of Christ" ([1 John 2:18](#); [1 John 2:22](#); [1 John 4:3](#); [2 John 1:7](#)). Antichrist is the name of that man who will appear between the rapture of the believers and Christ's appearing to set up His kingdom of peace (the millennium) and will draw off the people from awaiting Messiah. He will show himself that he is God and will demand worship ([2 Thes 2:4](#)). Being an instrument of Satan he will imitate Messiah as well as be hostile to him. ([Daniel 11:36-37](#)). This is why he is compared with a lamb and a dragon ([Rev 13:11](#)). Compare. (Coffman)
- B. There can be no way that this is a reference to the Jewish temple. Paul, who wrote the Corinthians that "Ye are the temple of God," First, it means the church of Jesus Christ; but in context it means the apostate church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, whenever and wherever the "man of sin" appears it will be in the church apostate! (Coffman)
- C. The great apostasy produced the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman papacy indeed has set itself up above God by claiming the right to add to, subtract from, alter modify and amend

God's law. They have been and are still worshipped by their duped patrons. They have allowed and even encouraged others to call them Lord God the Pope. It would be difficult indeed to find a group of men who come closer to acting like Gods on earth than have these men. (Taylor, Jr)

D. This writer, who has seen the Pope borne into the Basilica of St. Peter, hoisted above the people and elevated above the high altar upon the shoulders of those who carry him (literally "sitting") into the sanctuary cannot escape the deep. impression that a prophecy of that very spectacle is imbedded in this remarkable verb. (Coffman)

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

A. He had repeated the instruction often, and now reproves the Thessalonians for forgetting what he did say, and being agitated by false reports of what he did not say. (McGarvey)

B. The apostle alludes to a conversation which had taken place between him and the members of this Church when he was at Thessalonica; and this one circumstance will account for much of the obscurity that is in these verses. Besides, the apostle appears to speak with great caution, and does not at all wish to publish what he had communicated to them; the hints which he drops were sufficient to call the whole to their remembrance. (Clarke)

7 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. 8 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.

A. A mystery in the New Testament is a new truth previously unknown before its revelation in the present dispensation. In this case the mystery is the revelation of a future climax of lawlessness in the world. Then and now a movement against divine law directed by Satan was and is operative. But it is being restrained somewhat, and this restraining will continue until the time appointed for revealing the man of sin and the climax of lawlessness. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

B. In verse 6 we have a thing ("that which") restraining the person of antichrist, and in verse 7 we have the thing ("mystery of lawlessness") which would produce the antichrist restrained by a person. The traces of that spirit which overrules God's laws and substitutes its own were abundant in the church. It showed itself in attempts to engraft both Judaism and paganism into Christianity, thus paving the way for an apostasy, with a great head apostate. Romans and Galatians were written to correct Judaizing tendencies, and the Epistle to the Hebrews was an attempt to wean weak Christians from the sensuous ritualism of Moses. Tendencies to lapse into paganism are also frequently reprov'd. (McGarvey)

C. Of course the Roman government was the principal authority of the age in which Paul wrote; and, as long as there was a strong central government in Rome, the spiritual empire of the papists was unable fully to develop. It was with the breakdown of law and

order, in the coming of the vandals and hordes of barbarians, that the man of sin saw his opportunity and took it. There ensued the Holy Roman Empire, controlled absolutely by Romanists. (Coffman)

- D. There are elements of these corruptions already existing in the church. Dr. Newton maintains that the foundations of popery were laid in the apostle's days, and that the superstructure was raised by degrees; and this is entirely in accordance with the statements of the apostle Paul. In his own time, he says, there were things which, if not restrained, would expand and ripen into that apostasy. He has not told as particularly to what he refers, but there are several intimations in his writings, as well as in other parts of the New Testament, that even in the apostolic age there existed the elements of those corruptions which were afterward developed and imbodyed in the papacy. (Clarke)

[9](#) The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, [10](#) and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

[11](#) And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, [12](#) that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

