

A
Doctrinal and Devotional
Commentary
on the
Book of First Thessalonians
by Rénald Leroux Jr.

Info page

A Doctrinal and Devotional Commentary on the book of First Thessalonians.

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01 - Introduction to the Book of First Thessalonians

1. The author:

The name of the author (Paul) is given in the first verse of the first chapter.

2. Date and destination:

It is believed that this epistle was written around A.D. 50. Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, which was a major Mediterranean sea port. This city had a population of about 100,000 people and was situated on a major north-south trade route. This city was pro-Roman and had the privilege of being a "free-city," which meant being exempt from paying a tribute (special tax) to Rome. This church did not seem to be a wealthy church, as Paul writes that they were poor in 2 Cor. 8:1,2. It is believed that this letter was written when Paul was in Corinth.

3. Some reasons why Paul wrote this epistle:

It seems that Paul wrote this letter because the Thessalonians misunderstood certain important theological issues and Paul did not want them to remain in error. We also note that Paul desires to encourage these new believers in their new found faith.

4. The purpose of this epistle:

One of the main purposes of this epistle is to encourage the Thessalonians concerning the return of Jesus Christ. They were new believers, and Paul was anxious to support them in their walk with Christ.

5. The theme of First Thessalonians:

One can say that the general theme of this epistle can be found in the following verse: 1 Thessalonians 4:1 "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that

you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God" (NKJV)

02 - Greetings and thanksgiving

1 Thes. 1:1-4

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

²We give thanks to God always concerning all of you, making mention constantly in our prayers, ³*because we* remember your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, ⁴ knowing, brothers *dearly* loved by God, *that he has chosen you,*
(LEB)

Paul begins his letter by naming himself as well as two of his co-workers in the Lord. Have you noticed that the epistles begin with the sender's name, which is in contrast to how we write our names today, which is at the end of our letters? I believe that it is much better to know right away who is writing, before you begin reading, than to wait until you have finished!

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

Some believe that since the names of Silvanus and Timothy appear in this letter, it was co-written by all three, but this is a mistake. Paul is simply naming his co-workers who join with him spiritually in his opening greeting to the brethren in Thessalonica.

Silvanus is the first name. We know that this man is named Silas elsewhere in the Bible. It seems that Silas is a diminutive of Silvanus. He was a member of the church of Jerusalem, and in Acts 15:22 he was chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. Silas was also Paul's companion on his second missionary trip (Acts 15:39-41). Peter also mentions Silvanus (1 Peter 5:12). We do not know where and how Silvanus died.

Timothy is named second, probably because Silvanus had already been working with Paul when they met Timothy in Derbe (Acts 16:1). His father was Greek, but his mother

was Jewish (Acts 16:1). In 1 Tim. 1:2, Paul calls him a "true son in the faith". In Romans 16:21 Paul calls him a "fellow-worker". He worked with Paul in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17) and followed him on his missionary trips. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy to encourage him in his ministry within churches.

The epistle was written to the "*church*" (EKKLESIA means: a calling out, a popular meeting) of the Thessalonians. There was a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in Thessalonica. This city was a seaport in Macedonia. It was also the capitol of this region and a "free city" filled with Roman citizens, along with Greeks and Jews. It was probably because of the preaching of the gospel by Paul (Acts 17:1-4) that a church was established.

v.1 ... in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace.

Here we see that the church was in "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer) who is called the "*Father*" (PATER means: a father near or remote). We see that the apostle Paul duly taught them that the Living God had now become their spiritual Father. This was possible because of what the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus Christ had done in their favor. His atoning work at the cross is perfect and eternal, as we read:

Hebrews 10

10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

(NKJV)

Paul calls a blessing upon them "Grace to you and peace." These are two of the most important blessings a true believer in the Messiah Jesus Christ can possess. Grace is God's very special favor upon his adopted children, and peace is what has been

established between God and the believer through Jesus Christ, as we read in the book of Romans.

Romans 5

1 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

Once the provenance of this letter is known and a blessing is given, we now see the attachment of Paul towards the Thessalonians.

