

Life For Today
Bible Commentary

The Book of
First & Second
Thessalonians

Andrew Wommack

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SPECIAL NOTE

These commentary ebooks are just the footnotes from Andrew's Life for Today Study Bible And Commentary. Because these footnotes appear without change from the printed books, there are certain things that may not make sense. For example, the footnotes are numbered in a way that seems confusing in the ebooks; there are references to page numbers and marginal references, etc. These all serve a purpose in the printed books, but not in the ebook. Understanding that the footnotes originated in a printed book will help avoid confusion.

**THE BOOK OF
1 THESSALONIANS**

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS

OVERVIEW

Thessalonica was a city in Macedonia (see note 1 at Ac 16:9), or what we now call Greece. Paul traveled to Thessalonica after being released from prison in Philippi (Ac 16:40-17:1). Thessalonica was the second major city where Paul ministered after having the vision of a man calling him over into Macedonia (Ac 16:9).

Paul had a relatively brief ministry in Thessalonica because persecution drove him from the city; but the Word of God did make an impact, and a church was established. This letter to the church at Thessalonica gives us great insight into Paul's ministry and its effect in that city.

In 1Th 1:5, Paul mentioned that his preaching came to the Thessalonians in power and in the Holy Ghost. This is comparable to what Paul said in 1Co 2:1-5 and 4:20, and it is speaking of the miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit. No doubt one of the reasons Paul made such an impact in such a short time was that the Holy Spirit was working through him with signs and wonders.

Those who believed Paul's message became like him (1Th 1:6), so much so that they "sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad" (1Th 1:8). These were committed believers.

Paul had such an impact that he was driven from the city by persecution from the religious Jews (Ac 17:5-10). After leaving Thessalonica, Paul and his company went to Berea, which was about forty miles west along the Roman road called the Egnatian Way. However, the Jews who had persecuted him in Thessalonica came to Berea and caused the Berean Jews to expel Paul from their city also.

Paul went south to Athens, but left Timothy and Silas in Berea. When Paul reached Athens, he soon sent for Timothy and Silas to join him (Ac 17:15). Paul was so concerned for the Thessalonians' welfare that he sent Timothy back to check on them (1Th 3:5). Timothy joined Paul again in Corinth with good news about the Thessalonians' faith and their love for Paul (1Th 3:6). This was what led Paul to write the letter of 1 Thessalonians.

In this letter, he encouraged the Thessalonians to persevere in light of their many persecutions. He also wrote to correct various errors that had crept into the church. In addition, this letter contains one of the clearest teachings concerning the resurrection of the saints who have already died and the "catching up" of the believers who are still alive (1Th 4:13-18).

THE RECIPIENTS

Paul and his companions had come to Thessalonica early on his second missionary journey, sometime around A.D. 51 (see note 1 at Ac 18:22). As was his custom, he went into the Jewish synagogue and reasoned with the Jews from Scripture that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. This continued for about three weeks. Some believed Paul's preaching (among the Greeks, there was a great number that believed [Ac 17:4]). The

unbelieving Jews became very jealous and hired some people to cause an uproar in the city. They accused Paul of breaking the Roman laws by proclaiming Jesus to be king instead of Caesar (Ac 17:5-7).

The leaders of the city became very upset, and a man named Jason was fined, as were some other believers. There was so much opposition that finally Paul and his companions were forced to leave (Ac 17:9-10).

Thessalonica (see note 3 at Ac 17:1) was the largest and most important city in Macedonia (see note 1 at Ac 16:9). It was also the capital. It has been estimated that in New Testament times, Thessalonica had a population of around 200,000.

"Thessalonica, the modern Salonica, was founded about 315 B.C. by Cassander, who named it in honor of his wife, the half-sister of Alexander the Great. It was situated on the most famous of Roman military roads, the Egnatian Way, which connected Rome with the East. It was a seaport and a center of trade and commerce; a city ideally suited to Paul's missionary strategy" (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia, Volume 5, p. 723).

The church founded there was composed largely of Gentiles (1Th 1:9, 2:14; and Ac 17:4). It was a vigorous church that grew quickly in size and commitment.

AUTHORSHIP

Paul's authorship of the epistles to the Thessalonians is unquestioned by most scholars. Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians begin with the statement, "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians" (1Th 1:1 and 2Th 1:1).

For positive evidence of Paul's authorship, consider the following: (1) The epistles are presented as being from Paul; (2) Paul's companions who are mentioned at the beginning of the epistles accompanied him on his second missionary trip (Ac 15:40, 17:14, and 18:5); (3) the theological thought is Pauline; and (4) extra-biblical sources such as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Marcion, and Irenaeus all refer to Paul as the author of the letters to the Thessalonians.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Numerous footnotes in the Life for Today Study Bible Notes are about Paul: see note 4 at Ac 7:58, note 1 at Ac 9:1, note 1 at Ac 9:26, and note 1 at Ac 28:30.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

These letters were written from Corinth between A.D. 50 and 54 (Ac 17:1-10 and 18:1). This would make these epistles among the earliest of Paul's writings, probably after Galatians. It appears that 2 Thessalonians was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians, most likely within four months to a year.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians [which is] in God the Father and [in] the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 1 at 1Th 1:1: This letter begins with a greeting from three people: Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The word "we" occurs more times in this epistle (forty-eight times) than in any of the other letters Paul wrote. Silas and Timothy ministered with Paul in Thessalonica, and therefore, this letter was from all three of them.

However, the doctrine and style are totally Paul's. Paul even used the first-person singular in a few instances (1Th 2:18, 3:5, and 5:27). Therefore, it appears Paul was the one responsible for the letter, with Silas and Timothy being in agreement.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention

of you in our prayers;

Note 2 at 1Th 1:2: Paul continually gave thanks for the people of God. He always expressed this at the beginning of his letters, except in the Galatian epistle where he immediately rebuked the church for their grave doctrinal error of conforming to another gospel. Paul reminded the Thessalonians that he, Silas, and Timothy were continuing to pray for them.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:3

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

Note 3 at 1Th 1:3: Three virtues existed in this church--faith, love, and hope. Each virtue produced a powerful and definite result in the lives and conduct of the believers. This shows that these virtues are not just theological concepts or doctrines; they translate into the everyday lives of the believers.

This first virtue is what Paul calls "your work of faith." In its definition for "PEITHO" ("obey"), Vine's Expository Dictionary alludes to this by stating, "Faith is of the heart, invisible to men; obedience is of the conduct and may be observed. When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he

believes God. Of course it is persuasion of the truth that results in faith...but peitho, in the NT suggests an actual and outward result of the inward persuasion and consequent faith."

"Works of faith" do stand in contrast with the "works of the law" (Ga 2:16 and Php 3:9). Works of the Law are not of faith (Ga 3:12) and are the product of self-righteousness. Works of faith are the byproduct of our reliance upon Christ (Ro 1:5).

Second, Paul speaks of a "labour of love"--not just love, but a labor of love. "The word kopos [labour] denotes laborious toil, and directs our minds to unceasing hardship borne for love's sake" (Tyndale New Testament Commentary, p. 34; brackets mine). The Thessalonian Christians were loving in deed and in truth (1Jo 3:18).

Third, the Thessalonians had "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." This suggests the hope that the Thessalonians had in the Lord Jesus Christ enabled them to endure much persecution. The Greek word "HUPOMONE," which was translated "patience" here, does not refer to a negative, passive acquiescence, but rather an active patience characterized by endurance.

These virtues were expressed not only before man but also in the sight of God, and our Father.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

Note 4 at 1Th 1:4: Most people think that one cannot know whether another person is one of the elect, but that's not the attitude Paul expressed here. He knew the Thessalonians were of the elect. How did he know? It was because of the actions he described in 1Th 1:3.

It is hard to tell about the relationship some people have with the Lord, but there are others who manifest so much of the work of God in their lives that there is no doubt. The goal of believers should be to express the life of God so much that if they were arrested for being Christian, there would be enough evidence to convict them.

Note 5 at 1Th 1:4: Paul used the word "brethren" a total of seventeen times in this epistle. This word reveals the close family tie that Paul felt for these people.

Note 6 at 1Th 1:4: Here, "beloved" in Greek is what is called a perfect participle; i.e., it conveys "the thought of a love existing in the past with that of one continuing into the present with unabated force" (Tyndale New Testament Commentary, p. 36).

Note 7 at 1Th 1:4: The doctrine of election has been debated, and volumes of books have been written about the subject. However, most of the controversy has come over how "election" affects our free will. Does God just choose some for salvation and others for damnation? Do we not have a choice?

The simple answer is that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1Pe 1:2). This means God chose us based on His foreknowledge of what we would do. He didn't choose us independently of our free will.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:5

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

Note 8 at 1Th 1:5: Paul's ministry in Thessalonica was recorded in Ac 17:1-9. In that account, nothing is mentioned about Paul or any of the members of his company working miracles, but this verse makes it very clear that miracles did take place.

This is very similar to what Paul said to the Corinthians in 1Co 2:1-5 and 4:20 (see note 4 at 1Co 2:4). The supernatural power of the Holy Spirit confirmed the Gospel Paul taught (see note 2 at Mr 16:20). This is certainly one reason he made such a great impact in Thessalonica in such a short period of time.

The preaching of the true Gospel will be confirmed with signs and wonders through the power of the Holy Ghost.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:6

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

Note 9 at 1Th 1:6: "And ye became followers [imitators] of us, and of the Lord" (brackets mine). Paul's behavior was such that if the Thessalonians needed a model to follow, they could find it in him. So closely did Paul imitate Christ that to follow Paul was to follow Christ (1Co 4:16, 11:1; Php 3:17, 4:9; and 2Th 3:7).

The Greek word for "followers" used here is "MIMETES." It is used seven times in the New Testament and always in a good sense (1Co 4:16, 11:1; Eph 5:1; 1Th 1:6, 2:14; Heb 6:12; and 1Pe 3:13). "It comes from mimos, 'a mimic' or 'an actor'" (Word Meanings in the New Testament, p. 364). MIMETES was translated "imitators" in the Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, and New International Version.

What a challenge this word is for us today. Is our behavior a model of Christ?

Note 10 at 1Th 1:6: The circumstances in which the Thessalonians had received the Gospel was a combination of joy, produced by the Holy Ghost, and much affliction. The affliction that Paul was speaking about came as a result of the Gospel being

received by a great multitude of God-fearing Greeks and a few Jews. Paul had presented the Gospel for three weeks in the synagogue at Thessalonica. It was a time of joy as people believed the "good news."

Trouble soon came as a mob of the unbelieving Jews rioted and tried to drag Paul and Silas from the home of their host, Jason. Paul and Silas were not found, but Jason and some others were dragged to court and forced to post a bond. This guaranteed that Paul and Silas would not return to the city and resulted in them being sent away to Berea at night (Ac 17:1-10).

It was in the midst of this trouble and persecution that the Gospel was planted firmly in the lives of the Thessalonian believers. The Thessalonians received the Word not because it was easy but in spite of the difficulty and persecution. Jesus calls this the Word that fell on good soil: "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Lu 8:15).

1 THESSALONIANS 1:7

So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

Note 11 at 1Th 1:7: The Thessalonians were faithful to follow the Lord and His apostles even though receiving the message of Christ meant serious trouble for them. In so doing,

they became examples to all other believers and were worthy of being imitated. This is what the word "ensamples" means. The dictionary defines "ensample" as "one who is worthy of imitation or duplication."

Paul had commended them for following his example and was saying they had done so well that others should imitate them too.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:8

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

Note 12 at 1Th 1:8: The phrase "sounded out" is the Greek verb "EXECHEOMAI," and this Greek word means "to sound forth as a trumpet" (Vine's Expository Dictionary). This is describing the zeal the Thessalonians had for sharing their faith. In a very short period of time, they had proclaimed the Gospel throughout the regions of Macedonia (see note 1 at Ac 16:9) and Achaia (see note 11 at Ac 18:12). Paul even asked the Thessalonians to pray for him, that the Word of God would "have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you" (2Th 3:1).

One of the biggest lies that Satan has ever sold the church is that evangelism is solely the responsibility of the clergy. Christ

began and ended His earthly ministry with the same command: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mr 1:17) and "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me...unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Ac 1:8). These commands were not just for ministers. These are promises to every born-again believer.

The Thessalonians had this heart for the lost--so much so that from them, the Word "sounded forth" throughout the whole area. They didn't wait on the clergy; they all shared their faith.

According to Acts, the entire early church evangelized. Ac 8:4 states, "They that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." To put this in context, Ac 8:1 says, "They were all scattered abroad...except the apostles" (emphasis mine). Of course the apostles evangelized, too, but the clear emphasis is that all the members of the body of Christ were sharing their faith.

This is how the early church turned the world upside down (Ac 17:6) in such a short period of time. All the believers were doing their part. The church was growing with such rapidity that "by the middle of the second century one of the great apologists could say, 'We are everywhere. We are in your towns and in your cities; we are in your country; we are in your army and navy; we are in your palaces; we are in the senate; we are more numerous than anyone....' By A.D. 300 the church had shown such

tremendous strength and virility and was spreading so swiftly that it appeared the entire civilized world could be evangelized by A.D. 500. But something happened. Emperor Constantine, in the year 313, issued the Edict of Toleration, by which the long agonizing persecution of the Christians was at last brought to a halt. In following decades numerous other edicts favoring the Christians were passed, until at last the whole Roman Empire was declared by fiat to be Christian. Thus, millions of barbarians flooded into the church, bringing with them all of their pagan superstitions and heresies. They didn't even know the Gospel. They had never experienced its transforming power, and, of course, they could not go out and tell others about it. So, little by little, the idea arose that there was a division between the clergy and the laity and that this task of evangelism was the job of the professionally trained individuals.... The Dark Ages followed! With only a few bright spots in the history of the church since that time, this deplorable condition has continued down to our day" ("Evangelism Explosion" by D. James Kennedy, pp. 3-4).

If we believers today would follow the example of the Thessalonians and "sound forth" the Gospel to the corners of our world of influence, then we could hasten the evangelism of the world and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (see note 8 at Mt 24:14).

Note 13 at 1Th 1:8: Paul was saying he didn't have to tell others about how the Thessalonians had received the Word of God. Their own actions said it all.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:9

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

Note 14 at 1Th 1:9: The phrase "they themselves" refers to all those who had heard the testimony of the Thessalonians. They all bore witness to the transformation the Word of God had produced in the Thessalonians.

Note 15 at 1Th 1:9: When Paul spoke of the "entering in we had unto" the Thessalonians, he was speaking about the kind of reception they had given him. They had completely received him and the Gospel he preached, and became followers of both him and of Christ (1Th 1:6)--so much so that Paul said everyone else would do well to imitate them (see note 9 at 1Th 1:6).

What made the Thessalonians different than the others to whom Paul had ministered? What did the Thessalonians do to effect this great change? Paul described it in this verse by speaking of how they turned to God and served Him.