- A. The term "antichrist" conveys not only the idea of one who is opposed to Christ, but also of one who is the antithesis of Christ. The antichrist is a counterfeit or caricature of Christ, and his life is an elaborate parody of that part of the Christ life which may be so contradicted, contorted and adapted so as to comport with worldly ambition. The antichrist is the personification of sin (v3), whereas Christ is the incarnation of righteousness ([Acts 3:14](#)). He is the son of perdition (verse 3), just as Jesus is the Prince of life ([Acts 3:14](#)). He opposes his will against God, and exalts himself against God, and enthrones himself in the temple of God, and displays himself as God (v4), while Jesus resigned himself to the Father's will ([Luke 22:42](#)) and humbled himself in complete obedience ([Phil 2:5-8](#)), and, though truly claiming to be divine ([John 14:8-11](#)), waited until he was exalted of God (Phil 2:9). Antichrist has a season or time for revelation (v6), just as Jesus had ([Gal 4:4](#)), and still has a proper time for revealing himself ([Acts 1:6-7](#)). He first exists as a mystery, and then has his open revelation and so also did Jesus ([Rom 16:25-26](#)). Moreover, as a mystery the antichrist existed as lawlessness, and finally came forth the lawless one, while Jesus was first concealed in the mysterious types of the law ([John 5:46](#); [Rom 3:21-22](#)), and was born under the law ([Gal 4:4](#)) and was the very incarnation of law ([Rom 10:4](#); [Matt 5:17-18](#)), and is the mystery of godliness ([1 Tim 3:16](#)). He has a coming (v9, just as Christ has (v8). His coming is according to the working of Satan with lying power, signs and wonders, while Jesus came after the working of God ([John 5:19-20](#); [Eph 1:19-20](#)), with God's real powers, signs and wonders-- [Acts 2:22](#). With these lying miracles he established an anti-gospel, formed in the deceit of unrighteousness and producing death (v10); while Jesus, as is shown by the same verse, brought the gospel of

truth that men might be saved. And finally, his kingdom rests on belief--the belief of a lie (v 11)--just as Christ's rests upon the belief of the truth. Thus, step by step, the antichrist parodies the glories, but not the humiliations of the Christ, but he fails to rise to the last step. (McGarvey)

- B. We are constrained to contend that if no other form appears, the Papacy has already fulfilled the prophecy, for it agrees in all the points, as follows: 1. It has one official man ever at its head, and the arrogance of its claims are centered in him. 2. That man came with and out of all apostasy, and the very kind of an apostasy which Paul elsewhere describes ([1 Tim 4:1-3](#); [2 Tim 3:1-9](#)). 3. The spiritual pride and lawlessness which worked and would have produced antichrist in Paul's day, was curbed by the person of the Cæsar whose superior spiritual pride and lawlessness restrained that of the church by contempt and persecution. 4. When, notwithstanding the overshadowing emperor, the bishops of Rome began to assert themselves spiritually, they were still checked and restrained from revealing themselves as earthly potentates by the temporal power of the empire, just as the language of verses 6 and 7 so carefully distinguishes. 5. When the power of the Roman Empire was taken away, the pope appeared, and has since been unceasingly in evidence. Paul's readers could readily see how the emperor and the empire would check the antichrist; but Paul could not openly write that emperor and empire were to fall, for, had he done so, the Romans would have appealed to his words as affording a just cause for persecuting the church. 6. The pope is careful to keep up his line of succession, so as to establish his identity and claims; and arising out of the fall of Rome and the apostasy of the church, he has continued for centuries with little change, and certainly none for the better. 7. He exalts himself against God and Christ, calling himself the vicar, or infallible substitute for Christ, and permitting and encouraging his followers to speak of him thus: "Our Lord God the Pope, another God upon earth . . . doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things unlawful, and is more than God." Under these titles he presumes to set aside divine laws in favor of his own. Thus as a substitute person he makes substitute laws, and arrogates to himself divine power, as did Pope Clement VI. when he commanded the angels to admit certain souls to paradise.(Black Death) 8. He sits in the temple of God, i. e., he has his sphere of dominion in the church, and the temple or church which he occupies is still a temple erected to God, albeit the Spirit and presence of God may have long since departed from it. 9. He proves his supreme claims by fraudulent miracles, signs and wonders; of which cures effected by relics and shrines and pictures; prayers, made effectual by blessed beads; indulgences; souls prayed out of purgatory for money; absolution, and transubstantiation are fair samples. (McGarvey)