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

We (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) "*give thanks*" (EUCCHARISTEO means: to be grateful, to express gratitude) to God. Please note that Paul writes "*always*" (PANTOTE means: every when, at all times, ever more). We can see that this was habitual for the apostle. When he would remember the Thessalonians, he would automatically be thankful to the Lord God for them. Should we not also have the same attitude? Paul was thankful for "all of you", not just the ones that he liked best, or the ones that were more spiritual, but all of them. Being thankful towards the Lord, the apostle Paul made "*mention*" (MNEIA means: recollection, remembrance) "*constantly*" (ADIALEIPTOS means: without omission) in his prayers. So Paul and his co-workers took the time needed to pray for the brethren who were in Thessalonica.

³ *because we* remember your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

Paul will detail three of the main memories he has of them that push him to be thankful to the Lord and pray for them. The first is that they "*remember*" (MNEMONEUO means: to exercise memory) their "*work*" (ERGON means: to work, toil, labor) of "*faith*" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, belief). This could be an echo of what Paul had written to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2

10 For by his act we were given existence in Christ Jesus to do those good works which God before made ready for us so that we might do them.

(BBE)

Paul remembers how their faith pushed them towards "good works." They did not seem to stand idling but were active in the Lord. The second is their "*labor*" (KOPOS means: toil, labor, weariness) of "*love*" (AGAPE means: affection, benevolence, charity). Was this a labor of love towards one another? Was it also towards those who were not part of their congregation? I believe that the love of God working in them was not only for each other but for all the lost souls also. Has Jesus not told his disciples the following:

Mark 12

29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

30 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

31 "And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

(NKJV)

The third reason Paul prayed for the Thessalonians was because of their "*steadfastness*" (HUPOMONE means: hopeful endurance, patience) of "*hope*" (ELPIS means: to anticipate with pleasure). Their hope did not depend on the circumstances of life. It stood on the steady hope of Jesus Christ—the anointed one, the Messiah promised by the Almighty. That is on whom their hope was found-solid rock, not sinking sand! For the second time, Paul calls God their Father. He seems to be hammering this thought into their minds. Forget not who God has become towards you-your eternal Father.

⁴ knowing, brothers *dearly* loved by God, *that he has chosen you,*

In this last verse of our first section, Paul writes "*knowing*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of). There seem to be two very important facts that the apostle

absolutely desires the brethren to remember. The first was that they were "*dearly loved*" (AGAPE means: affection, benevolence, charity) by God. This reminds me of what Paul wrote to the Roman believers:

Romans 5

8 But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

(RSV)

The second was that he had "*chosen*" (EKLOGE means: divine selection, chosen, election) them. The Greek phrase says "the choice of you". Not only does God love you above all that you can imagine but he even desired you to be with him before time ever existed! Dear child of God may you also remember how much God loves you and has chosen you to be his for all eternity.

03 - *The power of the Gospel*

1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

⁵ because our gospel did not come to you with word only, but also with power and with the Holy Spirit and with much certainty, just as you know what sort of *people* we became among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia,
(LEB)

The power of the gospel to change lives is sometimes unbelievable. If we take Paul as an example, we see the veracity of this statement. He was a spiritual terrorist who hated those who followed the Nazarene. He tracked them down, persecuted them, and imprisoned them. He even sanctioned the execution of Christ's followers, as he did with Stephen (Acts 7). By a single touch of God's power, Saul was transformed into Paul, He went from persecutor to persecuted. Has this happened in your life? Has the power of God changed your inner being? Are you born again of the Spirit?

⁵ because our gospel did not come to you with word only, but also with power and with the Holy Spirit and with much certainty, just as you know what sort of *people* we became among you for your sake.

In our last section, Paul spoke about how the Thessalonians had received the gospel and how it was manifest in their lives. He now speaks of the power of the Gospel and its provenance. Our "*gospel*" (EUAGGELION means: a good message, the gospel), Paul calls it "our" because it is for all true believers. It was the good news given to mankind to bring them to salvation. All Christians must call the good news "my gospel." This Gospel that Paul brought forth did not come to you with "*word*" (LOGOS means: something said, the divine expression) "only" (MONON means: merely, alone, only). The gospel message that was brought to the Thessalonians was not only in human words. It was not the philosophical or idealistic discourse that the Greeks thought it was when Paul arrived in Athens and spoke at the Areopagus, as we see in the following description in the Book of Acts:

Acts 17

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?

20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."