The English word "turned" was translated from the Greek word "EPISTREPHO." EPISTREPHO was often used literally of people turning themselves around (Mt 9:22; Mr 5:30, 8:33; Joh 21:20; and Re 1:12), of people turning in repentance to God (Lu 17:4; Ac 3:19, 9:35, 26:18, and 20), and turning to the Christian faith (Ac 11:21, 14:15, 15:19; 2Co 3:16; this verse; and 1Pe

2:25). It was also used of John the Baptist's message in turning people unto the Lord (Lu 1:16-17). It was also translated in the King James Version as the English words "converted" (Mt 13:15, Mr 4:12, Lu 22:32, Joh 12:40, and Ac 28:27), "return" (Mt 24:18), and "turn back again" (Mr 13:16).

Notice also that the Thessalonians turned first to God and second from idols. It's possible for people to be so dissatisfied with what they are experiencing that they decide to turn away from that lifestyle but not turn to God. True conversion is not just a turning from something but a turning to God.

The phrase "from idols" suggests that most of these Christians were Gentiles who were converted from a pagan culture.

Next, the Thessalonians turned to serve the living and true God. The word "serve" is the Greek word "DOULEUO" and means "serve...to yield to, to give oneself up to" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). In the Greek, this word is in the present tense and carries the idea that the service is absolute, constant, and a continuous process and habit. There is no time that Jesus Christ is not our Lord and we are not His servants (see note 1 at Ro 1:1).

The Thessalonians turned to the living and true God as contrasted to the dead idols that they had been serving. "True God" means real and genuine as opposed to that which is fictitious and counterfeit (2Ch 15:3, Jer 10:10, Joh 17:3, and 1Jo 5:20).

1 THESSALONIANS 1:10

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [even] Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Note 16 at 1Th 1:10: The Thessalonians had not only repented and turned from idolatry to serve the true and living God; they also awaited the appearing of Jesus Christ from heaven. Paul introduced here the theme of Christ's return that he discussed later in detail in 2 Thessalonians. In this letter, he referred at least five times to the return of Jesus Christ, once in each chapter (1Th 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:16, and 5:23). His return will reveal two things: (1) It will be the "blessed hope" and the final manifestation of the salvation of the believer (Tit 2:13 and Heb 9:28); and (2) it will reveal the final manifestation of God's personal opposition to evil, resulting in judgment for the unbeliever (2Th 1:7-10).

Note 17 at 1Th 1:10: The "wrath to come" that the believer has been delivered from is the wrath or judgment that people will face because of their sins. God determined that the just punishment for sin would be eternal separation from Him. This separation is also referred to as "death" (Ro 6:23). God devised a plan to place the death penalty for sin upon His Son (Jesus Christ) when He suffered and died upon the cross. Because of

that death, God offers the forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who will repent and believe upon Christ (Ac 16:31 and 20:21).

For those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, there will be a day of wrath and vengeance (2Th 1:8 and 1Pe 4:17). Those who receive forgiveness through faith in what Jesus has already suffered will not come into judgment again. Their judgment has been placed on Jesus.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

1 THESSALONIANS 2:1

For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

Note 1 at 1Th 2:1: Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians was not "in vain." The Greek word for "vain" is "KENOS" and literally means "empty...fruitless, without effect" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). This could be interpreted as Paul's coming to the Thessalonians was successful, or accomplished a purpose. The New English Bible translates this verse, "You know for yourselves, brothers, that our visit to you was not fruitless."

1 THESSALONIANS 2:2

But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

Note 2 at 1Th 2:2: Philippi is a city about eighty-five miles northeast of Thessalonica. It would have taken Paul about three or four days to travel that distance by foot.

Paul referred to his treatment in Philippi as shameful. Paul and Silas were arrested and, without a trial, beaten and thrown into prison (Ac 16:10-40). As Roman citizens, this treatment was illegal (see note 2 at Ac 16:37).

Despite the sufferings they had endured because of their preaching of the Gospel, they were bold to share the same truths with the Thessalonians.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:3

For our exhortation [was] not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

Note 3 at 1Th 2:3: Paul was saying that he didn't use tricks or deception to convert the Thessalonians. He also was not living immorally and using his message of grace to cover sin. There were no hidden motives behind his preaching, such as covetousness, which he addressed in the following verses (1Th 2:5-6 and 9).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:4

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Note 4 at 1Th 2:4: Certainly, one of the reasons the Lord had entrusted the preaching of the Gospel to Paul was because he was not afraid of man. If Paul had been afraid of man, he would have compromised the Gospel for the sake of self-preservation. That would have lessened the power of the Gospel and prevented people from being saved (Ro 1:16).

Likewise today, the Lord has not called us to please others but to please Him who has called us. A true minister of the Gospel is faithful to the Lord, regardless of the reactions of man.

Note 5 at 1Th 2:4: It's hard for us to know the true motives of people's hearts, because we tend to look only on their actions (1Sa 16:7). However, God looks on the heart, or the motives behind the actions. Surely, there have been ministers who, by the world's standards, were very successful but will be exposed as frauds when the Lord reveals the true motives of their hearts.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:5

For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God [is] witness:

Note 6 at 1Th 2:5: Paul did not use flattering talk. This is the only time the word "flattering" was used in the New Testament. The Greek word from which "flattering" was translated is "KOLAKEIA," and it refers to insincere talk with the end desire of using someone for one's own selfish interest. Vine's Expository Dictionary states that words of flattery are used "not simply as an effort to give pleasure, but with motives of self-interest."

Note 7 at 1Th 2:5: "Covetousness" is the desire to have what belongs to someone else. It is always used in a negative sense in the New Testament. The basic idea is to cover up one's true motive while desiring what belongs to another. Paul stated "God is witness" that this was never his motive in ministering the Gospel to others.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:6

Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor [yet] of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

Note 8 at 1Th 2:6: Paul stated that he never sought recognition from the Thessalonians or from anyone else. Even though, as apostles, Paul and his companions were entitled to much honor, they never demanded or desired it. Paul was seeking the honor that comes from God alone (see note 22 at Joh 5:44).

Note 9 at 1Th 2:6: This is the first time that Paul referred to his companions, Timothy and Silas, as apostles. It is clear that this title is not just restricted to the Twelve (Eph 4:8-13, see note 1 at Mr 3:14).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:7

But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

Note 10 at 1Th 2:7: Paul likened his care for the Thessalonians to that of a mother tenderly caring for her child.

"Cherish" is a word that means "1. To treat with affection and tenderness; hold dear. 2. To keep fondly in mind" (American Heritage Dictionary). It is used of the husband-wife relationship (Eph 5:28-29), of Abishag the Shunamite "taking care of" King David's needs (1Ki 1:1-4), a mother's tender care of her child (this verse), and a man taking care of his own body (Eph 5:29).

In 1Th 2:11, Paul changed the metaphor of a mother's care to that of a father's care (see note 14 at 1Th 2:11). It was Paul's love

as a parent that motivated his care of the Thessalonians. This is in stark contrast to the way many ministers view the people to whom they minister today.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:8

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

Note 11 at 1Th 2:8: According to this verse, Paul and his companions not only shared the message of the Gospel with the Thessalonians; they shared their own lives with them as well.

The word "souls," as used here, stands for the whole person, and the thought is that of giving oneself to another rather than merely imparting a message. Self-sacrifice and "AGAPE" love are the heart of all true ministry, and Paul gave himself to the Thessalonians as a parent sacrifices for his children.

The phrases "affectionately desirous" and "dear unto us" show Paul's willingness to openly proclaim his love not only in words but in deeds as well. 1Co 13:8 in the New International Version says, "Love never fails." No wonder Paul was so successful in his preaching of the Gospel.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:9

For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

Note 12 at 1Th 2:9: The Christian life is not a vacation; at least it wasn't for Paul. Although many traveling preachers may have made themselves financially burdensome to others, that was not Paul's way. From Scripture we know that in Thessalonica (this verse), Corinth (1Co 4:12), and Ephesus (Ac 20:34), Paul maintained his ministry by manual labor.

Although Paul had the right to financial aid from others, he did not want to burden new believers or allow his critics an opportunity to accuse him of being in the ministry just for the money (see note 5 at 1Co 9:6). Ac 18:3 tells us that Paul worked as a tentmaker as he ministered the Gospel of God.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:10

Ye [are] witnesses, and God [also], how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

Note 13 at 1Th 2:10: The Thessalonians had to admit that Paul's conduct was holy, righteous, and blameless while he was with them. They knew that what he was saying was true. Paul

also invoked the Lord as a witness (1Th 2:5 and this verse). Paul's conscience was clear. He had behaved himself in a godly manner the whole time he was with them. How many of us would be willing to call on the Lord to bear witness to our actions and motives?

1 THESSALONIANS 2:11

As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father [doth] his children,

Note 14 at 1Th 2:11: Paul likened himself unto a father who exhorts, comforts, and charges his children. He had already compared his love for the Thessalonians to that of a nursing mother for her child (see note 10 at 1Th 2:7). Paul didn't have the attitude of some ministers today that "the ministry would be wonderful if it weren't for people." Paul genuinely loved the people to whom he ministered.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:12

That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Note 15 at 1Th 2:12: Paul promoted living a life worthy of God. He didn't teach living holy in order to be saved but living holy because we are saved and are children of the King (see note 1 at Ro 6:1 and note 2 at Ro 6:2).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received [it] not [as] the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Note 1 at 1Th 2:13: The cause that occasioned Paul's rejoicing here was the holy living to which he had exhorted the Thessalonians in the previous verses. The reason Paul could rejoice was because the Thessalonians had received his message as it was "in truth, the word of God." It's the reception of God's Word that causes holiness to come as a fruit. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Joh 8:32). God's Word is truth (Joh 17:17).

Note 2 at 1Th 2:13: It is the reception of God's Word into our lives that provides the basis for true Christianity. The phrase "the Word of God" is used forty-six times in Scripture. It not only refers to written and spoken words from God but also to Jesus Christ Himself, the incarnate Word (Joh 1:14). The Word is also a

superhuman power that effectively works in those who believe (Heb 4:12).

The primary way God speaks to us and releases His power in the world today is through His Word, which has been organized into the Bible. It is through God's Word that we come to know Him (1Sa 3:21 and Joh 8:31-32). God's Word is settled forever (Ps 119:89); therefore, it's always relevant. It never changes. God's Word is the standard by which all will be judged (Joh 12:48).

God's Word always accomplishes its purpose (Isa 55:11). We are cleansed through God's Word (Joh 15:3), and everything that pertains to life and godliness comes to us through His Word (2Pe 1:3). We become partakers of God's divine nature through His Word and escape the corruption of this world (2Pe 1:4).

There is no success in the Christian life without being deeply rooted in God's Word (Mr 4:14-20).

Note 3 at 1Th 2:13: There is a difference between the word of man and the Word of God. God's Word is infinitely superior in every way. Any attempt to elevate man's words to the same level as God's always results in devaluing God's Word. Jesus told the people of His day that they were "making the word of God of none effect through [their] tradition" (Mr 7:13, brackets mine). The traditions and teachings of man are not worthy to be compared to the Word of God.

Note 4 at 1Th 2:13: Paul preached the same Gospel everywhere he went, but it didn't always produce the same results. It wasn't because the message was different; it was the

way people received it that made the difference. These Thessalonians received Paul's message as the Word of God. Therefore, it produced life in them.

Even though ministers are responsible for how they minister, we also are responsible for how we hear. Jesus was the perfect minister, yet most of the people of His day rejected Him and His message. They didn't have ears to hear or hearts to receive. It's imperative that we keep pure and sensitive hearts to God so that when we hear the truth, we will receive it as it is in truth--the Word of God.

God's Word only releases its life-giving power when we mix it with faith in our hearts (Heb 4:2).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:14

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [have] of the Jews:

Note 5 at 1Th 2:14: Sometimes when Christians suffer persecution, they think they are not in God's will, because of such difficulties. In this verse, Paul countered this false view and identified his readers with the churches of God in Judea that suffered similar things at the hand of the unbelieving Jews.

Paul himself had been the recipient of so much persecution that he later wrote, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Ti 3:12). Persecution is not the exception; it's the norm. One of the reasons Christians aren't persecuted is that they are not living godly lives. If believers go against the flow, they will bump into the devil. Only those who are headed in the same direction as the devil are not opposed by him.

In many Christian nations today, there isn't overt persecution from the government as in days gone by. However, there is still plenty of opposition to the Gospel and those who proclaim it (see note 7 at Mt 5:10).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:15

Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

Note 6 at 1Th 2:15: It is sad that unbelief not only causes people to perish, but often those who reject the Gospel endeavor to hinder others from receiving God's Truth as well. That's what the unbelieving Jews did. They not only rejected the message of God's true prophets, but they killed them so others would not be influenced.

The American Heritage Dictionary says that to "respond"

means "1. To make a reply; answer. 2. To act in return or in answer." When Christ is preached, it produces a response but not always a positive one. Everywhere Paul went, there was either a revival or a riot, but never indifference (see note 2 at Ac 14:4).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:16

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Note 7 at 1Th 2:16: Because of Christ's work of redemption for mankind, it is quite unusual for God to strike out upon man in wrath. Mankind is living in a period of grace where God is not imputing people's sins unto them (see note 14 at 2Co 5:19), but it is not unfair or unjust for Him to give people justice. When God manifests wrath, it is always just (see note 1 at Lu 13:6).

The words "grace" and "mercy" are characterized by unearned and undeserved treatment. For those who accept God's gift of salvation, His wrath will never come upon them (1Th 1:10 and 5:9). For those who have not accepted His salvation, the Lord is still merciful toward them, but He can call their debt due at any time (see note 4 at Ac 12:23 and note 5 at Ac 13:9).

Paul was saying that God's mercy for the Jews was running out. They had killed the Lord Jesus and His prophets, and had become offensive not only to the kingdom of God but also to the

Roman government. In just a few short years, Paul's prediction came true with the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in A.D. 70 under the Roman general Titus, who later became emperor (see note 4 at Lu 19:43).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:17

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

Note 8 at 1Th 2:17: Paul's feelings for the Thessalonians are revealed in this verse. He used the phrase "being taken" to describe his departure, using the Greek word "APORPHANIZO." This Greek word means "to bereave of a parent" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). It was like his family was broken up when he was forced to leave them. Even though Paul was gone, the Thessalonians were in his heart, and he greatly desired to see them.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:18

Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

Note 9 at 1Th 2:18: This is an amazing passage of Scripture. Many people don't think Satan has the power to hinder anything if an individual is in the center of God's will, as Paul was. They mistakenly think that everything going smoothly is a token of God's direction (see note 3 at 1Co 16:9). Any problems believers encounter must mean they missed God. That is not what Paul was describing here.