Stand Fast

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and

belief in the truth, **14** to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. All three members of the godhead are mentioned in this great verse; and it is the answer to the terrible things Paul had just foretold. Whatever evil may engulf the world, the Thessalonians must not be troubled. They are "beloved of the Lord," "chosen of God unto sanctification," and the subject of the apostle's most devout thanksgiving. (Coffman)
- B. Paul had just spoken of a time (at the end) when most people would reject the truth and turn aside to fables; but, as Hendriksen put it, "The true believer must never be afraid of belonging to the minority. It is the remnant that shall be saved. All others shall be condemned." (Coffman)
- C. God chose all men to be saved, in the sense that every man ever born on earth was destined to be a child of God; but the freedom of the human will nullifies that eternal decree in many. In the New Testament, as here, God's choosing implies also the believer's having accepted. It is the choice that men make which determines destiny. All men are called, but only those who hear, accept and obey are the truly "called." (Coffman)
- D. The Thessalonians were a called people. They were called of God. He called them by the gospel. The gospel called them to become Christians. It called them to remain Christians. The goal of their gospel call was their obtaining the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The goal of the gospel is heaven for all its willing recipients. What a contrast between the goal of the gospel and the goal of that system ruled over by the lawless one, the man of sin, the son of perdition. (Taylor, Jr)

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

- A. God was doing his part in calling and in sanctifying, and so the Thessalonians are here exhorted to do their part in firmly adhering to the truth which they had believed. For if one would hold the gospel salvation he must hold the gospel truths. These truths are here called traditions; for, though inspired truths, they were as yet falling from the lips of living men, and were not yet reduced to writing, though we see by these two epistles of Paul that the New Testament record was in process of construction. (McGarvey)

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, **17** comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

- A. The glad tidings of the Gospel, and the comfort which ye have received through believing; a gift which God had in his original purpose, in reference to the Gentiles; a purpose which has respected all times and places, and which shall continue to the conclusion of time; for the Gospel is everlasting, and shall not be superseded by any other dispensation. It is the last and best which God has provided for man; and it is good tidings, everlasting consolation-a

2 Thessalonians 3

Pray for Us

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, **2** and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

- A. The Thessalonians needed prayer in their temptations, but they also needed to pray for others. Assuming a burden of prayer for others lightens one's own load. The apostles were needy too. The apostles acknowledged that the success of their missionary labors was due to God's blessing His Word as they proclaimed it. In particular, the spreading of the gospel was God's work and its reception among those who heard it was due to His preparing hearts. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- B. The unselfishness of his request should be noted. He asks nothing for himself, but desires that the truth may prosper in his hands elsewhere, as it was now prospering in Thessalonica. He speaks of the Word as a thing of life (comp. [Ps 19:5](#); [Ps 147:15](#); [2 Tim 2:9](#)); for the Word, being energized of God, approaches a living personality. The Word is glorified when it saves souls ([Acts 13:48](#)). Possibly there is here an allusion to the applause of the people when a racer wins his race. (McGarvey)
- C. As the missionaries itinerated from city to city, opponents of Christianity tried to frustrate their efforts. The Thessalonians knew all about this (Acts 17:5-9). The enemies of the gospel were doing something irrational, namely, resisting the free gift of God. They were also being destructive of the spiritual welfare of others. The hostility of these enemies was due to their lack of faith in the message of salvation. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- D. Faithless men often are not satisfied until they have killed either the faith of all men and God or the man who have a faith that refuses to recant. These were the types of man Paul faced and corrupt Corinth. Again this was not a selfish prayer. By their deliverance they would be permitted to preach more and more and bring more and more people into the ark of a spiritual safety-the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Taylor, Jr)

3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. **4** And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. **5** Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