21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

(NKJV)

It was much more than that because it came with "*power*" (DUNAMIS means: force, miraculous power, might). Paul does not mention any miracles that have been done among them. The power he mentions is the power of God to transform lives in an instant. It is the power of the cross and its effect on the repentant believer that transforms the soul from dead to alive in Christ.

v.5 ... and with the Holy Spirit and with much certainty, just as you know what sort of *people* we became among you for your sake.

This miraculous power was manifested by the "Holy Spirit," the third person of the Trinity. It is he whom Jesus left to take care of his disciples (John 14:26). It is He who brings power to the child of God (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit is behind the power and spiritual capacities that each child of God receives. The power of the gospel was manifested with "*much certainty*" (POLUS PLEROPHORIA means: abundant confidence). It was received in faith and was embraced fully by the believer. It was not a passing "new thing" until another came along. The gospel was solidly anchored and grew in the hearts of Christians.

Paul calls to memory what the Thessalonians saw of him for he writes "*as you know*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of). What did they know of Paul?

v.5 ... just as you know what sort of *people* we became among you for your sake.

What they knew was what "*sort*" (HOIOS means: to make like oneself, be of opinion) of people we became. He is speaking about his living testimony as he walked among

them. He lived to be an example of what a follower of Christ was like. This was proof of the power of the Holy Spirit living in Paul and his companions. Being a living testimony of the power of the Holy Spirit was "for your sake." It was not for their glory or reputation, but for the sake of the new brethren. May we all desire to model Jesus Christ for the sake of all believers around us, while not forgetting those who are not yet in the faith.

⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

The result of the living testimony of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy bore fruit. The Thessalonians "*became*" (GINOMAI means: to cause to be, to become) "*imitators*" (MIMETES means: an imitator, a follower) of them. Why was it important for Paul to live the way he did? Was it only that the people imitated HIM - no! It was because they would (by imitating him) become imitators of the "Lord" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority). Paul imitated Jesus so that those imitating him would imitate the Lord. This is something all true believers are called to do—to become more and more Christ-like, so that by our verbal and living testimony, people can come to the saving knowledge of Christ.

v.6 ... receiving the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

The Thessalonians "*received*" (DECHOMAI means: to receive, accept, take) the word (the good news) in "*much*" (POLUS means: much, many, abundant) "*affliction*" (THLIPSIS means: pressure, anguish, tribulation). The circumstances in which they lived were not favorable. They were living in difficult times, and misfortune, suffering, and distress were a daily burden. But when they heard of the good news in Jesus Christ, they received it with the "*joy*" (CHARA means: cheerfulness, calm delight, gladness) of the Holy Spirit. The idea of being "seeker-friendly" and trying to make people feel "just right" so that they will be inclined to come to the Lord is not from the Bible! Once more, we see the working of the Holy Spirit in the person's life to bring him to the cross of Christ.

⁷ so that you became an example to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia,

This joyful transformation of the believer in Christ had a great impact on others. You see, the Thessalonians became an "*example*" (TUPOS means: a stamp, a die, a resemblance), a living testimony (as Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were) to all those who "*believe*" (PISTEUO means: to have faith, to entrust, to believe). In Macedonia, which was a Roman province north of Greece, where Paul had made a few missionary trips, and also in Achaia, which was originally a narrow strip of land in Greece. Their testimony was wonderful, and it overflowed into neighboring territories. It was their joy in their suffering that astounded people and attracted them to the Lord. May we also be like the Thessalonians, filled with joy from the Holy Spirit in all circumstances.

04 - *Their Christian Testimony*

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

⁸ for from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith toward God has gone out, so that we have no need to say anything. ⁹ For *they* themselves report about us, what sort of welcome we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve *the* living and true God, ¹⁰ and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who delivers us from the coming wrath.

(LEB)

This section is a grand description of lives that are changed by the saving faith in Jesus Christ and of what the Holy Spirit can do in the lives of true believers. In verse seven, Paul writes that these believers were examples for everyone to see. We will see what Paul means by this.

⁸ for from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith toward God has gone out, so that we have no need to say anything.

Here we first see that the testimony of the "*word*" (LOGOS means: something said, the divine expression) of the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) has "*sounded forth*" (EXECHEMAI means: to echo forth, resound) from them. This means that the Thessalonians were believers who evangelized, telling the wonderful story of the redemption that is found in Jesus Christ. They were on fire, burning with the desire for lost souls to be saved. Unfortunately, this passion is becoming less and less common to see. It is as though believers in general have forgotten the call they have received from the Savior.