Satan has severe limitations, and he cannot just devour people (1Pe 5:8). But there are certain things he can do to even those who are operating in the power of the Holy Spirit. The greatest way he can hinder believers is when what they are believing for involves other people.

For instance, our financial prosperity involves others. People can't stop us from prospering, but they can certainly hinder us. And in the area of persecution, God will not just "wipe out" all those who oppose us so that we can preach the Gospel without any hindrance. He loves even those who reject Him. God's mercy toward those who persecute us may cause us some hardships, but it allows the unbelievers the opportunity to receive salvation (see note 14 at 2Co 12:7).

Paul made a similar statement to this one in Ro 15:22-23. In that passage, he explained that the hindrance to his traveling to Rome was that there were unreached people around him that he felt compelled to preach to before he could leave them. It is most probable that he was describing the same thing here. He wanted to return to Thessalonica; but Satan was hindering the preaching of the Gospel, so it was taking Paul longer than he anticipated to finish his work there.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:19

For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

Note 10 at 1Th 2:19: The New International Reader's Version translates 1Th 2:19-20 in the following way: "What is our hope? What is our joy? When our Lord Jesus returns, what is the crown we will delight in? Isn't it you? Yes, you are our glory and our joy."

Note 11 at 1Th 2:19: Paul was doing what he was doing because of his love for God and his love for people. He wasn't in it just for himself. What blessed him the most in this life was seeing people receive Jesus and become mature believers in Him. That's what he was referring to here.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

1 THESSALONIANS 3:1

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

Note 1 at 1Th 3:1: Paul waited as long as he could before he sent Timothy back to the Thessalonians, but what was so urgent that he felt it necessary to send someone to them at all? Paul explained in 1Th 3:2 that it was his concern for the condition of the Thessalonians' faith.

This illustrates an important truth. Coming to faith in Christ is not the end; it's just the beginning. Paul knew the Thessalonians needed to grow to become truly healthy spiritually, and he knew the growth needed to come quickly.

Just as perfectly healthy babies won't stay healthy long without attention, so also new believers need to have special attention. It is just as irresponsible to neglect young Christians as it is to birth infants and then forsake them. Yet, that is what happens to many when they first profess faith in Christ. There should be as much emphasis on follow-up as there is on evangelism.

Note 2 at 1Th 3:1: This was no minor thing for Paul to send his associate Timothy back to Thessalonica and remain in Athens alone. It was in Athens that Paul had been put on trial and just barely escaped a death sentence (see note 1 at Ac 17:23). Athens was a hostile place for the Apostle Paul, yet he put the needs of the Thessalonians ahead of his own.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:2

And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

Note 3 at 1Th 3:2: While Paul continued to work in Athens, he sent Timothy to minister to the Thessalonians. Paul intended for Timothy to accomplish two main things: to establish and to comfort.

The English word "establish" was translated from the Greek verb "STERIZO," which was used thirteen times in the New Testament. STERIZO means "to make stable, place firmly...to strengthen" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). The word was used of stabilizing an existing structure. It came to be used figuratively of strengthening and stabilizing the believers.

The word "comfort" came from the Greek verb "PARAKALEO," and it was used 109 times in the N.T. This word

carries the idea of encouraging and strengthening by consolation. A variation of this Greek word was translated "Holy Spirit," because "to comfort" is descriptive of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The same word is used of Christ in 1Jo 2:1, where it means a legal advocate.

The Phillips New Testament Bible translates 1Th 3:1-2 as "And so at length, when the separation became intolerable, we thought the best plan was for me to stay in Athens alone, while Timothy, our brother and fellow-worker in the Gospel of Christ, was sent to strengthen and encourage you in your faith."

1 THESSALONIANS 3:3

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

Note 4 at 1Th 3:3: Many people today think there would be something wrong with you if you didn't show signs of stress in a trying situation. They would say, "You're in denial." Paul specifically exhorted the Thessalonians not to be "moved" by their afflictions.

The Greek word for "moved" is "SAINO." It means to wag like a dog's tail (Strong's Concordance). The picture Paul was painting is of the believers' faith fluctuating because of trials and persecutions. He wanted their faith to be steady in Christ.

Many Christians, even mature ones, sometimes feel that they must be out of God's will when trials come. However, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Ti 3:12). Persecution is not a sign of being wrong any more than a lack of persecution is a sign of being right (see note 3 at 1Co 16:9).

Note 5 at 1Th 3:3: Paul said we are "appointed" to afflictions. The word "appointed" was translated from the Greek word "KEIMAI," and this Greek word means "to lie outstretched" (Strong's Concordance). This is describing us being in the path of and vulnerable to afflictions.

This is not to say that the Lord is sending the afflictions (see note 5 at Mr 4:16). Afflictions come from the devil to steal away our faith, as Paul was warning against here. The point is that afflictions do come, and "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Ti 3:12; see notes 11-17 at 2Co 12:7, notes 18-19 at 2Co 12:8, and note 20 at 2Co 12:9).

1 THESSALONIANS 3:4

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Note 6 at 1Th 3:4: Paul was only with the Thessalonians about three weeks before persecution forced him to leave (Ac 17:1-10). Yet in that short time he had warned them that they would be persecuted if they accepted the Lord. This shows that Paul didn't preach an easy salvation. Right from the beginning, he warned them of the cost of being true disciples.

Note 7 at 1Th 3:4: The account of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica was recorded in Ac 17:1-12. In that passage, two Thessalonian believers are mentioned (one by name - Jason) as being seized by a mob that upset the whole city. Paul told them persecution was a part of the Christian life, and they had already experienced it.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:5

For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

Note 8 at 1Th 3:5: Paul was very concerned about the Thessalonians' faith. Were they still fully trusting Christ or had the tempter been able to lure them away? Both Jesus and Paul spoke of a temporal faith that looks very much like the real thing, but when times get rough, these people fall away (Lu 8:13 and

1Co 15:2). A committed faith perseveres, never gives up, and follows Christ no matter the cost (Mt 19:27).

In 1Co 15:2, Paul described a faith that does not continue to follow Christ as a faith that is "vain." "Vain" means "not yielding the desired outcome; fruitless" (American Heritage Dictionary). Satan was using persecution to try to snatch away the Word that was sown in the hearts of the Thessalonians. The outcome that Paul was believing for was full Christian maturity. Anything else would not have been considered a success by Paul. His preaching would have been in vain.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:6

But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also [to see] you:

Note 9 at 1Th 3:6: Timothy had come back with good news. The phrase "good tidings" was translated from the Greek word "EUAGGELIZO," and this is the same Greek word that was also translated "preach the gospel" ten times in the New Testament. Timothy's report to Paul revealed the good news that the Thessalonians' faith and love were holding strong. Paul was glad for this good news and rejoiced that they wanted to see him as much as he desired to see them.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:7

Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

Note 10 at 1Th 3:7: The Living Bible states Paul's feelings plainly: "So we are greatly comforted, dear brothers, in all of our own crushing troubles and suffering here, now that we know you are standing true to the Lord."

Paul endured great hardships without the negative reactions one might expect. He considered all his troubles "light afflictions" compared to his eternal reward (see notes 18-19 at 2Co 4:17 and notes 20-21 at 2Co 4:18). He was dead to himself and so alive to God that temporal trials were nothing (see note 15 at Php 1:22). Additionally, this verse reveals that he lived for others, not himself. Therefore, the Thessalonians' success comforted him.

Today most people are so self-centered that when they see others prosper, they have a tendency to become envious and depressed, wondering why they themselves aren't doing as well. This is not a good attitude. Those who exalt self above others will always be unhappy. One of the keys to true happiness is the attitude Paul expressed here, where the prosperity of those whom one loves is more important than one's own success.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:8

For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Note 11 at 1Th 3:8: This verse gives us great insight into what made Paul "tick." He loved others more than himself (see note 10 at 1Th 3:7).

1 THESSALONIANS 3:9

For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

Note 12 at 1Th 3:9: Paul was saying that the joy he received from Timothy's report about the Thessalonians standing strong in their faith was beyond his ability to express. The New International Version translates this verse as "How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?"

1 THESSALONIANS 3:10

Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Note 13 at 1Th 3:10: This verse gives us insight into Paul's life as a man of prayer. Night and day, he prayed on behalf of the Thessalonians that he might be able to see them. This was not for his own selfish interest but rather that he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith.

Note 14 at 1Th 3:10: The "faith" Paul was speaking of is not referring to their trust in Christ, but rather to the whole body of Christian and apostolic doctrine. There is more to faith than just being born again. In fact, Paul knew these people were born again, because he was the one who ministered salvation to them. Yet, he had no rest until he knew they were using their faith to go on to maturity in the Lord.

The Apostle Peter wrote in 2Pe 1:5-11 that those who increase in their faith unto maturity "shall never fall" (2Pe 1:10). Some Christians, once they have entered salvation, stop too close to the door. Believers need to go so far into the things of God that they can't find their way out.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:11

Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

Note 15 at 1Th 3:11: Time after time, Satan had hindered Paul from coming to the Thessalonians (see note 9 at 1Th 2:18). Here, Paul was directly appealing to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who have all power in heaven and in earth (Mt 28:18), to direct his way unto them. God is mightier than Satan, and Paul was looking unto the Lord for a breakthrough.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:12

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all [men], even as we [do] toward you:

Note 16 at 1Th 3:12: The second part of Paul's prayer centers in asking that the love the Thessalonians already had would abound and increase. Love is something that cannot be in excess. Paul's prayer was that love would not only abound toward the brethren but also spill over to the unbelievers as well.

Paul was the leader in the example of love. He prayed they would "increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you" (emphasis mine).

1 THESSALONIANS 3:13

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Note 17 at 1Th 3:13: In this verse, Paul was saying that their hearts being established in holiness was the end result of their love abounding, which he spoke of in 1Th 3:12. Holiness is a byproduct of love, not the means by which love is received.

Holiness isn't something that God does. It is His very nature. It's who and what He is. All the moral laws revealed in Scripture are just reflections of who God was before Scripture was ever written. Likewise, our holiness is a product of who we are and not what we do.

Through the new birth, every one of us believers received a righteous nature (see notes 15-18 at Eph 4:24). Our actions didn't produce the new nature, but the new nature will produce actions if we allow it to dominate our thinking. As we let the love of God that was deposited in our born-again spirits flow through us, holiness becomes a fruit, not a root, of our salvation.

Note 18 at 1Th 3:13: Here, Paul mentioned the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He expounded on this further in 1Th 4:13-5:11.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 4

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort [you] by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, [so] ye would abound more and more.

Note 1 at 1Th 4:1: Remember that in the previous verse (1Th 3:13), Paul had spoken about the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In 1Th 4:13, he continued speaking about the second coming of Christ. However, the verses in between (1Th 4:1-12) are not disconnected from that subject.

1Th 4:1-12 speaks of Christian conduct and character in association with the topic of the second coming. This is precisely the point the Apostle Peter made in 2Pe 3:10-12 - "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

It is no mistake that Paul exhorted the Thessalonian believers to be holy in the context of speaking of Christ's second coming. It's a great motivation toward holiness to think about the return of Jesus. Everything physical that we become so occupied with will one day be dissolved, and only what was done for Christ will remain.

Note 2 at 1Th 4:1: Paul was reminding the Thessalonians of what he had previously taught them concerning Christian conduct when he was with them before. In other words, he taught them what they had already heard.

It seems that not many people want to hear something they've already heard. People are always looking for something new. There is an insatiable hunger for more and more information. But in the Gospel, it's not how much you know, but how well you know what you know.

There is no premium on ignorance, but in God's kingdom, little is much if God is in it. On the other hand, it's possible to have vast knowledge of God's Word without having any true revelation knowledge (see note 1 at Lu 2:26 and note 6 at 1Co 2:16). We don't need to get just the surface truth of the Scriptures but the profound truths that are locked deep within.

Note 3 at 1Th 4:1: Unlike others whom Paul rebuked for their lack of compliance with his instructions, these Thessalonians were doing as Paul had taught them. He wanted

them to abound more and more in these Christian virtues, which they subsequently did. In his second letter to them, he thanked God for their love abounding (2Th 1:3).

We never arrive; we just leave. It is always appropriate to be reminded of things that we are already doing so that we can continue to develop in those areas.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:2

For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

Note 4 at 1Th 4:2: It would be a rare thing indeed to find someone today who would give commandments to others. It's not politically correct. Most believe that people shouldn't be that sure of themselves. Besides, there aren't absolutes in our society today. What's good for one person might not be right for another. However, that was not Paul's attitude.

Paul was adamant about what he taught. He went so far as to say that even if an angel would try to correct something he had taught, it should be rebuked (Ga 1:8-9). That's being remarkably confident that what he was preaching was the truth. Paul could be that confident because he didn't get his message from man but directly from God (Ga 1:11-12).

The Apostle Peter also echoed this same attitude when he said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth" (1Pe 4:11). We need more ministers like Paul and Peter, who received their messages from God instead of man.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:3

For this is the will of God, [even] your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

Note 5 at 1Th 4:3: People are always wanting to know what God's will is for their lives. Usually, they are looking for specific direction about their careers, their marriages, or like things. Until they do God's general will revealed for all in Scripture, there is no reason to expect specific direction.

This verse gives us God's will for each one of our lives, and this should keep us busy until we die. As we become faithful in walking out God's general will for our lives, which is revealed in Scripture, then the Lord will give us more specific direction.

Note 6 at 1Th 4:3: The word "sanctification" means "separation to God...the separation of the believer from evil things and ways" (Vine's Expository Dictionary). There are two types of sanctification in the Christian life.

First, our born-again spirits (see note 2 at Joh 3:3) are instantly sanctified the moment we make Jesus our Lord (see note 17 at Eph 4:24). They remain this way regardless of fluctuations in our actions (Heb 10:10). Therefore, the sanctification that has already taken place in our spirits is a constant that forms the basis for our relationship with the Lord.

Second, it is not enough to only be separated unto God in our spirits. What has taken place in our spirits must manifest itself in our actions. This outward separation, or sanctification, is not a constant, and it fluctuates according to what we focus our attention on.

We have already been sanctified in our born-again spirits, once and for all, and we are progressively reproducing that sanctification in our actions day by day.

Note 7 at 1Th 4:3: In 1Co 6:18, Paul said to flee fornication, and in this verse, he said it is God's will that we abstain from fornication. The only way we will successfully abstain from fornication is to flee from it. Those who flirt with sin will succumb to it. The only sure way to overcome temptation is to avoid it (see notes 14-15 at 1Co 6:18).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:4

That every one of you should know how to possess his

vessel in sanctification and honour;

Note 8 at 1Th 4:4: Notice Paul's use of the words "every one." Holiness is not just for some in the body of Christ; it is God's will for every one of His children.

Note 9 at 1Th 4:4: Paul's wording here is worth noting. We are to "possess" our "vessel." Many of us Christians acknowledge that a spirit can possess our bodies, but we don't normally speak of possessing our own bodies. That's because most of us think of our bodies as the real us. Paul thought differently.