- A. Though human beings cannot be trusted, God is faithful to his promises and his purposes. He may always be confided in; and when people are unbelieving, perverse, unkind, and disposed to do us wrong, we may go to him, and we shall always find in him one in whom we may confide. We often have occasion to know, to our sorrow, that "all men have not faith." We see many who once gave some evidence that they had "faith," abandon it all; and we see many in the church who seem to have no true faith, and who refuse to lend their aid in promoting the cause of religion. In such circumstances, the heart is disposed to despond, and to ask whether religion can be advanced in the midst of so much indifference and

opposition? At such times, how consoling is it to be able to turn, as Paul did, to one who is faithful; who never fails us; and who will certainly accomplish his benevolent purposes. Men may be faithless and false, but God never is. (Barnes)

- B. From expressions of confidence in God, Paul easily passes to prayer to him, that the Thessalonians may be led to love him, and to exercise in their trials and persecutions the patience which Christ exhibited under unparalleled suffering. To love God, together with the brotherly love which they already possessed ([1 Thes 4:9-10](#)), constituted a fulfillment of the law ([Matt 22:37-40](#); [Rom 13:10](#)), and hence led to acceptable obedience. (McGarvey)

Warning Against Idleness

6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. **7** For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; **8** nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, **9** not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. **10** For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

- A. This is an appeal by the apostle to the authority of his commission and office as an apostle of Christ. It should be noted that he did not fail to mention "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," thus making it clear that his command carried the full weight and authority of Christ himself. (Coffman)
- B. "Withdraw from such ..." It signifies the withdrawing into oneself, a holding oneself aloof from the offender in question. This is not to be done in a spirit of superiority. The appeal to brotherliness shows that it is part of a man's duty to the brotherhood that he should not condone the deeds of any who, while claiming the name of brother, nevertheless denies by his actions what the brotherhood stands for. (Coffman)
- C. That a minority of the church members were misbehaving seems clear in that Paul admonished his readers generally to discipline the erring brethren. The seriousness of the charge is seen in Paul's appeal to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. On behalf of everything that Jesus Christ is, they should do as Paul said. This is a command, not a suggestion. When Paul wrote the church earlier, he told them to "warn those who are idle" (1 Thess 5:14). (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- D. Many of the Thessalonian converts were from the laboring classes. Now, laborers in that day were brought into competition with slave-labor, and hence were disposed to look upon all manual work as degrading. This false view of life was the main influence which produced that vast multitude of parasites that then swarmed in every large city of the empire. To correct this mistaken pride, and to restore labor to its just dignity, Paul had made tents and supported himself by his hands while at Thessalonica. For these and other reasons he had also waived his right to support and had sustained himself while at Corinth ([Acts 18:3](#); [2 Cor 11:9](#)) and at Ephesus ([Acts 20:34](#)). But notwithstanding his example and instruction, and

despite his written rebuke ([1 Thes 4:11-12](#)), idleness appears to have increased rather than diminished. (McGarvey)

- E. They were commanded to withdraw from the disorderly. This command was not directed just to the elders, though they were to take the lead but to all the church. Discipline is never effective unless practiced by all. To withdraw from a brother means a drawing back from having fellowship with him. It requires a termination of social and fraternal fellowship with him as long as he walks disorderly. The only association to maintain with him is in the realm of seeking fervently for his total restoration to his full fellowship again. (Taylor, Jr)

[11](#) For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. [12](#) Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

[13](#) But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

- A. What was the original cause of their idleness, is not known. There seems no reason, however, to doubt that it was much increased by their expectation that the Saviour would soon appear, and that the world would soon come to an end. If this was to be so, of what use would it be to labor? (Barnes)
- B. While Paul who commands all who are able to eat their own bread, be quiet, and not to 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)
- C. One writer has suggested five reasons for church discipline which has become the lost commandment in this day. They are 1. to obey God, 2. to help save the world, 3. to keep the church pure. 4 to deter wrongdoing, 5 to save the soul of the one who has sinned. (Taylor, Jr)

[14](#) And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. [15](#) Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Benediction

[16](#) Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. [17](#) The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

[18](#) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

- A. Pause prayerful position is one of peace. He desires that the Lord of peace give you peace always by all means.
- B. It was Paul's evident custom to have a scribe or letter writer who took dictation, to write out what he said. Then at the end of the letter he would take the pen in hand from the

selected scribe and sign his own name. He affirms this to be his standard procedure in every letter. This gave the letter apostolic attestation and guarded against forged or pseudo letters sent out as though from Paul. (Taylor, Jr)

Questions: Robert Taylor, Jr.