Matthew 28

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

(RSV)

Acts 1

8 But you will have power, when the Holy Spirit has come on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

(BBE)

Preachers from the pulpit preach on many things but often forget our sacred duty to be heralds of the "Good News" for our own generation. Have we forgotten the outcome of our lack of care for the lost? Seeing that it is urgent to evangelize, Paul wrote the following:

Romans 10

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

(NKJV)

The Thessalonians were preachers of the "good News" so much so that Paul writes the following:

v.8 ... not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith toward God has gone out, so that we have no need to say anything.

They were not satisfied with spreading the gospel to family and friends. They took this message all over Macedonia and Achaia. They took the gospel along with them "every place" they went. We sometimes hear that "this is not the time" or "this is not the place" to talk about Jesus. This was certainly not how these believers thought! Their "faith" (PISTIS means persuasion, credence, moral convictions) in God has "gone out"

(EXERCHOMAI means to issue, come forth, go abroad) everywhere. Paul is so pleased with these believers that he says that we have "*no need*" (CHREIA means: necessary, want of, need) to say anything. In other words: "it is useless to talk about this because everybody knows about it." Is this true for you? Is it true for your church? Are you known for your zeal to announce the "Good News" to others?

⁹ For *they* themselves report about us, what sort of welcome we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve *the* living and true God,

Another aspect of the great change the Holy Spirit brought is found in verse nine. There are two things that Paul points out concerning them. The first deals with "*what sort*" (HOPOIOS means: of what kind, such as, what manner) of "*welcome*" (EISODOS means: an entrance, to enter into) we had with you. In Acts 17:1-4 we see the following:

4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

(NKJV)

Here we see that some Jews and a great multitude of devout Greeks joined them. We only see elsewhere in Iconium that a "great multitude" joined Paul after he brought the gospel message to them. Not all believed. Some Jews were even so irritated that they gathered a mob and caused a great deal of trouble. Paul must have praised the Lord for all the souls that repented and came to Christ. The second point made by Paul is that they had "turned to God" from "idols" (EIDOLON means: an image, a heathen God, an idol). They abandoned their old ways and the idols (false gods) they were serving. Once they abandoned their idols, they turned to God "*to serve*" (DOULEUO means: to be a slave to, in bondage) the "*living*" (ZAO means: to live, life-time) and "*true*" (ALETHINOS means: truthful, the opposite of what is fictitious) God. The Lord God declared these words through the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 45

5 I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I gird you, though you do not know me,

6 that men may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.

(RSV)

This is what true believers do once they are saved. They abandon their old ways and idols in life and turn to the living God to serve him. Is that what you have done? Are you still holding on to your "old ways" and your "old idols"?

The fourth and final description of how their lives were transformed is found in verse ten:

¹⁰and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who delivers us from the coming wrath.

They evangelized, they received people that the Lord God sent their way, they abandoned their idols and turned to God to serve him. Now they "*await*" (ANEMENO means: to wait) his Son (Jesus Christ) from "*heaven*" (OURANOS means: the sky, heaven). They knew that Christ was sitting at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20) because he had been "*raised*" (EGEIRO means: to waken, rouse from sleep) from the dead. They also knew that Jesus was the one who "*delivers*" (RHOUMAI means: to draw for oneself, rescue) us (believers) from the "*coming*" (ERCHOMAI means: to come or go) "*wrath*" (ORGE means: violent passion, anger, wrath). Here Paul is speaking concerning the great judgment to come (Rev. 20:12). They believed in the second coming of Jesus in order to gather his people with him. This was their hope and it should be ours also.

05 - Paul and his ministry among them

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

¹ For *you* yourselves know, brothers, our reception with you, that it was not in vain, ² but *after we* had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, just as you know, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. ³ For our exhortation *is* not from error or from impurity or with deceit, ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, thus we speak, not as pleasing people but God, who examines our hearts. ⁵ For *never* did we come with a word of flattery, just as you know, nor with a pretext of greediness (God *is* witness), ⁶ nor seeking glory from people, neither from you nor from others. ⁷ *Although we could have insisted on our own importance* as apostles of Christ, yet we became infants in your midst, like a nursing mother cherishes her own children. ⁸ Longing for you in this way, we determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you had become dear to us.