The spiritual part of us--which, as Christians, is our true self--has been made brand-new through the new birth. Our bodies are just our "earth suits" that allow us to function in this physical world. Our bodies are just vessels that hold the divine life, located in our spirits, and keep it from "running out," back to God.

Understanding this gives us an advantage over nonbelievers. Our bodies are just temporary homes. We should take care of them, but we should not be devastated at their demise or impending destruction. We have a better home coming (2Co 5:1-9).

Note 10 at 1Th 4:4: "Esteem" and "respect" are synonyms for the word "honor." Paul was saying that the way to self-esteem and respect, in the natural realm, is through doing what is right. That's radically different from modern psychology's approach to

self-esteem.

The way people are being taught to have respect for themselves today is to reject all standards of right and wrong so that they can feel good about themselves regardless of what they do. That's not the approach Paul took, and it's not the will of God.

There are times we should feel bad about our actions. If we rape, murder, steal, are lazy, sow strife, or do a multitude of other destructive things, we should feel rotten. That's healthy. Instead of seeking to justify every perversion known to man so that we can have self-esteem, we should confess our sins and receive forgiveness. Then we can feel good about what Christ has done for us and esteem Him and His work in our lives (see note 12 at 1Co 1:28).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:5

Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

Note 11 at 1Th 4:5: Paul said that there should be a difference between the conduct of Christians and that of non-Christians. That's logical. Christians have the nature of God in them, while lost people have the nature of the devil (Eph 2:2-3). That should translate into the Christian lifestyle being as different from the worldly lifestyle as much as God is different from the

devil.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:6

That no [man] go beyond and defraud his brother in [any] matter: because that the Lord [is] the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

Note 12 at 1Th 4:6: Paul had just said that it was God's will for believers to live sexually pure lives. Here, in the same sentence, he advocated honesty in believers' dealings with others. He even placed a judgment from God upon those who defraud their brethren, which he didn't mention when speaking of the sexual sins. This is not to say that the Lord is more concerned with integrity than sexual purity, but it is saying that He is just as concerned with how believers treat others as He is with moral purity.

Note 13 at 1Th 4:6: Those who are truly born again have a covenant with God that ensures them that He will never hold their sins against them. Man's sins--past, present, and future--were placed on Jesus (see note 11 at Ro 4:8). So, what if Christians defraud their brethren? Does God judge them for that sin?

God is for justice and against dishonesty. He is not against those who act dishonestly, especially if they are His children, but He will take a stand against their actions. Therefore, if believers

defraud their brothers, God will correct that wrong and bring justice to light. He is not against the thief, but is for the victim.

Imagine a father who has a dishonest child. The father loves his child, but if that father has integrity, he will not support his child's dishonest ways. A godly father would not lie so that his child could defraud someone, and a godly father would turn in his child or make amends if he knew his child had stolen from someone. Yet, that godly father would still love his child and do anything within the law to help that child.

Likewise, God loves and is for all His children, but let wayward children beware--God will not help you con other people. He will expose you and defend the right, but He will never stop loving you.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:7

For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

Note 14 at 1Th 4:7: God did not call us as believers to live in immorality (i.e., uncleanness) but rather to live separated lives unto Him. Anyone who advocates differently is not representing God.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:8

He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Note 15 at 1Th 4:8: To reject the moral appeal of Paul's message is, in reality, to reject God's message. When a minister is truly directed by the Lord, then it is God, and not the person, who is speaking (see note 4 at 1Th 2:13). We should not be so gullible that we accept every word that people speak, but we should also not be so skeptical that we reject God when He speaks through others.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:9

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

Note 16 at 1Th 4:9: Immorality is to be avoided, and love is to be practiced and cultivated. The ridiculous idea that God leads people into extramarital affairs does not line up with the principles of Scripture. How can I love my neighbor as myself (part of Jesus' great command, Mt 22:36-40) and, at the same time, destroy a husband, wife, or family by my immoral actions? That is not what the Bible calls love but rather lust (Jas 1:14).

Loving others always involves seeking their welfare and benefit, not destroying them.

Note 17 at 1Th 4:9: Two different Greek words for "love" were used in this verse. "PHILADELPHIA" was translated "brotherly love" in the first part of this verse, and "AGAPAO" was used at the end of the verse.

PHILADELPHIA (see note 3 at Ro 12:10) is more of a warm feeling of affection. AGAPAO (see note 4 at Joh 13:35) is God's kind of love. This love seeks the betterment of others and is not based upon feelings as its source. AGAPAO will generate PHILADELPHIA love if practiced. AGAPAO love feeds one's enemies if they are hungry and gives them something to drink if they are thirsty. It overcomes evil with good (Ro 12:20-21). It is this kind of love that is taught by God.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:10

And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

Note 18 at 1Th 4:10: The Thessalonians had expressed love throughout all parts of the province of Macedonia. Paul's admonition was to increase more and more in this Christian virtue. It's impossible to love too much.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:11

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

Note 19 at 1Th 4:11: The word "study" in this passage (Greek - "PHILOTIMEOMAI") "does not refer to study in the sense of opening books or reading; it means 'to desire,' or 'to determine.' A possibly clearer translation would be, 'aspire to live quietly and take care of your own affairs while you work with your hands as we instructed you'" (Liberty Bible Commentary, Volume 2, p. 612).

Work should never be despised by Christians. God ordained it as a part of life before the Fall - "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Ge 2:15). It is a responsibility given to man - "Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest" (Le 23:3). It causes one to prosper - "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase" (Pr 13:11) and "In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury [i.e., poverty]" (Pr 14:23, brackets mine). It is a deterrent to crime - "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph 4:28). It is a command of the Lord Jesus - "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with

quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2Th 3:12).

Paul elaborated on this point in his second letter to the Thessalonians when he said, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2Th 3:10).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:12

That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and [that] ye may have lack of nothing.

Note 20 at 1Th 4:12: Working is a way to win the respect of people outside the church. The conduct of lazy people goes before them no matter what kind of religious words they may use.

No one likes to be around parasitic people who depend on others constantly to meet their needs. Paul said that through labor, people will not have to depend on others for what they need. 1Th 4:11-12 is a strong admonition for the Christian work ethic.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as

others which have no hope.

Note 1 at 1Th 4:13: Ignorance is one of Satan's primary weapons against man. The Apostle Peter said in 2Pe 1:3, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." Any person with a pure heart will be set free through knowledge that reveals God's truth (Joh 8:31-32).

Note 2 at 1Th 4:13: Paul was giving instruction to those who had experienced the death of a believing loved one. He stated clearly that the purpose of this instruction was to keep them from sorrowing like unbelievers who have no hope.

One of the most painful things about experiencing the death of a loved one is the thought of never seeing that person again. It all seems so final; there are all the things you said that you wish you could take back and all the things you wish you would have said but didn't. That is not so for the Christian.

Paul revealed that all the dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we who remain will be reunited with them for eternity (1Th 4:16-17). This is comforting (see note 16 at 1Th 4:18). Understanding this makes death for the Christian nothing more than a long separation.

For the person who is not a believer, this is not so. It is true that Christian and non-Christian alike will be resurrected, but the

non-Christian will be banished from God and everything that causes pleasure, for all eternity. It is not clear from this side of eternity exactly what this torment will be, but isolation will likely be a part of it.

Note 3 at 1Th 4:13: Paul was not saying that it is wrong for us Christians to have sorrow over people we love who have died. He was saying we shouldn't sorrow "even as others which have no hope" (unbelievers). It is normal to miss the people we love, but as Christians, our hope of being reunited with those people in the resurrection greatly diminishes the pain and actually gives comfort.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:14

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Note 4 at 1Th 4:14: As surely as Jesus died and rose again, those who die in Christ will return with Him when He comes again. That's assurance!

Note 5 at 1Th 4:14: The word "sleep" refers to the Christians who have died (see note 9 at John 11:12 and note 10 at John 11:14). Paul said that all the true believers in Christ who have already died will return with Jesus when He comes.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

Note 6 at 1Th 4:15: Here, Paul was speaking the direct word of the Lord. The bodies of those who are dead in Christ will be resurrected prior to the catching away of the Christians who are alive on the earth at that time.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16

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

Note 7 at 1Th 4:16: The return of the Lord to the earth, the bodily resurrection of the saints who have already died, and the catching up of the saints who are alive at that time are not disputed. These events are universally believed throughout the body of Christ. However, the time that these events will take place is one of the most divisive arguments among Christians today.

There is no one passage of Scripture that chronologically explains these events. This portion of Scripture in 1Th 4 comes as close as any, yet there still needs to be much interpretation to arrive at the current popular doctrines that exist today.

If the Lord did not see fit to make the timeline of these events a major focus of any of the writers of the New Testament, then it probably should not be a major focus of ours either. We should not be so adamant about a position that is not crystal clear in Scripture that we reject other believers who do not see it our way. We should remain open to other possibilities so that if everything doesn't go the way we expect, we won't panic and lose faith.

Those who are seeking the Lord with all their hearts have nothing to worry about. They will be caught up with the Lord whenever that happens.

Note 8 at 1Th 4:16: The word "shout" was translated from the Greek word "KELEUMA," and this Greek word means "a cry of incitement" (Strong's Concordance). This word was used "by a military officer to his soldiers, or by a hunter to his hounds, or by a charioteer to his horses. When used by military or naval personnel, it was a battle cry. In most places it denotes a loud, authoritative cry, often one uttered in the thick of a great excitement" ("Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament" by Fritz Rienecker, p. 599).

Note 9 at 1Th 4:16: The Greek word translated "voice" in

this verse is "PHONE." This word means "a tone...an address" (Strong's Concordance), so this could be speaking of more than just a shout, possibly an address similar to that recorded in Re 11:15.

Note 10 at 1Th 4:16: The English word "archangel" was translated from the Greek word "ARCHAGGELOS," and this Greek word means "a chief angel" (Strong's Concordance). However, the use of the definite article "the" is specifying a particular angel--the chief angel. According to Strong's Concordance, the Greek word ARCHAGGELOS is a compound word consisting of "ARCHO," meaning "to be first (in political rank or power)," and "AGGELOS," meaning "a messenger." There can only be one "first angel." It is most probable that this is referring to Michael, the only angel referred to in Scripture as "the archangel" (Jude 9).

Note 11 at 1Th 4:16: This passage is not specific on which "trump" this will be. However, a parallel passage of Scripture in 1Co 15:51-52, which most people believe is describing the same event, is more specific. In that passage, Paul stated that it is "at the last trump" when Christ appears and our bodies are changed.

The seventh and final trumpet in the book of Revelation, and indeed the last mention of a trumpet in the Bible, is in Re 11:15. By comparing Re 11:15-19 with what the angel said in Re 10:5-7 about what would happen at the last trumpet blast, we can see that this last trumpet is signaling the second return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 12 at 1Th 4:16: Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout (see note 8 at this verse). The voice (see note 9 at this verse) of the archangel (see note 10 at this verse) and a trumpet blast (see note 11 at this verse) will be heard. At that moment, all the bodies of Christians who have died shall rise. The material elements of the body will be reassembled and united to the soul and spirit. Every individual who has ever lived will ultimately be reconstituted to a complete person--spirit, soul, and body.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17

Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Note 13 at 1 Th.4:17: The Christians who are alive on the earth will be caught up together (see note 14 at this v.) with the resurrected saints.

The English word "rapture" is not used in scripture. "It is from the word 'caught up' (Gk. HARPAZO) in the Latin translation we get our word 'rapture.' The word in the original means 'snatch,' or 'seize,' and denotes a sudden violent taking away. The word pictures being 'swept off' into the air as by a tornado. The result of this sweeping away, of course, is that we meet the Lord" (Liberty Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 614).

Note 14 at 1 Th. 4:17: The English word "together" was translated from the Greek word HAMA, which means "at the same time" (Strong). Therefore, Paul is describing the dead in Christ being raised first and then the living saints being changed and caught up at the same time to meet the Lord in the air.

Note 15 at 1 Th. 4:17: This verse has been used to "prove" a difference between what many call the rapture of the Church (see note 13 at this v.) and the second coming of Christ. This verse says we will meet the Lord in the air, leading some to believe that this is not the second coming of Christ to the earth. They make a distinction between Christ coming into the atmosphere and actually setting foot on the earth at the second coming.

This interpretation would make this instance here just an appearing of Christ in the skies where the believers are taken up into heaven for another seven years while the events of the tribulation period are played out on earth.

However, this passage of scripture doesn't portray the Lord making a u-turn and heading back to heaven with the saints. It also doesn't show Him further descending to the earth; that is not relevant to what Paul is saying. This simply describes our meeting with the Lord. It takes place in the air. This doesn't describe what takes place or where we go after meeting the Lord in the air.

There is no disagreement that the Lord is coming back and

all the saints will be caught up to meet the Lord. But there is no clear doctrine of "a rapture" in scripture where the believers will be caught up prior to the tribulation described in the book of Revelation. The doctrine of the rapture cannot be substantiated on this passage of scripture. It is just as logical to interpret this as the second coming of Christ as to believe it is depicting "the rapture" (see note 13 at v. 17).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:18

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Note 16 at 1 Th. 4:18: What comfort does the resurrection bring to those who mourn?

First of all, it takes away the finality of death. For those who believe in the resurrection, death is nothing more than a long separation. No one is truly gone; we are just separated and there will be a reunion.

Secondly, the scriptures reveal that our resurrected bodies will not be subject to the problems we experience here such as sickness, deformities, and pain. Therefore, death can actually be looked at as the doorway to a much better existence. As much as we may dislike the exit from this realm, it does usher us into a much better realm. That's comforting!

Thirdly, to believe in the resurrection, we have to believe in God. God's Word reveals that those who have already died are now in a place of extreme blessing in the presence of God, even though they haven't received their resurrected bodies yet. Therefore, it's comforting to know that those we lost in death who are true believers, are now basking in the actual presence of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). We don't need to sorrow for them and what they may be missing. We are the ones who are missing out.

1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 5

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

Note 17 at 1 Th. 5:1: It is interesting that Paul said it was not necessary for him to write about the times and seasons concerning the "day of the Lord" (v. 2). Yet there is great debate about these very issues today. Why didn't he need to inform them? The next verse goes on to mention the surprise that the event would be to everyone.

What he's saying is that no one can know the exact time or season of the Lord's return. The day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night. It would be unexpected and sudden (v. 2). Therefore, there's no point in trying to pinpoint that time. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Mt. 24:36). Jesus' disciples asked Him again about the time of His return just before His ascension, "And He said to them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7).

So, twice the Lord stated that there was no way for us to know the time of His return, and Paul is following that same reasoning with his statements here. Anyone who tries to get around this by saying they may not be able to predict the exact time but they can come within a day or week of the actual time is missing the point (see note 28 at Mk. 13:32, p. 460).