1. What are some of the obstacles that hinder the vast spread of the gospel?
2. Why is there such a great need for Christians to have the spirit of patience and steadfastness?

Lessons Learned From First and Second Thessalonians



The journey through the earnest epistles of 1st and 2nd Thessalonian has been spiritually stimulating and deeply upbuilding. Paul writings by the inspiration of God has stirred our spirits, probed our hearts, challenged our minds, invigorated our innermost longings and made us want to live a more faithful life for the master. All of us should have grown as a result of our study.

CHRISTIAN CARE AND CONCERN

Paul constant care and his courageous concern for the Thessalonians runs throughout both epistles. It was his concern for their lost souls that prompted his taking them to the gospel in the first place. It was his concern for them that made him willing to suffer in order that truth might become their prized possession. His care and concern are seen in the fact that he taught them the truth and exposed any and all errors that threatened the security of their souls. Paul was not of the modern persuasion that love blinds one to the religious era. He knew the truth and the truth alone can save. He knew that error had in it the seeds of spiritual destruction. His care and concerns are seen in that he treated them as the nursing mother does her own precious offspring. Christian and consecrated concern runs as golden threads throughout the Thessalonian epistles. How brilliantly these glisten as reflected from the mirror of Christian sunlight.

THE MARVELOUS HARMONY AMONG GRACE, LAW, LOVE, FAITH AND WORKS

We are living in an era in which grace is abused. The masses of men misunderstand the biblical doctrine of love. It would be difficult indeed to discover a word more abused in our day than is the kindly term of love. Every man becomes his own committee of one in determining what the loving thing to do actually is. Quite frequently the situation, not scripture determines the action. Quite frequently passion, not purity, is the chief factor determining what the loving thing demands. There is confusion relative to the link between faith and works. Religious leaders in mass form misunderstand, misapply and misappropriate faith. Then they erroneously conclude that works of no kind play any role at all in the religion of Christ. How far afield they have become.

Paul saw no conflict among these kindly expressions. He began and ended both epistles by making prominent mention of grace. In both epistles he did not hesitate to command a certain course of action or remind them of commandments he had given them orally or with them. Be it remembered that the law is a rule of action, a regulation, commandment. Grace and law are both interwoven into the fundamental and foundational fabric of both epistles. Paul witnesses no conflict between grace and law or between love and law. In the very opening context, he spoke of grace and their labor of love

PERSECUTION: THE UNIVERSAL LOT OF THE GODLY

Paul made this crystal clear in second Timothy 3:12 by declaring "Yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The Thessalonians were very much in the stream of these severe tribulations and testing trials. The church there was born from the womb of persecution. The Thessalians obeyed the gospel with fierce foes breathing down their backs. One of the purposes for which both epistles were written was to encourage them in all the severe sufferings potent persecutions that besieged them day and night. It is still true that those who live godly will suffer persecution but persecutions of one kind or another come to every Christian who is godly in attitude and action, who is righteous in language in life.

THE TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING AND TEACHING

The church of Thessalonica had its beautiful beginning by means of gospel proclamation he relied upon the gospel not gimmicks to move them toward Christian conversion and real Christian commitment. He knew the gospel was God's power to save. It was his message in season and out of season. He did not adapt the message to the people. He sought to adapt the people to the unchanging message of saving truth. Our generation of preachers and teachers need desperately to learn and to learn well this imperative lesson.

THE PLACE OF PRAYER

Prayer is the one of the great doctrine set forth in the Thessalonians epistles. Not only did Paul pray for them but he even sought for a royal reciprocation. He was apostle but he still needed their prayers. He was inspired but he still needed the solace and strength to prayers of others in his stead. Paul well knew that prayer moves the hand of Him that moves the universe. He would have agreed with a later poet who would say that more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams possible. As Christians we need to say frequently to our friends "brethren pray for us."

THE PLACE FOR MORAL PURITY

The Thessalonians had come from a deeply pragmatic background. Fulfillment of every human passion was considered natural and normal. The gospel of Christ called for a change in all this. Sanctification would not allow sex outside marriage. Honor as a Christian would not allow them to defraud another in these matters of genuine gravity. One of the gravest dangers currently facing God's people is the wave of immorality which seeks to engulf and overwhelm us in attitude and action, in language and life.