(LEB)

This section should definitely be required to be studied by all who desire to enter the ministry in whatever way. There are too many scandals brought by church leaders that bring shame and mockery to the name of God. Non believers are disgusted with Christianity and many do not want any part in it because they see certain leaders as hypocrites and frauds. Not so with Paul and his associates (Silvanus and Timothy), and it should be the same for us.

¹ For *you* yourselves know, brothers, our reception with you, that it was not in vain,

Paul is calling the Thessalonians to the witness stand! For you yourselves "*know*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware) since his ministry was public and he had nothing to hide, he calls on the "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, a member of the same religious community). He reminds them of "*our reception*" (EISODOS means: entrance, entering into) of how they presented themselves to them. He may also refer to how they were received in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-7). He presented himself first to the Jews at the synagogue, and a few believed. Then he presented himself to the Gentiles and

many believed. This caused a commotion, and some jealous Jews gathered evil men and a mob, and the entire city was in an uproar. They tried to find Paul, but it was in vain, so they took Jason and dragged him to the city rulers. Even though all of this happened and Paul's life was threatened (as well as his associates), he writes that it was not in "*vain*" (KENOS means: empty, in vain, ineffective, worthless). Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy did not shy away from difficult situations. They faced them by placing their trust in the Lord, and so should all true believers. When there is opposition to our gospel, we should not withdraw.

² but *after we* had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, just as you know, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

This was not the first time they faced opposition to the gospel. It never stopped Paul, as we see. Notice what he writes: "*but after we had already suffered*" (PROPASCHO means: to suffer before, to undergo hardship previously). Previous sufferings DID NOT STOP Paul and his associates. Even if they had been "*mistreated*" (HUBRIZO means: reproach, entreat shamefully) in Philippi. That is where Paul exorcised a girl who had an evil spirit in her, making her owners furious because of the loss of money they experienced. They brought Paul and Silas to the marketplace to be given to the Roman authorities. There was a great uproar, and Paul and Silas were beaten with rods and afterwards thrown in prison with their feet in the stocks. They were miraculously freed from the prison. The prison guard and his family came to faith, and the next day they were set free by the Roman authorities (Acts 16:10-40).

Again, he called the brethren to be his witnesses, "*just as you know,*" for all he was writing was the truth. So what did they do after being beaten by the rod, being thrown in prison and having their feet in stocks? Did they say "that's enough" or "no more evangelizing, it is too dangerous"? Quite the opposite, Paul writes, "*we had the courage*" (PARRHESIAZOMAI means: to be frank in utterance) in our God. They looked to God and were encouraged. Remember what Jesus said:

Matthew 5

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(NKJV)

They continued to speak in "*much*" (POLUS means: much, many, great deal) "*opposition*" (AGON means: conflict, anxiety, fight). A church was born out of all the tribulation that the enemy could throw at them! Amen that they persevered. How many times can we be immobilized in our ministries simply because of a little opposition?

³ For our exhortation *is* not from error or from impurity or with deceit,

Paul is now going to explain how they had their ministries with the Thessalonians when they were among them. He cannot lie or embellish what he is writing because the people would know since they were there! Paul speaks of our "exhortation" (PARAKLESIS means: imploration, solace, entreaty) this was their exhortation to surrender to the gospel of God, repent and receive Christ as their Messiah. This exhortation IS NOT from "*error*" (PLANE means: fraudulence, deceit, error) or from "*impurity*" (AKATHARSIA means: impurity, moral uncleanness) or from "*deceit*" (DOLOS means: decoy, a trick, a bait). Their hearts were pure and they DID NOT use any "tricks of the trade" to get them to repent. So many ploys and ruses are used today to "attract" people or make them "comfortable" so they can be in a "good place" and come to the cross! What rubbish! We never see this being done in the gospels or the epistles.

⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, thus we speak, not as pleasing people but God, who examines our hearts.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy did not need any ploys or ruses to get the attention of the people. For they had been "*approved*" (DOKIMAZO means: to test, to approve, allow) by God to be "entrusted" (PISTEUO means: to entrust a thing to) with the gospel. God gave them the gospel to preach and called them to do so. Because of this, they did not need tricks, ploys, or ruses in their ministries. Could it be possible that those who use

such ploys to attract people do so because they have not been called by God or because they do not trust the Lord in their ministries, turning to human ways of doing things?

v.4 ... thus we speak, not as pleasing people but God, who examines our hearts.