1 THESSALONIANS 5:2

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

Note 18 at 1 Th. 5:2: The terminology "the day of the Lord" is very important. "The day of the LORD" was used 19 times in the Old Testament (Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18 [twice], 20; Obed. 1:15; Zeph. 1:7, 14 [twice]; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5). "The day of the LORD'S anger" was used three times (Lam. 2:22; Zeph. 2:2-3). "The day of the LORD'S vengeance" was used once (Isa. 34:8) as was "the day of the LORD'S wrath" (Zeph. 1:18). "The day of the Lord GOD of Hosts" was used once in Jeremiah 46:10. Each one of these passages is speaking of the outpouring of the Lord's wrath on the ungodly.

In the New Testament, there are five times when "the day of the Lord" is used (Acts 2:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Th. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). Each one of these references is also clearly speaking

of God's wrath on the ungodly.

No doubt "the day of the LORD" could also be linked with other scriptures such as Revelation 16:14 which speak of "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (2 Pet. 3:12; 1 Jn. 4:17; Rev. 6:17).

Therefore, this terminology is very clearly referring to a time when God brings judgment on the ungodly. The Word of God has many examples of God's judgment on the ungodly, but it also clearly depicts a future time referred to as "the day of the LORD" when world-wide judgment will be executed as never before.

Today we see men blaspheme God and live in ways that will not be tolerated in "the day of the Lord." That's because we are living in the Church age which is a day of grace. That's not to say there has never been grace until the establishment of the Church. No, the Word of God is full of God's grace in the Old Testament. But during the present time of the Church, we see God's grace manifested towards mankind in a way that it never was before.

Likewise, there has been judgment from God on the ungodly throughout history. But there is coming "the day of the Lord" that will make the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah seem mild in comparison.

Isaiah prophesied about "the day of the Lord" this way: "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint,

and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger" (Isa. 13:6-13).

Notice that in Isaiah's prophecy, he speaks of the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars just as Joel did in Joel 2:31. Jesus also referred to this same thing in Mark 13:24-26 and related it to His second coming. Paul uses the same analogy in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 that Isaiah used in verse 8. This "day of the Lord" is no doubt the second return of the Lord when He executes judgment on the ungodly.

Note 19 at 1 Th. 5:2: The illustration that Paul is drawing on is the suddenness and surprise of a thief. The second coming of the Lord will come upon the world unawares so that they will not

have time to do anything about it. Jesus used this same illustration (Mt. 24:43; Lk. 12:39).

1 THESSALONIANS 5:3

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

Note 20 at 1 Th. 5:3: In verse 3, Paul is expounding on the point he made in verse 2 about the coming of the Lord being unexpected. At the very time that the world is feeling secure, destruction will come and they will not escape. This destruction that Paul is speaking of is "the day of the Lord" or the second coming of Christ which he spoke of in verse 2 (see note 18 at v. 2, p. 1241).

Note 21 at 1 Th. 5:3: These verses which comprise the context of Paul's statement about "the day of the Lord" make it clear that he too understood the "day of the Lord" to be a day of judgment on the ungodly (see note 18 at v. 2, p. 1241). Yet, looking at the even broader context, we can see that this "day of the Lord" is relating back to his statements in chapter 4 about our gathering together unto the Lord in the air.

Once again, this different emphasis of comfort in 1 Thessalonians 4:18 and judgment in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 has led

some to believe these are two different comings; i.e. "the rapture" in 1 Thessalonians 4 and the second coming in 1 Thessalonians 5 (see note 15 at 1 Th. 4:17, p. 1240). However, there is no reason from these scriptures to separate this into two events. It is very plausible that we will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord as He is returning to the earth to fight the great battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). We then become part of that great heavenly army returning to earth.

As a matter of fact, the context of Revelation 16:16 where it speaks of Armageddon uses this same analogy that Paul used here in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 about this time coming as a thief. This further strengthens the argument for this "day of the Lord" being the second coming of Christ.

Note 22 at 1 Th. 5:3: Isaiah's prophecy about the destruction accompanying "the day of the Lord" (see note 18 at 1 Th. 5:2, p. 1241) used this same illustration of a woman in travail. This shows the suddenness of the judgment that will come at the second coming of the Lord.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:4

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

Note 23 at 1 Th. 5:4: The metaphor of these statements is

weakened for us because of our use of electricity for light today. In the time which Paul wrote these words, a world without electricity was a dark world. Their artificial light provided only enough light to survive. There was no comparison between the light of day and the darkness of night, just as unbelievers without Christ are unable to see like those who have the light of Christ in their lives.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:5

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Note 24 at 1 Th. 5:5: Those who are living in darkness are portrayed as sleeping and being in drunkenness. These metaphors portray the fact of not being in touch with reality. In this situation the Day of the Lord and His judgment will overtake them as a thief. A thief is never expected. In contrast, the believers are sober-that means awake and alert, looking for their salvation.

The salvation and deliverance spoken of is from the wrath that will be released upon unbelievers when Christ returns. Deliverance from this wrath is why Jesus came to seek and save the lost. John the Baptist's warning to the Pharisees and Sadducees was similar when he said, "O generation?who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mt. 3:7).

Not only do we need to know what we have been saved unto, but there needs to be a true realization of what we have been saved from. Heinrich Vogel said, "whoever thinks he can smile at God's wrath will never praise him eternally for his grace." Surely, when we see the wrath of God released upon those who were better than us, we will appreciate our salvation all the more.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:6

Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober.

Note 25 at 1 Th. 5:6: As mentioned in note 24 at verse 5, those who are in darkness are unbelievers, and the metaphor is portraying them as being out of touch with reality. Therefore, this verse is admonishing us not to be as those in darkness. We are supposed to be awake and alert, looking for the return of the Lord.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:7

For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

Note 26 at 1 Th. 5:7: Sleep and drunkenness, which symbolize being in a stupor, are associated with the night. That's when most people do those things. In contrast, the daytime is when people get up and work. Therefore, Paul is instructing us to act like people who are awake and to start doing what Christians are supposed to do.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:8

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

Note 27 at 1 Th. 5:8: This is similar to the description of our armor listed in Ephesians 6:13-17. The same author wrote both these passages, so there is no doubt that Paul was alluding to this same illustration.

Here Paul mentions a breastplate of faith and love. In Ephesians, he calls it a breastplate of righteousness. This is appropriate since the only way we can obtain righteousness is through putting faith in the grace and love of God.

Isaiah also spoke of the Messiah putting on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation upon his head (see Parallel Scripture for this v.).

1 THESSALONIANS 5:9

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Note 28 at 1 Th. 5:9: This is another passage of scripture that those who teach a rapture (see note 15 at v. 17, p. 1240) lean heavily upon. The reasoning is that the book of Revelation shows an unprecedented wrath of God released on the earth during the tribulation. Therefore, the believers must be gone because, "God hath not appointed us to wrath?"

There are at least two things wrong with this thinking.

First, the book of Revelation does show there are believers who are present on the earth during the tribulation (ex. Rev. 6:11; 7:2-4; 11:3; 13:7-8; 14:13). Regardless of what kind of believers you say these are, some Christians will go through tribulation. That renders this reasoning invalid. But that doesn't mean they are experiencing God's wrath.

Secondly, the Christians will be miraculously spared the plagues of God just as the Israelites were during the ten plagues in the land of Egypt. They went through the plagues but the plagues didn't touch them. Likewise, Christians will be miraculously spared the wrath of God during the tribulation. They will be on the earth but that doesn't mean they will experience

God's wrath. No! That is reserved for His enemies (Nah. 1:2).

The motivation of many for believing in the rapture theory is a misunderstanding concerning the judgments of God in the book of Revelation. They miss the fact that Revelation is showing the judgment of God on the ungodly only. Believers will be able to be sustained supernaturally just as they have always been. There will be persecution, but if one thinks the Lord would never allow His people to go through persecution, he is sadly misinformed about Church history. Every day Christians around the world are being martyred.

We cannot fabricate a way of escape just because we don't like what's coming. We need to put our faith in Christ and endure until the end just as countless generations of believers before us have done.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:10

Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Note 29 at 1 Th. 5:10: Paul is saying that whether we die or are one of the believers who are alive at the second coming of Christ, through Christ's offering we will live again with Him.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

Note 1 at 1 Th. 5:12: The English word "beseech" means "to request urgently, implore" (NAHD). The Greek word EROTAO used here means "to interrogate or by implication, to request" (Strong).

Note 2 at 1 Th. 5:12: Paul is instructing the Thessalonians "to know" their Christian leaders. The Greek word for "know" in this passage is EIDO and means "to have regard for, cherish, and pay attention to" (Thayer). The reason for showing such respect is three fold.

First, true Christian leaders labor. The word "labor" carries the idea of laboring with wearisome effort and toil. To give oneself to prayer and to the ministry of the Word does require exhausting toil and effort and deserves a "thanks."

Secondly, Christian leaders are placed "over" us by the Lord. The word "over" used here carries the idea of a protector or guardian and one who gives aid to others (Thayer). Therefore, Paul is encouraging respect for our leaders. The NIV translates this verse, "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord, and admonish you."

Thirdly, Christian leaders admonish-that is, they warn, exhort and caution (see note 3 at this v.). Everyone needs someone who will speak the truth to him in love. This is what Christian leaders are supposed to do.

Therefore, because of the work the Christian leaders do, the body of Christ is to respect and treat them with love.

Note 3 at 1 Th. 5:12: The Greek word translated "admonish" in this verse is NOUTHETEO, which means "to put in mind, i.e. (by implication) to caution or reprove gently" (Strong). This same word was translated "warn" in verse 14.

Hebrews 13:17 says that our leaders watch for our souls. They do this by putting us in mind of what the Word of God says through words of caution or gentle rebuke. That's the job of Christian leaders.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:13

And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. [And] be at peace among yourselves.

Note 4 at 1 Th. 5:13: The English word "esteem" means "to place a high value on; respect, prize" (NAHD) The NIV translates this verse as "Hold them in the highest regard in love because of

their work."

A parallel passage of scripture written by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17 says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine." This is speaking of the leaders who minister the Word. They are supposed to be given twice the remuneration of non-preaching/teaching elders.

Note 5 at 1 Th. 5:13: Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." This is the same point that Paul is making in these scriptures. Showing our love and respect towards our leaders is the right thing to do and it will make their ministry more effective too.

Failure to properly show respect towards Christian leaders is one reason they don't function better. A bitter leader is not a good leader.

Note 6 at 1 Th. 5:13: Notice that Paul said the reason we are to esteem our Christian leaders very highly is "for their work's sake." It has been incorrectly taught that we are supposed to honor the position, not the person. While there may be some truth in that, we only HIGHLY honor those who are doing a good job. Any other interpretation only gives power to tyrants.

Note 7 at 1 Th. 5:13: Paul is advocating peace among the

believers. One of the necessary elements to peace in the body of Christ is the respect towards leadership he had just encouraged. Those who refuse to respect godly leaders are selfish and rebellious and very detrimental to peace in the body.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all [men].

Note 8 at 1 Th. 5:14: The word "unruly" was translated from the Greek word ATAKTOS, which means "unarranged, i.e. (by implication) insubordinate" (Strong). This is a reference to verses 12-13 where Paul spoke of respecting our Christian leaders. He is saying we should warn those who do not submit to godly leadership of the consequences to themselves and others that their rebellion will have.

Note 9 at 1 Th. 5:14: The word "feebleminded" has come to mean "mentally deficient" in our language today. Yet the Greek word OLIGOPSUCHOS that was used in this verse means "faint-hearted" (Strong). The NIV translated this word as "timid." Paul is saying we should encourage those who lack courage.

Note 10 at 1 Th. 5:14: In Acts 20:35 Paul used the word "weak" to refer to the poor. It is possible that this is also what he

meant here.

Note 11 at 1 Th. 5:14: This verse sums up the responsibilities of Christians towards one another. We are to: (1) caution the disorderly (see note 8 at this v.); (2) encourage and console the faint hearted (see note 9 at this v.); (3) help those who are weak (possibly the poor-see note 10 at this v.); and (4) be patient with others.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:15

See that none render evil for evil unto any [man]; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all [men].

Note 12 at 1 Th. 5:15: The word "see," as used here, means "to make sure" (NAHD). Paul is instructing the Thessalonians to make sure that everyone is treated fairly.

Note 13 at 1 Th. 5:15: Paul is instructing the Thessalonians to treat ALL men in a godly fashion. There is no double standard in Christianity. Galatians 6:10 says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16

Rejoice evermore.

Note 14 at 1 Th. 5:16: As mentioned in note 2 at Philippians 3:1, page 1166, the word "joy" is a noun describing a person, place, or thing. The word "rejoice" is a verb describing the action of a person, place, or thing. So, the command to "Rejoice evermore" is a command to act.

Most people view emotions, such as joy, as reactions to what is happening to us. But godly emotions are based on what Christ has already done for us regardless of what is happening in our physical world. Otherwise, Paul would be unreasonable to command us to always rejoice.

Bad things happen even to good people. If emotions were just our physiological responses to problems or the lack thereof, then there is no way we could keep this command. But emotions are an action based on our choice. If we choose to focus on what Christ has done for us, then we can rejoice in spite of our environment. This is not a suggestion, it's a command.

Note 15 at 1 Th. 5:16: The word "evermore" literally means "at all times" (Strong). No one wants to be miserable. People don't wake up in the morning and pray for depression. But very few people take any responsibility for the way they feel. They think feelings are just automatic responses to what happens to us. That is not so. We can choose how we feel.

Our feelings follow our thoughts. If we think on negative things, whether real or imagined, we will have negative emotions. If we think on the wonderful things God has done for us, we will have positive emotions, regardless of what our physical circumstances are (Rom. 8:6). Rejoicing at all times has nothing to do with what is currently happening to us but it has everything to do with focusing on what has already happened to us and what has been promised to us in Christ.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

Pray without ceasing.

Note 16 at 1 Th. 5:17: There are two main ways that this verse is commonly interpreted. Probably the most common interpretation is that we are supposed to pray constantly. It is understood that we cannot physically be praying every single minute of every day. So, an attitude of prayer, where we are constantly in communion with the Lord, is stressed. This is certainly something to be advocated and followed.

But it seems more reasonable that this verse is teaching that we should not cease praying until we see the manifestation of what we have believed. In other words, once we believe the Lord for something in prayer, don't let go of that prayer until we have the answer.

Either interpretation is scriptural, i.e. in line with what the Bible teaches. But this one verse is not teaching two different things.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Note 17 at 1 Th. 5:18: There are some people who take verses like this to teach that everything that happens to us is God's will. That is certainly not what Paul meant when he said we were to give thanks in everything (see note 35 at Eph. 5:20, p. 1132).

1 THESSALONIANS 5:19

Quench not the Spirit.