THE DIGNITY OF LABOR

Some among the Thessalonians failed to realize just how important work it is in God's plan for humanity. In both the epistles Paul taught them to work, to eat their own bread, to mind their own business and to present an honorable walk among outsiders. Paul counseling even commands the adoption of a no work no eat philosophy which should be restored in our day.

THE NEED FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Paul realized that discipline both instructive and corrective is an imperative for the successful function of Christianity. Full discipline is the forgotten commandment in most congregational settings today.

THE BIBLICAL IMPORTANCE OF FINAL THINGS

The second coming of Christ is the most dominant theme of the Thessalonian epistles. It is mentioned in seven of the eight chapters of these two epistles. Paul taught both the positives as well as negatives of the second advent, He taught the reality of the resurrection.



(Robert R. Taylor, Jr. Oct 1931 -March 2023)

Appendix

Musings on 2 Thess 2:3-7

The text begins with these inspired words, “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; 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, shewing himself that he is God.” Verse 7 begins with, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work...”

Who is the man of sin? Who is the son of perdition? Some have said it is the pope. Others have said it was the Roman emperor. Still others refer to him as some future anti-Christ. It is commonly believed that the books of Thessalonians were the first (or among the first) books written in the New Testament. The books that come after the Thessalonian letters (chronologically speaking) will give insight as to who this character is/was.

The word “perdition” comes from a word that is often translated as ruin, loss, destruction or damnation. In John 17:12 Judas Iscariot is called the son of perdition. He personified the attitude of the Jews toward Jesus. Jesus spoke of the Jews as children of the devil in John 8:44. Interestingly, the same word is used in Hebrews 10:39 where those Jews who had left Christ to go back into Moses’ law are said to have been drawn “back into perdition.”

In 1 Thess 2:14-16 Paul shows, by inspiration, that it was the Jews who were trying to keep the Gentiles from hearing the Gospel. In Acts 17:5 it was the Jews who drove Paul out of Thessalonica. It was the Jews who went to Berea when they heard Paul was preaching there and stirred up the people against the gospel. In 2 Thess 1:4 Paul mentioned their persecution and tribulation. It is evident that the Jews, or the Judaizing teachers, were persecuting the Christians.

The word “perdition” is translated as damnable heresy or pernicious ways in 2 Peter 2:1-3. Peter is referring to the Judaizing teachers. Satan wanted to water down Christianity by making it a Jewish sect. The Judaizing teachers were probably Christians who wrongfully taught that a Gentile had to be circumcised after the manner of Moses’ law (cf Acts 15:1). A letter was dispatched from Jerusalem to deny this false doctrine (cf Acts 15:23, 24). Sadly, the problem did not go away. It appears, at least in my opinion, that Judaism became Satan’s tool to attempt to destroy the gospel (cf Rom 16:17-20).

It might be good for us to ask who the first century Christians would have in mind when reading the words “who sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (v 4). The only person I can think of that fits this divine description is the High Priest. It would be 18 or 19 years before the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed. The Jews were still playing at religion, but were no longer God’s children, no longer God’s people. But, Satan was using that position and their traditions to help destroy the gospel.

Some have thought that this verse refers to the pope. That simply cannot be because the pope never sat in the temple of God. Remember, it has to make some kind of sense to those people in Thessalonica.

It makes more sense to think of the son of perdition, the man of sin as either the High Priest (specifically) or the Judaizing teachers (generally) as Satan's tools against Christianity. I do not know if this is the perfect answer to the son of perdition or the man of sin in 2 Thess 2:3-7, but, to me, it sure makes a lot more sense than trying to tie a nice bow around the Roman Catholic church from a 1st century perspective.

As a side note; would it not be an interesting study to take what Paul said about his "thorn in the flesh" and apply this Jewish/Judaizing problem as an answer to that phrase. 2 Cor 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."