Paul reminded the Thessalonians, "*thus we speak*" (LALEO means: to speak, preach, to talk). Remember how we spoke to you? Remember that it was not as "*pleasing*" (ARESKO means: to be agreeable, to seek to please) to people but to God. He spoke to people in order to please God and not mankind. The gospel calls on man to confess that he is a sinner and to repent, asking Christ to save him from the judgment to come. This displeases most people, but Paul did not "water-down" or shy away from telling the truth. Paul explains why he acted this way. Speaking of God, he writes : who "*examines*" (DOKIMAZO means: to test, to approve, examine) our "*hearts*" (KARDIA means: the heart, fig: the thoughts and feelings of the mind). We act this way because we know that God looks at our hearts and motives and we want to stand pure before him.

⁵ *For never* did we come with a word of flattery, just as you know, nor with a pretext of greediness (God is witness),

Paul now describes what he and his associates did not do when they came to them. The first thing is that they "*never*" (OUTE means: not even) came with a "*word*" (LOGOS means: something said, utterance) of "*flattery*" (KOLAKEIA means: flattery with a view to take advantage or a gain). This Greek word is only used once in the New Testament. Again, Paul calls upon them as witnesses to the truth he is saying. The second thing they did not do is to have a "*pretext*" (PROPHASIS means: an outward showing, pretext) of "*greediness*" (PLEONEXIA means: avarice, extortion, greediness). They did not want their money, nor any riches, nor any benefits they could receive from them. That was not the reason why they brought the gospel to them. What difference do we see with certain modern preachers and teachers who are millionaires and own many houses and planes. Who lives like kings or queens, saying that this is for the ministry. Greed and love of material possessions overflow their hearts. Shame on them! " God will one day be a witness against them!

⁶ nor seeking glory from people, neither from you nor from others.

Paul continues to say what they did not do among them, and this time he says that they were not "*seeking*" (ZETEO means: to seek, desire, enquire) "*glory*" (DOXA means: glory, dignity, praise) from people. They were not looking for glory and fame, neither from you nor from "*others*" (ALLOS means: more, others, one another). This reminds me of the following story:

Acts 14

8 Now at Lystra there was a man sitting, who could not use his feet; he was a cripple from birth, who had never walked.

9 He listened to Paul speaking; and Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well,

10 said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and walked.

11 And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, because he was the chief speaker, they called Hermes.

13 And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the people.

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out among the multitude, crying,

15 "Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

(RSV)

Glory and fame from men should never be sought by any disciple of Christ. The only one we should be willing to please is the Lord God, and to one day hear from his lips, "Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master" (Mat. 25:23).

⁷ *Although we could have insisted on our own importance* as apostles of Christ, yet we became infants in your midst, like a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

Paul writes that "*we could have*" (DUNAMAI means: to be able, be possible), it would have been possible for Paul and his associates to have "*insisted*" (BAROS means: a load, a burden) on their own importance as "*apostles*" (APOSTOLOS means: a delegate, he that is sent) of Christ. Paul is not saying that Silvanus and Timothy are apostles, as the twelve who walked with Jesus before his ascension. He is saying that they had received the mandate from Christ and were sent by Christ to evangelize among them. Paul writes that they were like "*infants*" (EPIOS means: mild or kind, gentle). They did not use their authority to get what they wanted. On the contrary, they were gentle and humble towards them. He says that they were like "*nursing mothers*" (TROPHOS means: someone who nourishes, a nurse). They were like mothers who nourished their children.

⁸ Longing for you in this way, we determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you had become dear to us.

They loved the Thessalonians "*longing for you*" (HIMEIROMAI means: too long for, affectionately desirous). This love for them encouraged them to be "*determined*" (EUDOKEO means: to think well of, approve, be willing) to "*share*" (METADIDOMI means: to give over, share, give) with them. This reminds me of the love that brought the first believers to share between each other.

Acts 2

44 And all those who were of the faith kept together, and had all things in common;

45 And exchanging their goods and property for money, they made division of it among them all, as they had need.

46 And day by day, going in agreement together regularly to the Temple and, taking broken bread together in their houses, they took their food with joy and with true hearts,

47 Giving praise to God, and having the approval of all the people; and every day the number of those who had salvation was increased by the Lord.