Note 18 at 1 Th. 5:19: The word "quench" as used in this instance means "to suppress, squelch" (NAHD). The Holy Spirit, as part of the Godhead (see note 4 at Acts 5:4, p. 594), is infinitely greater in power and might than any of us. Yet, amazingly, God does not force Himself on us. He only moves as

we yield to Him. Our insensitivity to the Holy Spirit limits His action in our life. We must learn to yield and cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

Things that quench the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives are matters of the heart, such as unbelief and rebellion. Sometimes an undue emphasis is placed on actions, leading people to believe that it's what we do that quenches the Holy Spirit. But our actions are only the results of our attitudes.

It is very likely that Paul's instructions in the next few verses about not despising prophecies (v. 20), proving all things (v. 21), and abstaining "from all appearance of evil" (v. 22), are some of the specific areas where the Thessalonians had been quenching the Spirit.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:20

Despise not prophesyings.

Note 19 at 1 Th. 5:20: The English word "despise" was translated from the Greek word EXOUTHENEO, which means "to make utterly nothing of, i.e. despise" (Strong). The word not only depicts contempt or hatred but it can mean as little as to ignore. It was translated "set at naught" three times in the New Testament. (Lk. 23:11; Acts 4:11; Rom. 14:10). Paul's admonition is to not hate, dislike, or ignore prophecy.

Note 20 at 1 Th. 5:20: Why would anyone despise any utterance that came from God? In the case of prophecy, it's because the listeners may not be convinced God is the author of what is being said. Judging prophecy is highly subjective. It is easy to discredit the message because of the messenger. It takes effort on our part to look past the human instrument and get the true message coming from God.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:21

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Note 21 at 1 Th. 5:21: Paul had just spoken of not despising prophesyings (v. 20). Now he is telling us not to be gullible. Extremes are always wrong. It is wrong to be so critical that we despise prophesyings (see note 20 at v. 20) and it is equally wrong to take everything that is spoken in the name of the Lord as true. We must exercise discernment.

Jesus said we would know true prophets (and likewise their prophesies) by their fruit (Mt. 7:15-20). If their message is leading people away from the Lord and into bondage, we should not hold fast their words. However, we need to apply wisdom when inspecting fruit. Even good fruit can go bad. There were some people who took Paul's message and twisted it to say that he had given them freedom to live a sinful life (Rom. 3:8). That

wasn't so, and isolated incidents are not justification for discrediting a whole ministry. But the dominant fruit which a ministry produces is a valid way of proving or judging that ministry.

The believers in Berea also gave us a good example of how to prove all things. In Acts 17:11 the scripture says, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The ultimate test of any prophet or prophecy is whether or not it lines up with the written Word of God. If anything violates the letter or spirit of the Word, it is wrong. Once again, there needs to be some maturity on our part to make a judgment like this. No one has the whole truth (1 Cor. 13:12). Anyone can and everyone does make mistakes. Yet there should be an overall scriptural soundness in our doctrine. Those who blatantly violate scripture should not be judged as good.

Note 22 at 1 Th. 5:21: Notice that Paul said, "hold fast that which is good." He did not say reject the bad. That is implied but the emphasis is on embracing the good. There are some people who are on "witch hunts," just looking for the slightest mistake on a minister's part. And once that occurs, they come against them in the most violent ways, often branding them as heretics. That is not what Paul is saying.

When listening to any ministry, discernment needs to be used. Not everything that is said in the name of the Lord is truly from the Lord. But it is equally wrong to be critical of others

except in the most extreme cases. Kenneth Hagin said, "Even an old cow has enough sense to eat the hay and leave the sticks." We should be as wise.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:22

Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Note 23 at 1 Th. 5:22: The word "abstain" means "to keep oneself from doing something" (NAHD). The emphasis is on self restraint. No one else can make you abstain from anything.

Note 24 at 1 Th. 5:22: Notice that we are not to abstain (see note 23 at this v.) from evil only, but we are to abstain from all APPEARANCE of evil. Paul said a similar thing in 2 Corinthians 8:21, "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Again in Romans 12:17 Paul said, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (see note 5 at 2 Cor. 8:20, p. 1023).

Many people have thought that as long as we are right in the sight of God, that's all that matters. But these scriptures show us that it is God's will to be right in the sight of man also, as much as it is possible. Certainly, this is primarily because of our Christian witness. Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10) and he uses every possible weapon against us. We can't stop him totally from taking shots at us, but at least we can stop supplying him

with ammunition.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and [I pray God] your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 25 at 1 Th. 5:23: The believer's born-again (see note 2 at Jn. 3:3, p. 92) spirit is complete in every way (see ref. d at this v.). But Paul made it very clear in this verse that it is God's will for our entire person to be sanctified. Our soul and body will not experience the same degree of sanctification as our spirit until we go to be with the Lord or He returns for us. They can be blameless but not sinless (see note 7 at 1 Cor. 1:8, p. 859 ; see note 2 at Lk. 1:6, p. 38)

Note 26 at 1 Th. 5:23: This is one of the clearest references in scripture that we are a three part being-i.e., spirit, soul, and body. It's obvious that we all have a physical body. Likewise, it is easy to understand we have an inner part which the Bible refers to as the soul. For instance, we have emotions by which we can feel pain when no one has physically touched us. It's not a physical pain but it is in an inner part of us. This is what many people call the personality. It is comprised of our carnal intellect, our emotions, our will, and our conscience.

The spirit part of man cannot be perceived through any of our physical senses (Jn. 3:6). Therefore, the natural man (see note 1 at 1 Cor. 2:14, p. 869) cannot understand the existence and function of the spirit, and the terms spirit and soul are commonly used interchangeably. Paul makes a clear distinction between them here.

The spirit part of Adam was the part of him that died when he ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:16-17). Adam's physical body didn't die until 930 years later (Gen. 5:5). So, when Ephesians 2:1 says we were dead in trespasses and sins, it was speaking of a spiritual death (see note 9 at Col. 3:3, p. 1206). Our spirits were dead or separated from God.

At the new birth (see note 2 at Jn. 3:3, p. 92) our dead spirit is made alive unto God. The Christian is completely new in his spirit. The rest of the Christian life is bringing the body and the soul under the control of this born-again spirit through the renewing of the mind (see note 9 at Rom. 12:2, p. 826).

1 THESSALONIANS 5:24

Faithful [is] he that calleth you, who also will do [it].

Note 27 at 1 Th. 5:24: We are not "on our own" when it comes to living the Christian life. The One who called us to sanctification (God) is faithful to accomplish it in us. One of the

great truths of the New Testament is that Christ indwells the believer. God's supernatural power is therefore available to bring His will to pass in and through that individual. The victorious Christian has learned to let Christ live through him (see note 14 at Gal. 2:20, p. 1063). Failure to let Christ have control is at the root of all our frustrations (Ps. 37:5; 1 Pet. 5:7).

1 THESSALONIANS 5:27

I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

Note 28 at 1 Th. 5:27: The word "charge" is a strong term in the Greek and carries the idea of a command or even as an oath or vow. Paul is concerned that all receive the information that he has written in this letter.

The Greek word for "read" is used to signify reading aloud. Paul wanted a public reading of this letter to all the believers. Public reading of scripture became an accepted part of worship in the early church (Acts 13:27; 15:21; 2 Cor. 1:13; Eph. 3:4; Col. 4:16).

**THE BOOK OF
2 THESSALONIANS**

INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS

OVERVIEW

The great persecution the Thessalonians were facing caused many to think that the "day of the Lord" that Paul had taught about was already taking place. As a result, some believers were quitting their jobs in light of the Lord's return. Paul found it necessary to give instruction concerning persecution and idleness, and to correct doctrinal error.

THE RECIPIENTS

Paul and his companions had come to Thessalonica early on his second missionary journey, sometime around A.D. 51 (see note 1 at Ac 18:22). As was his custom, he went into the Jewish synagogue and reasoned with the Jews from Scripture that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. This continued for about three weeks. Some believed Paul's preaching (among the Greeks, there was a great number that believed [Ac 17:4]). The unbelieving Jews became very jealous and hired some people to cause an uproar in the city. They accused Paul of breaking the Roman laws by proclaiming Jesus to be king instead of Caesar

(Ac 17:5-7).

The leaders of the city became very upset, and a man named Jason was fined, as were some other believers. There was so much opposition that finally Paul and his companions were forced to leave (Ac 17:9-10).

Thessalonica (see note 3 at Ac 17:1) was the largest and most important city in Macedonia (see note 1 at Ac 16:9). It was also the capital. It has been estimated that in New Testament times, Thessalonica had a population of around 200,000.

"Thessalonica, the modern Salonica, was founded about 315 B.C. by Cassander, who named it in honor of his wife, the half-sister of Alexander the Great. It was situated on the most famous of Roman military roads, the Egnatian Way, which connected Rome with the East. It was a seaport and a center of trade and commerce; a city ideally suited to Paul's missionary strategy" (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia, Volume 5, p. 723).

The church founded there was composed largely of Gentiles (1Th 1:9, 2:14; and Ac 17:4). It was a vigorous church that grew quickly in size and commitment.

AUTHORSHIP

Paul's authorship of the epistles to the Thessalonians is unquestioned by most scholars. Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians begin

with the statement, "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians" (1Th 1:1 and 2Th 1:1).

For positive evidence of Paul's authorship consider the following: (1) The epistles are presented as being from Paul; (2) Paul's companions who are mentioned at the beginning of the epistles accompanied him on his second missionary trip (Ac 15:40, 17:14, and 18:5); (3) the theological thought is Pauline; and (4) extra-biblical sources such as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Marcion, and Irenaeus all refer to Paul as the author of the letters to the Thessalonians.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Numerous footnotes in the Life for Today Study Bible Notes are about Paul: see note 4 at Ac 7:58, note 1 at Ac 9:1, note 1 at Ac 9:26, and note 1 at Ac 28:30.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

These letters were written from Corinth between A.D. 50 and 54 (Ac 17:1-10 and 18:1). This would make these epistles among the earliest of Paul's writings, probably after Galatians. It appears that 2 Thessalonians was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians, most likely within four months to a year.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:1

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Note 1 at 2Th 1:1: Paul was the author of this letter. He directed the content under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, with Silas and Timothy in agreement (see note 1 at 1Th 1:1).

2 THESSALONIANS 1:2

Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 2 at 2Th 1:2: Grace and peace came to be the normal greeting of the Christian community. Grace is God's ability toward believers on an undeserved, unmerited basis. Peace is the result of God's grace within the hearts of those who receive it. Paul was evoking God's grace toward believers, and the acceptance of it, which results in peace.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:3

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it

is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

Note 3 at 2Th 1:3: Two things in particular occasioned Paul's thanksgiving for the Thessalonians. First, they had grown in the Christian faith, and second, they abounded in love for one another. This was great news considering that they had been converted for only a very short time, probably only a few months.

Paul had only ministered in Thessalonica for less than three weeks (Ac 17:2). It speaks very well of his ministry that in this short period of time, he had laid a foundation of faith among the believers that was still holding and increasing.

Note 4 at 2Th 1:3: Technically, it is the exercising of our faith that causes growth. That is to say, we get better and better at using the faith we have. Our faith doesn't actually grow; it's our application of faith that is growing. When we are born again, we are all given the measure of faith (see note 16 at Ro 12:3). It's the same faith in amount and power that Jesus has, for it is the faith of Christ (see note 15 at Ga 2:20). We need to grow in our knowledge and the usage of our faith.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:4

So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and

tribulations that ye endure:

Note 5 at 2Th 1:4: The Apostle Paul was so impressed at the Thessalonians' growth that he could not help telling the other churches. Even during a time of persecution and suffering, the Thessalonians continued to believe and trust in Christ. Behavior that impressed the Apostle Paul is worth noting and imitating.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:5

[Which is] a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

Note 6 at 2Th 1:5: Many people think that the absence of problems is the true indication of being in God's will, but the Scriptures don't teach this (see note 3 at Ac 16:10). Paul was saying just the opposite in this verse. Suffering persecution is a manifest token that believers are children of God. The persecution doesn't come from God and therefore should not be prayed for or embraced, but it should be expected because "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Ti 3:12).

At one time, Paul had been one of the most violent persecutors of the Christians (Ac 22:4 and 26:10-11). No doubt he put his efforts into persecuting the Christians who were the

most committed. As the true Christians were silenced, it was hoped that those on the fringes would flee in terror. Thus Paul viewed persecution as a manifest token that those individuals being persecuted were true believers. He knew firsthand that persecutors don't waste their time on the uncommitted. Therefore, persecution is actually a compliment that the persecutors see proof of a genuine commitment to the Lord in believers.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:6

Seeing [it is] a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

Note 7 at 2Th 1:6: The word "recompense" means to repay. The Greek word "ANTAPODIDOMI," from which "recompense" was translated, was rendered "repay" in Ro 12:19 - "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The Lord is keeping a record of those who persecute His followers, and they will have to pay for it one day, unless they repent and accept the salvation offered through Jesus.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:7

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord

Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

Note 8 at 2Th 1:7: These instructions from Paul seem odd, for him to tell those who are being persecuted to rest. The Greek word that was translated "rest" is "ANESIS," and it means "relaxation or (figuratively) relief" (Strong's Concordance). It is this meaning of "relief" that Paul was referring to here.

It is a relief to know that all the injustices we see around us are someday going to be set right. The Lord will deal with every act of man and dispense true justice--none of us will get by with anything. It might look that way from our human point of view, but the righteous Judge will have His day in court.

This is basically the reasoning that David used in Ps 37. He said not to fret ourselves because of evildoers. A day is coming when they will be cut down and the righteous will shine forth as the light. That's what Paul was referring to here.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:8

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Note 9 at 2Th 1:8: The church age is an age of grace (see note 8 at Ro 3:24). Jesus came preaching the good news (see note 22 at Eph 1:13), not imputing people's sins unto them (see note

14 at 2Co 5:19).

Therefore, judgment is not as prominent in the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament, but that doesn't mean there is no impending judgment. Christians will not suffer the wrath of God's judgment--Jesus bore that for believers. All unbelievers, however, will experience the fierceness of God's wrath.

Those unbelievers who are alive on the earth at Christ's second coming will suffer the plagues written in the book of Revelation, and some will suffer physical death (Re 19:19-21). The unbelievers who have already died will be physically resurrected and then banished from the Lord for all eternity (2Th 1:9). Although the Bible teaches that hell (present) and the lake of fire (future, Re 20:14) are places of torment (see note 7 at Lu 16:28), we can be assured that the greatest torment will be total separation from God and everything good that proceeds from Him (see note 10 at 2Th 1:9).

Many Christians who have spent their lives meditating on the goodness of God find it hard to comprehend the wrath of God. It is emotionally unattractive, yet God's eternal wrath on those who refuse His mercy is clearly taught in Scripture.

God takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Eze 33:11). It is God's will that all repent and receive His gift of eternal life (2Pe 3:9). Hell was made for the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41), not people. Any people who end up in hell do so of

their own choice. Those people will have had to climb over innumerable obstacles that God has placed in their way to turn them from hell. In a sense, the Lord will only be enforcing people's own choices by condemning them to hell or the lake of fire. Ending up in heaven or hell is the result of the choices made in this life.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:9

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

Note 10 at 2Th 1:9: Hell is the place where the unbelieving dead presently go (see note 13 at Mt 5:22). After the judgment before the great white throne (Re 20:11-15), all the unrighteous will be cast into the lake of fire along with the devil for all eternity (see note 4 at Mr 3:29).

These are places of torment. There will be fire, thirst, torment, and agony over lost loved ones (see note 7 at Lu 16:28). All the horrors of eternal damnation cannot be imagined, but surely the greatest of all punishments will be eternal separation from the presence of God.

We all take a lot of things for granted. Even unbelievers receive many things from the goodness of God. God makes His sun to rise on the just and the unjust. He sends rain on us all,

regardless of our relationship with Him. He provides food for us all, and we have the beauties of nature that have brought joy to each one of us. Despite how desperate our plight might be, we have all enjoyed some pleasures and kindnesses from others.

Those who spend eternity in the lake of fire will have nothing good. God is good (Mr 10:18), and to be banished from the presence of God is to be banished from all that is good. There will be no one to give comfort, no hope, and no relief. There will be memories of all the times God tried to reach out to them and prevent them from going to that terrible place. There will be eternal remorse, shame, and guilt. All eternity will be spent with the one they loved and served so well--the devil.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:10

When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Note 11 at 2Th 1:10: This is the only time in Scripture that the Greek word "THAUMAZO" was translated "admired." This same word was translated "marvelled" twenty-one times (Mt 8:10, 27, 9:8, 33, 21:20, 22:22, 27:14; Mr 6:6, 12:17, 15:5, 44; Lu 1:21, 63, 2:33, 7:9, 11:38, 20:26; Joh 4:27, 7:15; Ac 2:7, and 4:13). THAUMAZO literally means "to wonder; by implication, to admire" (Strong's Concordance).

Note 12 at 2Th 1:10: There is a wonderful contrast between the terrible punishment for the unbelievers on the day of the Lord's return (see note 10 at 2Th 1:9) and the tremendous joy of the faithful.

2 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him,

Note 1 at 2Th 2:1: Paul had spoken about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in his previous letter to the Thessalonians. Most of his remarks about that subject centered on comforting the believers in regard to their loved ones who had died (1Th 4:13-18).

However, in 1Th 5:1-4, Paul did speak about the time the Lord would return. He made it very clear that no one could know the exact time of Christ's return (1Th 5:2), but he did caution the Thessalonians to be ready. Apparently, that led some of the Thessalonians to fear that Christ's second coming was imminent. Paul was trying to straighten their thinking out on this issue.

Paul listed two things that will happen before Christ returns: First, there has to be a falling away (see note 6 at 2Th 2:3), and second, "that man of sin" has to be revealed (see note 7 at 2Th 2:3).

2 THESSALONIANS 2:2

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Note 2 at 2Th 2:2: Why would the second coming of the Lord shake or trouble the Thessalonians? Didn't Paul use the second coming of the Lord and the gathering together unto Him to comfort the Thessalonians in the previous letter? The answer to this lies in the fact that some people were trying to convince the Thessalonians that they had missed the second coming of Christ (see note 4 at this verse). That certainly would be upsetting.

Note 3 at 2Th 2:2: Things haven't changed much in 2,000 years. There were people among the Thessalonians who were interpreting prophecy in light of current events in ways that were shaking the faith of some believers. Some were speaking "by the Spirit," some were reasoning from the Scriptures, and others produced forged letters from Paul saying that Jesus had already returned.

Certainly, the hardships and persecutions the Thessalonians were enduring were similar to prophecies about the end times, but that didn't mean these were the exact days that had been prophesied about. Many people during World War II believed Hitler was the Antichrist. He fit the bill closer than anyone who had come before him. It was plausible, but time has shown that

he was not the one.

Those who interpret prophecy need to refrain from saying "thus saith the Lord" when it is only their own reasoning speculating about what might be.

Note 4 at 2Th 2:2: As described in note 21 at 1Th 5:3, "the day of the Lord" is describing the second return of the Lord. There is no reason to doubt that what Paul called "the day of Christ" is describing the same event. In the first verse of this chapter, "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" is mentioned along with "our gathering together unto him." These terms were used in Paul's first letter and referred to the second coming of Christ (see note 14 at 1Th 4:17).

Note 5 at 2Th 2:2: The New King James Version rendered the phrase "at hand" as "had come." The New International Version rendered it similarly as "has already come." The New American Standard Bible translated it as "has come," and the Amplified Bible says "has [already] arrived and is here."

Each of these translations clearly interprets Paul as having said that some people had been telling the Thessalonians that the second coming of Jesus had already taken place. This is the reason they were shaken and troubled about the second coming of the Lord. They were being told they had missed it.

Jesus made it very clear that no one would miss His second coming (see note 2 at Lu 17:24), and Paul proceeded to give the

Thessalonians assurances that Jesus had not returned yet.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:3

Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Note 6 at 2Th 2:3: The day of the Lord will be preceded by a "falling away." The phrase "falling away" came from the Greek noun "APOSTASIA," from which we get our English word "apostasy." This Greek word means "'a defection, revolt, apostasy,' is used in the NT for religious apostasy.... In 2Th 2:3 'the falling away' signifies apostasy from the faith" (Vine's Expository Dictionary). This apostasy must precede the day of the Lord.

This same point was made by Paul in 1Ti 4:1-3 and 2Ti 3:1-4.

Note 7 at 2Th 2:3: This "man of sin" is commonly believed by most Bible scholars to be the beast spoken of in Re 13:1-8 and the little horn of the fourth beast spoken of in Daniel's vision (Da 7:7-8 and 23-25). He is also called "the son of perdition" (this verse) and "Wicked" (2Th 2:8). In 2Th 2:9-10, it is revealed that he will be empowered by Satan with "power and signs and lying wonders" through deception. This is also probably the "vile

person" Daniel spoke of in Da 11:21-45.

John said in 1Jo 2:18 that many antichrists were already at work in the world. Those who deny that Jesus is the Christ are antichrist (1Jo 2:22). But apparently there is coming an individual who will typify all that is evil, and he is commonly referred to as the Antichrist.

Many assume this "man of sin" is this Antichrist specifically because in 2Th 2:4, it speaks of him sitting "in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." This is supposed by many to correspond with the king Daniel described in Da 11:21-45 and Jesus' own teaching about the end times in Mt 24:15. In Re 13:4 and 13-15, the image of the beast that all the world worships may be this abomination Daniel and Jesus spoke of.

Note 8 at 2Th 2:3: The Greek word that was translated "perdition" here is "APOLEIA." It literally means "ruin or loss (physical, spiritual or eternal)" (Strong's Concordance). This same term was applied to Judas Iscariot in Joh 17:12. This word was also translated "destruction" in Php 3:19 - "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

The use of this word "perdition" in describing "the man of sin" is characterizing him as an absolute reprobate (see note 6 at Ro 1:28). He will be void of any conscience and beyond conviction.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:4

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Note 9 at 2Th 2:4: This "man of sin" attempts to show that he is God. He demonstrates extreme pride and places himself over everything that is an object of worship. The Greek word for "opposeth" here is "ANTIKEIMAI," and it literally means "to lie opposite to, to be set over against...to withstand...the opponent and self-exalter against...contrary to" (Vine's Expository Dictionary). In the Greek, "opposeth" is in the present tense, meaning a continuous process or habit. This is continual opposition to God.

Note 10 at 2Th 2:4: Throughout history, there have been rulers who have proclaimed themselves as deity and demanded worship. This "man of sin" will do this in the Jewish temple specifically in defiance of our true God (Da 11:36). If this "man of sin" is the beast of Re 13, then he would set an image of himself up in the temple to be worshipped, and the false prophet would give life to it and force everyone to worship it.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:5

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

Note 11 at 2Th 2:5: Paul had told the Thessalonians these things before. Although he spoke of the second coming of the Lord in 1Th 4:16-5:9, he did not speak specifically about this "man of sin." Therefore, it is to be assumed that this was part of the instruction he gave the Thessalonians in person when he was with them (Ac 17:1-9).

2 THESSALONIANS 2:6

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

Note 12 at 2Th 2:6: It is interesting that Paul said the Thessalonians knew what this restraining force was. It's interesting because there is no consensus among scholars today as to what this is. What was so clear to them seems to be a mystery to us today (see note 13 at this verse).

Note 13 at 2Th 2:6: Paul was saying that there is something holding back this "man of sin." The word "withholdeth" is the Greek verb "KATECHO," and it means "'to hold back, detain, retain'...'to restrain, hinder' (the course or progress of)" (Thayer's

Greek-English Lexicon).

Probably the most commonly held interpretation of what is withholding "the man of sin" from being revealed is the working of the Holy Spirit through the church. Many believe that the church will be "raptured" out of the earth before a seven-year tribulation that this "man of sin" will dominate (Re 13).

However, this cannot be the restraining influence, since 2Th 2:3 says the coming of Christ will not happen until this "man of sin" is revealed (see note 15 at 1Th 4:17). If the "man of sin" cannot be revealed until "what withholdeth" is removed, then the Holy Spirit in the church cannot be that restraining influence.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:7

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way.

Note 14 at 2Th 2:7: Here, "iniquity" is the Greek noun "ANOMIA," and it literally means "the condition of one without law" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). Lawlessness is going on, but someone or something is restraining it.

Note 15 at 2Th 2:7: This is the point that the Apostle John made in 1Jo 2:18 when he said, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are

there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." The spirit of antichrist is already at work in the world. Those who are against Christ have this spirit of antichrist working in them. This spirit is not and cannot find its full expression as long as the restraining influence is still present (see note 13 at 2Th 2:6).

Note 16 at 2Th 2:7: The word "letteth" here is the same Greek word used in 2Th 2:6 for the English word "withholdeth." Something or someone is restraining and holding back the progress of lawlessness. This must be taken out of the way for the wicked one to be fully revealed.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Note 17 at 2Th 2:8: The "Wicked" one is the same person as the "man of sin" in 2Th 2:3 and "the mystery of iniquity" in 2Th 2:7. After the removal of what withholds (2Th 2:6), the world will then plunge into lawlessness. The name of this "man of sin" is never mentioned in Scripture. He is known only by his deeds and actions. It will be the Lord Jesus Christ with the words of His mouth that will totally destroy him at His coming (Re 19:15 and 20-21).

Note 18 at 2Th 2:8: In Heb 4:12, God's Word is said to be "sharper than any twoedged sword." In Eph 6:17, God's Word is called the sword of the Spirit. In Re 1:16; 2:16; 19:15, and 21, Jesus is described as having a sword coming out of His mouth. All of these verses are referring to the Word of God.

The weapon that Jesus will use to dispatch all His enemies is the Word of God. People will be slain until blood will be up to the horses' bridles (Re 14:20). This is a weapon that makes all the bombs of man pale in comparison. This is the same Word that God has committed unto us. When we speak His Word in faith, nothing can overcome it.

Note 19 at 2Th 2:8: This "brightness" could be describing the countenance of the Lord Jesus Christ as in Re 1:16. It could also be referring to the fire that other scriptures associate with the coming of the Lord (2Th 1:8; Heb 10:27; 2Pe 3:12; Re 18:8, and 19:20).

2 THESSALONIANS 2:9

[Even him], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

Note 20 at 2Th 2:9: The Greek word "PAROUSIA" ("coming") is used seven times in 1 and 2 Thessalonians (1Th 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; 2Th 2:1, and 8-9). It is used of the second

coming of Jesus Christ as well as the coming of various people throughout the New Testament.

In this passage, we see the PAROUSIA of the "man of sin." His appearance will be marked out by miracles, signs, and wonders. People will stand in awe because of the supernatural manifestations that he will demonstrate. These manifestations are referred to as lying wonders because they are counterfeit and their origin is not from God. False miracles are also mentioned in Ex 7:11, 22, 8:7; De 13:1-3; Mt 24:24; Re 13:13, 16:14, and 19:20.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:10

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Note 21 at 2Th 2:10: The word "perish" is the Greek verb "APOLLUMI," and it was translated ninety-two times in the New Testament in the following ways: "perish" thirty-three times, "destroy" twenty-six times, "lose" twenty-two times, "be lost" five times, "lost" four times, and twice in other, miscellaneous ways. Metaphorically it means "to devote or give over to eternal misery" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon).

The reason that people perish, Paul stated, is because "they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." The

word "received" is the Greek verb "DECHOMAI," and it was also translated "receive," "accept," and "take" (Strong's Concordance). It carries the idea of someone who would welcome the truth. The Thessalonians, in contrast to these that "received not the love of the truth," received the Gospel "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1Th 2:13).

2 THESSALONIANS 2:11

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

Note 22 at 2Th 2:11: The Lord would never give people a strong delusion that would keep them from receiving salvation. The Lord is "not willing that any perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). When people reject the truth He has shown them, they are, in a sense, choosing deception by their own free will--He is just enforcing their own decisions. This only happens to those who don't love the truth.

This is all the more reason we need to seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near (Isa 55:6). We don't know when the mercies of the Lord will cease and this delusion will come. We must love the truth and never willfully reject it.

Note 23 at 2Th 2:11: This helps explain why there will be a great "falling away" before the return of the Lord (2Th 2:3, see note 6 at that verse). Those who don't genuinely love the truth will be given over to this strong delusion that will sever them from all godly influence. The gray area will disappear, and people will either be hot or cold but not lukewarm (Re 3:16).

2 THESSALONIANS 2:12

That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Note 24 at 2Th 2:12: If the Lord didn't give this "strong delusion" (2Th 2:11), then some people would submit to the Lord out of fear or intimidation as they see the signs of the end approaching. It is impossible to please the Lord without faith (Heb 11:6). It is not God's will to force people into submission. If it were, He would operate much differently than He does. Therefore, those who reject the Truth will have their hearts hardened (see note 3 at Mr 8:17), resulting in their inability to believe and sealing their damnation. This is not unjust on the Lord's part; He will just be enforcing people's own choices (see note 22 at 2Th 2:11).

Note 25 at 2Th 2:12: All Christians have wondered at some time or another about the ungodly who flaunt their love of sin in the face of God and everything that is decent. If they suffered

immediate judgment, it wouldn't be confusing, but the seeming lack of judgment can bring confusion. The writer of Ps 73 certainly was perplexed about this.

God is a righteous Judge who will set the record straight. His day is coming, and it will be terrible on those who received not the love of the truth. Now God is suffering long with the ungodly so that as many as will believe can be saved (2Pe 3:9).