JB

Realized Eschatology Refuted By Jesus

We have discussed in previous lessons “eschatology.” The doctrine of final judgment and death. We have studied the AD 70 theory, which teaches that in AD 70 the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in that city were fulfillment of Jesus’ finally coming. This is known as realized eschatology.”

This false doctrine is easily refuted by simply reading the text of Jesus’ discourse on Mount Olivet with His disciples. The background of the context in Matthew 23 Jesus had called the Jewish leaders, specifically the scribes and Pharisees (v 2) “hypocrites” seven times. He also called them “blind guides,” “fools,” “serpents” and “vipers.”

Chapter 23 ends with these words recorded my Matthew;

Matt 23:37-39

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

It is very important to our study to see how chapter 24 begins. Jesus and His disciples departed the temple and sat down somewhere on the Mount of Olives overlooking the city of Jerusalem. Most likely looking down on the temple and the surrounding buildings that were within the city walls. The first verse of chapter 24 says the disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. This is when Jesus said, “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (v 2).

This must have shocked and mystified the disciples. Being puzzled they asked Jesus two questions; Matt 24:3

“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?”

Some may see three questions here, but let’s compare the corresponding verses from the other accounts.

Mark 13:4

“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”

Luke 21:7

And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

We can see there were two questions asked. Question one, Matt 24:3; “Tell us, when shall these things be?”

We need to stress the significance of the words “these things” in the context. The Lord had used these words in 23:36 where He said, “all these things shall come upon this generation.” Jesus said, “these things” in verse 2 and the disciples said, “these things” in verse 3. Jesus uses “these things” again in verses 6, 33 and 34. They all meant the same thing. There is no doubt He is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem.

We shall put the evidence in juxtaposition for easy comparison:

1. In the destruction of Jerusalem there would be benefit in fleeing to the mountains. In the Lord's final coming there would be no benefit in fleeing to the mountains.
2. The destruction of Jerusalem was local; Judea and Palestine. In the Lord's final coming it will be universal.
3. At the destruction of Jerusalem it would have required haste in escaping. In the Lord's final coming haste will accomplish nothing.
4. At the destruction of Jerusalem there would be tribulation. At the last coming they will be eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage.
5. At the destruction of Jerusalem there would be definite signs. At the Lord's coming there will be no signs.
6. Before the destruction of Jerusalem there would be wars, famines and earthquakes. At the Lord's coming things will all seem normal.
7. The destruction of Jerusalem was illustrated by the parable of the fig tree (something was nigh). The Lord's coming was illustrated by the parable of the thief (no warning).
8. The destruction of Jerusalem was to take place during the lifetime of those present (this generation). Conversely, the parable of the virgins mentions the bridegroom "tarried."
9. One takes place on earth. The other takes place in heaven.
10. The destruction of Jerusalem is referenced by "those days." The Lord's coming is referenced by "that day." (Do not over-look the significance of the fact "that day" is singular. Days will be no more after "that day.")

There can be little doubt the destruction of Jerusalem is a "type" of the end of the world, but it was not the final coming of the Lord.

Before we end this short study it would be wise to include the answer Jesus gave to the second question asked in Matthew 24³: "...and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?"

There needs to be a division in your New Testaments at Matt 24:36. Circle verse 36, underline it or add an asterisk to the margin. It is the separating point in Jesus' teaching between the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of this world at Christ's return. The text reads; "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

For the next 62 verses in Matthew 24 and 25 the one and only subject of the context is the coming of the Lord at the final destruction of the earth. This unknown and unknowable date is emphasized in verses like Matt 24:42, 44; 25:13 and Acts 1:7.

When He does come back to gather the church together to be presented to God the Father, it will be with great pageantry. 1 Thess 4:16 describes this universal event with such words as, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," Not just the voice of the Lord, but the Lord shouting. We won't miss that. The verse goes on to say, "with the voice of the archangel," Michael, the only archangel the Bible mentions, will blend his voice in the announcement of the world's end. And as if those two ethereal voices weren't enough the text says "the trump of God." The end of this world will be kept secret from no human. It will not be private or recluse. Near the end of Peter's writings he added this succinct observation through inspiration, 2 Peter 3:10 "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."

Realized eschatology is false and all those who teach it are false teachers.

All quotations taken from the KJV.