(BBE)

They shared with the Thessalonians not only the "*gospel*" (EUAGGELION means: a good message, the gospel) of God but also our own "*souls*" (PSUCHE means: breath, soul, spirit). What Paul is saying is that they were prepared to give of themselves for them,

sparing no effort in their favor. May we have this burning desire for our Christian brothers and sisters!

v.8 ... because you had become dear to us.

In this last phrase, Paul gives the reason why they were ready to go to such lengths for the sake of the new believers in Thessalonica. He writes "*because*" (DIOTI means: on account that, inasmuch, because) you have become "*dear*" (AGAPETOS means: beloved, well loved, dear) to us. It is evident that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy truly understood what Jesus meant when he said:

John 13

34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
(NKJV)

06 - Paul's life as a witness of Christ

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

⁹ For you remember, brothers, our labor and hardship: working by night and day in order not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You *are* witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and righteously and blamelessly we became to you who believe, ¹¹ just as you know how *we treated* each one of you, like a father his own children, ¹² exhorting and consoling you and insisting that you live in a manner worthy of God, who calls you to his own kingdom and glory.

(LEB)

In our last section, the apostle Paul called the Thessalonians to the "witness stand" to testify to the truth of what was said. Now he calls them again to bear witness to how he and his associates lived and ministered among them.

⁹ For you remember, brothers, our labor and hardship: working by night and day in order not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Paul asks the believers to "*remember*" (MNEMONE means: to exercise memory, to recollect) and calls them "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother near or remote). We are reminded that we are all part of the family of God and should treat each other as such. In the rest of the verse, Paul will describe part of their ministry among them. He first talks about their "*labor*" (KOPOS means: to tire, toil, weariness). This points out the fact that they were not lazy, slothful, or sluggish in their ministry. Second, he speaks of "*hardship*" (MOCHTHOS means: painful, sadness). One can work a lot and yet not be fatigued. This was not their case. The ministry among them was hard and sometimes painful. As a pastor, I know that sometimes exhorting someone who is stubborn can be very painful and stressful emotionally.

Then Paul describes their time-line as servants of the church. He said that they were "*working*" (ERGAZOMAI means: to be engaged in, minister about) "*night*" (NUX means: night) and "*day*" (HEMERA means: the time between dawn and dark). They were ministering when the need was present. They did not end their day at 5pm and that

was it until the next day at 8am! They were on call, all the time. That is a great difference from what we sometimes see today, where pastors can only be reached on certain days.

v.9 ... in order not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Was there another reason why Paul, Silvanus and Timothy worked day and night apart from being at their service? It seems that they also worked in the ordinary manner so that they would not be a "*burden*" (EPIBAREO means: to be heavy upon, overcharge) to any of them. They worked to have money so that they would not force the believers (who were poor) to supply their needs. They labored in the church and also in the work place. This seemed to be habitual for Paul.

Acts 18

1 After these things, he went away from Athens, and came to Corinth.

2 And there he came across a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by birth, who not long before had come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had given orders that all Jews were to go away from Rome: and he came to them;

3 And because he was of the same trade, he was living with them, and they did their work together; for by trade they were tent-makers.

(BBE)

The last phrase seems to sum up their ministry with them. He writes we "*proclaimed*" (KERUSSO means: to herald, proclaim, preach) the "*gospel*" (EUAGGELION means: a good message, the gospel) of God. The gospel should always be at the center of one's ministry, whatever it may be.

¹⁰You *are* witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and righteously and blamelessly we became to you who believe,

Paul is telling the truth, for he calls the believers to be his "*witnesses*" (MARTUS means: a witness, a martyr). It is one thing to call a person to be his witness, but Paul also calls "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer) as well! This would be blasphemous if Paul were lying!

Paul will call upon them to be his witnesses of how "*devoutly*" (HOSIOS means: piously, holily) and "*righteously*" (DIKAIOS means: equitably, properly, upright) and "*blamelessly*" (AMEMPTOS means: without fault) they worked. So they were pious, proper, and blameless towards all the believers in Thessalonica. This is what I call Christian ethics. This is how they lived among the believers. This is how each and every believer should act among themselves. This is a code of honor that is to be lived out among the disciples of Christ.