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

Note 1 at 2Th 2:13: This verse contains many doctrinal elements: thanksgiving, brotherly love, God's love for the saints, election, sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and faith in the Gospel.

Paul began this section by going from the singular to the plural and using our English word "we." This indicates that Timothy and Silas were joining Paul in their thanksgiving for the Thessalonians.

Paul's statement about the brethren being "beloved of the Lord" brings out the fact that believers are thoroughly loved by

God. It was God who had chosen them unto salvation. The Greek verb "HAIREOMAI" means "to take for oneself, i.e. to prefer" (Strong's Concordance).

The phrase "through sanctification of the Spirit" shows that it was the Holy Spirit who was setting apart the believers unto salvation, while "belief of the truth" shows that the object of the Thessalonians' faith was the Gospel.

Note 2 at 2Th 2:13: Paul had just spoken some very sobering words about the fate of those who don't love the truth (2Th 2:11-12). Here, he reassured the Thessalonians that he wasn't including them in this number of people who would be damned.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:14

Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 3 at 2Th 2:14: Jesus said He has given us the same glory that the Father has given Him (see note 110 at Joh 17:22). Paul said this glory would be revealed in us, not to us when we stand before the Lord (see note 1 at Ro 8:18). Paul also said in Eph 1:18 that the riches of the glory of His inheritance are already in the saints (see note 12 at Eph 1:18). Peter said we were called unto God's eternal glory (1Pe 5:10).

In this verse, Paul repeated this truth by saying that we have been called "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." In light of these other scriptures, it is very clear that this is not something that will take place in the future, but it is a present-tense reality in every true believer.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:15

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Note 4 at 2Th 2:15: Paul was admonishing the Christians to be not quickly shaken ("stand fast"), and to hold--that is, retain and grasp firmly--the traditions that they were taught. In light of Paul's strong words in 2Th 2:11-12, it was especially important to hold on to the Truth they had been taught.

Note 5 at 2Th 2:15: The "tradition" that Paul was speaking of here is the Gospel itself that had been handed down to the Thessalonian believers. Paul stated here that the traditions may have been oral (by word) or written (by his epistle).

W.E. Vine stated that "at the outset, and for twenty years thereafter, there is no evidence that anything was committed to writing whether by the apostles or by their colleagues, but before the last of the apostles had passed away each book of the New Testament had been written and was in circulation...among the

churches" (Vine's Expository Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians, p. 200).

2 THESSALONIANS 2:16

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given [us] everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

Note 6 at 2Th 2:16: 2Th 2:16-17 is like a preliminary benediction to this letter.

Note 7 at 2Th 2:16: Regardless of how good human comfort is, it is only temporary. Jesus has given us everlasting consolation.

2 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

2 THESSALONIANS 3:1

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have [free] course, and be glorified, even as [it is] with you:

Note 1 at 2Th 3:1: Notice that Paul wasn't requesting prayer for his personal success; he was desiring God's Word to prevail. Paul didn't promote himself, so he wasn't dismayed when things became difficult for him personally. Many times people who are focused upon themselves get depressed and discouraged when personal trials come. Those who are dead to self have a definite edge on others.

Note 2 at 2Th 3:1: Paul, Silas, and Timothy were requesting prayer that their mission to spread the Gospel would have free course. The English word "course" was translated from the Greek verb "TRECHO," and this Greek word means "'to run'; a. properly: of persons in haste...rapidly propagated" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). In the Greek, this is in the present tense and means a continuous, uninterrupted, and habitual action.

Paul's prayer was that the Gospel would go forth unhindered so that others may believe and Jesus Christ would be glorified as

He was among the Thessalonian believers. Even though Paul prayed this, he realized that there would be unreasonable and wicked people who would refuse to believe.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:2

And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all [men] have not faith.

Note 3 at 2Th 3:2: Those who resist the Word of the Lord are "unreasonable," which is surprising to some. Intellectuals often cite "reason" as the basis of their rejection of God and His Word, but that's not the real explanation.

It is intellectually dishonest to refuse to consider reality beyond what can be discerned with the physical senses. The study of human history reveals an inbred knowledge of God that cannot be ignored except through self-deception. As David said, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps 14:1 and 53:1).

Those who refuse the revelation of God's Word on the basis of "reason" are unreasonable. Even from a secular point of view, the Bible has impacted the world throughout the ages more than all other books combined. How could truly objective people not consider its claims?

The truth is that those who deny God and His Word do so

through prejudice. They don't want to believe, because that would bring them into accountability to God for their actions. It is unreasonable to reject the infallible proofs God offers each and every person (see note 1 at Ac 1:3).

2 THESSALONIANS 3:3

But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep [you] from evil.

Note 4 at 2Th 3:3: In the previous verses, Paul asked for prayer that the Gospel would prevail. He requested this because there were "unreasonable and wicked men" who were seeking to stop the spread of the Gospel. Paul experienced their persecution often.

Even though Paul was praying for protection and unhindered success, he knew opposition would come. Paul said that he had suffered much adversity (2Co 11:23-30). How did he cope? How does anyone handle all the hardships that come in life? Paul gave his answer here.

Regardless of what others do, God is faithful. The key to maintaining joy amid life's trials is staying focused on God's faithfulness instead of the unfaithfulness of others.

Note 5 at 2Th 3:3: Paul mentioned two areas of God's

faithfulness. First, He is faithful to establish us and keep us from evil. The English word "stablish" was translated from the Greek word "STERIZO," and STERIZO means "to set fast, i.e. (literally) to turn resolutely in a certain direction, or (figuratively) to confirm" (Strong's Concordance). It was translated "strengthen" in Lu 22:32. The Lord is faithful to strengthen us and set us, or turn us resolutely in a certain direction; our motivation comes from the Lord.

Second, the Lord is faithful to keep us from evil. Jesus told us to pray for this in Mt 6:13, and He prayed this for us in His prayer the night before His crucifixion (Joh 17:15). God delivering Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah was used as an example of His faithfulness (2Pe 2:6-9), and the Lord's preserving faithfulness is praised in Jude 24.

God is faithful to establish us and keep us from all evil, but that doesn't mean all of us Christians will automatically experience this. Our part is to receive it by faith (see note 6 at 2Th 3:4).

2 THESSALONIANS 3:4

And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

Note 6 at 2Th 3:4: In 2Th 3:3, Paul spoke of God's

faithfulness to establish us and keep us from all evil (see note 5 at that verse). Here, he spoke of our part. It is necessary that we do what the Lord tells us to do to receive this protection.

This is not to say we must earn or deserve God's faithfulness. No! That would void the grace that Paul preached so fervently, but we do have to cooperate with God. His blessings are not just automatic. God makes provision for our needs, but it is essential that we believe to receive.

Note 7 at 2Th 3:4: Paul had given commandments to the Thessalonians. Most Christians today would rebel at a minister even giving suggestions. There would be a full-fledged riot if a pastor issued commandments in the name of the Lord (see note 4 at 1Th 4:2).

In Paul's previous letter to the Thessalonians, he had commanded them to abstain from fornication, not to defraud their brethren in any matter, and to work with their own hands (1Th 4:1-11).

In 2Th 3:6, Paul gave another command--to withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly. He expounded on this in 2Th 3:10-15 and applied it to the commandment he had given in his first letter concerning everyone working. In 2Th 3:10, he rephrased his command to say, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." He went on to give instructions about how to treat anyone who disobeys this commandment.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:5

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Note 8 at 2Th 3:5: Love and patience are two of the most important Christian virtues, yet the God-kind of love and patience are far beyond our human ability to achieve. God must direct our hearts into these things. As Paul put it in Php 2:13, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Not only must God do everything through us; He also makes us willing, or directs our hearts, as Paul said here.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:6

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Note 1 at 2Th 3:6: Paul used a very strong and authoritative phrase: "we command you...in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We command" is the Greek verb "PARAGGELLO," and this Greek word carries the idea of an order or charge. It is further

strengthened by the phrase "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." This command is also found to be in the present tense in the Greek, which makes it a continuous or habitual action or command.

The command is to withdraw, disassociate, and separate oneself from those who call themselves Christians but walk disorderly. This indicates a life that is not submitted to the authority of Jesus Christ and does not reflect the godly principles taught by the apostles.

Note 2 at 2Th 3:6: This is similar to the instructions Jesus gave in Mt 18:15-17. In those scriptures, Jesus made this "church discipline" a joint decision of the body of Christ; this is a safeguard against railroading someone, and it is a good principle to follow in this instance of dealing with those who refuse to work (see note 5 at Mt 18:17).

Note 3 at 2Th 3:6: These instructions are specifically about how to deal with fellow believers who are able but refuse to work.

Note 4 at 2Th 3:6: Jesus said, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Mt 15:6), yet Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians to follow their traditions. Apparently, there are good traditions and bad traditions.

In this instance, Paul was referring to the Gospel of Christ.

At the time Paul was writing this letter, the New Testament was not in written form; that came later. Therefore, the truths of N.T. scripture were still oral, and these are the traditions Paul was referring to (see note 5 at 2Th 2:15).

2 THESSALONIANS 3:7

For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

Note 5 at 2Th 3:7: Paul's command to separate from those who were disorderly and lazy was backed by the example that he had given to the Thessalonians. Paul saw the apostles' example as an authoritative model for all believers to follow. True doctrine was to be shown as well as believed.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:8

Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

Note 6 at 2Th 3:8: Paul and his companions were self-supporting. They worked long hours so as not to be a financial burden to those they ministered to (1Th 2:9). Ac 18:3 reveals that

Paul was a tentmaker by trade. That's how he supported himself and his companions. In Paul's day, tents were widely used; therefore, this was a trade that provided him ample opportunity for income whenever the need arose.

Note 7 at 2Th 3:8: The Greek word that was translated "travail" here is "MOCHTHOS." It means "hard and difficult labor, toil, travail; hardship, distress" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). Paul didn't just work--he worked hard. He said he worked night and day, which implies that he worked long hours as well.

Paul often told us to follow him. Therefore, ministers who are in the same circumstance as Paul shouldn't be afraid of work. Paul was a hard worker, and believers should be too.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:9

Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

Note 8 at 2Th 3:9: Paul was saying that he had the right, or authority, to receive his living from preaching the Gospel. However, he chose not to use that power so he could set an example for the Thessalonians to follow.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:10

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

Note 9 at 2Th 3:10: Paul previously dealt with this issue of laziness among the Thessalonians. No details are given, but apparently there was a problem in this area. This may be the reason Paul chose not to receive personal offerings from the Thessalonians. He brought not only the teachings of the Word to bear on this situation but also his own example.

Note 10 at 2Th 3:10: There are some obvious exceptions to what Paul was commanding here. He was not referring to allowing those with physical deformities to starve. There are many different scenarios that depict people who are not able to work. This is not what Paul was referring to here. Paul was specifically targeting those who can work yet choose not to. Paul was saying that the church should not help those people. If they are able to work, they need to. Indeed, it does not truly help able-bodied people to give them handouts.

There are times when any one of us might be in financial trouble and might need some assistance, but Paul was speaking against a misplaced compassion that rewards laziness. The support of today's able-bodied poor by the government or

charitable groups should stop.

The church has traditionally been the greatest friend of the truly destitute. Godly love compels believers to help those in need, but just giving food or money to the poor is not the help they really need. They need the opportunity to work and be contributors instead of takers. Paul's commandment here should be the guiding factor in helping the poor.

All assistance to the poor who are able-bodied should be tied to some form of work. If they don't work, they shouldn't be allowed to eat. That would motivate them to change their lifestyles in a hurry. Because this principle has not been followed, we now have second- and third-generation welfare recipients who have lost all motivation and dignity, which is not the type of charity that God advocates.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:11

For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

Note 11 at 2Th 3:11: The old adage "An idle brain is the devil's workshop" is not a scripture, but it is a scriptural principle. These Thessalonians who were not working were meddling in other people's business. People who are busy working and making a living seldom have time to interfere in the affairs of

others, because they are occupied with their own lives. Hard work is healthy--physically and mentally.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:12

Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Note 12 at 2Th 3:12: The word "quietness" as used here is defined as "peaceful; untroubled" (American Heritage Dictionary definition of "quiet"). This can be clearly seen in the way this word was used in Pr 17:1 - "Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife." Solomon made the same point in Ec 4:6 - "Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit."

2 THESSALONIANS 3:14

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

Note 13 at 2Th 3:14: Paul's instructions here would be highly controversial today. It has become an almost sacred belief

that we are not to feel ashamed about anything, and God have mercy on any person who causes shame--this is totally unacceptable in our modern culture.

However, there are things of which people should be ashamed. Specifically, Paul was saying an able-bodied person who doesn't work but is freeloading should be ashamed. It should be embarrassing and humiliating to panhandle. God did not create man to live this way.

There is a proper place for negative emotions. A preoccupation with trying to obliterate all negative feelings has led some people to feel no shame about things that should cause shame. Homosexuality, adultery, lying, stealing, and a multitude of other things have lost much of their shame to a growing number of people. Shame and disgrace are emotions that Paul used to turn people to the right path.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:15

Yet count [him] not as an enemy, but admonish [him] as a brother.

Note 14 at 2Th 3:15: Notice the specific instruction not to treat these persons with animosity; they are still brothers and sisters in the Lord and should always be treated as such. This makes this whole process corrective instead of punitive. This is

the key ingredient to church discipline that is often missed and has caused so much hurt and rejection.

When correctly administered, church discipline should actually manifest the love of Christ to those receiving it. The actions taken may be severe, but if done in love for the purpose of correction, the individual who is being corrected should not feel like an enemy.

The word "admonish" differs from "punishment" in that it means a mild rebuke, and to warn, urge, or caution. Therefore, Paul was not speaking of humiliation or total devastation. This is not an opportunity for carnal Christians to release their anger on their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:16

Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord [be] with you all.

Note 15 at 2Th 3:16: Paul was praying for the Thessalonians to experience God's peace regardless of their situation. The Amplified Bible translates this verse as "Now may the Lord of peace Himself grant you His peace (the peace of His kingdom) at all times and in all ways [under all circumstances and conditions, whatever comes]."

Note 16 at 2Th 3:16: The Lord is always with us. He said He would be with us always, even unto the end of the world (Mt 28:20). He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb 13:5). Therefore, Paul must be speaking of the manifest presence and power of the Lord being with us.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:17

The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

Note 17 at 2Th 3:17: Communications in Paul's day were nothing like what we have today. It was easy to forge letters, and it could take months or years to learn of a forgery and take measures to remedy the situation. Paul spoke of others forging letters in his name in this very epistle (2Th 2:2). Therefore, Paul had a special way of authenticating all his letters.

Paul usually dictated his letters to someone who wrote them, much like a secretary today. At the close of each letter, he would write a salutation in his own handwriting. This is what he was referring to here and was his token in each epistle.