¹¹ just as you know how *we treated* each one of you, like a father his own children,

Paul continues to remind the brethren how they ministered to them. If in verse seven he spoke about a mother (or nurse) and her child, Paul now gives the image that they were also like fathers towards them. Again, he affirms the truthfulness of what he writes by saying "*just as*" (KATHAPER means: exactly as) you "*know*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of). The subject is how they "*treated*" (GINOMAI means: to cause to be, to become) each one of them. They did this like a "*father*" (PATER means: a father, near or remote) would do to his own "*children*" (TEKNON means: a child, boy or girl). They acted as their spiritual fathers and called them to themselves.

¹² exhorting and consoling you and insisting that you live in a manner worthy of God, who calls you to his own kingdom and glory.

Here we see three other things that they did towards their spiritual children. First they were "*exhorting*" (MATUREO means: to give advice). Every child needs advice because they need to learn how to live their lives with as little damage as possible. Spiritual children are the same. They need to be taught and given advice on spiritual matters. It is unfortunate to see how often this advice is not welcomed. It is as though some believers think that they do not need it. They are fools and often filled with pride. The second is that they were "*consoling*" (PARAMUTHEOMAI means: to encourage, to console) them. They were there when difficult times arose. They stood by their brothers and sisters. You knew that you could lean on them for strength. Are we also there for our brothers and sisters when they pass through difficult times? Finally, they were "*insisting*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near, invite) that they would "*live*" (PERIPATEO means: to tread all around, walk) in a certain manner.

v.12 ... in a manner worthy of God, who calls you to his own kingdom and glory.

So how should the Thessalonians walk in life? They should walk in a manner "*worthy*" (AXIOS means: appropriately, as becometh) of God. Since we have become his children by adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5) we need to walk in a way that is worthy of our Father. We should be like Job, who walked blamelessly before the Lord (Job 1:8; 2:1). Have you noticed that there are four different "walks" in the letter to the Ephesians?

Ephesians 4

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,
(NKJV)

Ephesians 4

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,
(NKJV)

Ephesians 5

2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.
(NKJV)

Ephesians 5

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.
(NKJV)

We should not only walk worthy of God because of the righteousness that is given in Jesus Christ, but also because God "*calls you*" (KALEO means: to call, bid, call forth). Where does God call us to? He calls us to his own "*kingdom*" (BASILEIA means: royalty, a realm, a kingdom). Before we were saved by the Messiah, we belonged to the kingdom of darkness, but now we belong to another kingdom, as we see in the letter of Paul to the Colossians.

Colossians 1

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

13 He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

(RSV)

Finally, God calls his children to his own "*glory*" (DOXA means: dignity, honor, praise, glory). The only example I can think about concerning the glory of God would be the transfiguration of Christ on the mountain top.

Matthew 17

1 And after six days Jesus takes with him Peter, and James, and John, his brother, and makes them go up with him into a high mountain by themselves.

2 And he was changed in form before them; and his face was shining like the sun, and his clothing became white as light.

(BBE)

Should believers not manifest their thankfulness and attachment towards the Father by living a life that glorifies him?

07 - Their new life in Christ

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

¹³ And because of this we also give thanks to God constantly, that *when you* received God's word *that you heard* from us, you accepted *it* not *as the* word of men, but *as it* truly is, *the* word of God, which also is at work in you who believe. ¹⁴ For you became imitators, brothers, of the churches of God *which* are in Judea in Christ Jesus, because you also suffered the same *things* at the hands of your own people, just *as they* themselves *did* also at the hands of the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and who persecuted us, and *who are* not pleasing to God and *are* opposed to all people, ¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles in order that they may be saved, so that *they* always fill up their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the end.

(LEB)

In our last section, the apostle Paul wrote about how Silvanus, Timothy, and he himself ministered among the Thessalonians. In our present section, he will write about how the Thessalonians received the gospel message.

¹³ And because of this we also give thanks to God constantly, that *when you* received God's word *that you heard* from us, you accepted *it* not *as the* word of men, but *as it* truly is, *the* word of God, which also is at work in you who believe.

Paul begins by stating what I believe is the most important factor concerning them. Paul writes: we also "*give thanks*" (EUCCHARISTEO means: to be grateful, to express gratitude). I find this very spiritual, giving thanks to God for those who have become their brothers and sisters in the faith. Paul reacts as if these young believers were in some way a gift to be thankful for! Have we ever thought of this? Each and every believer in our congregation is a person that we should be thankful for. They give thanks to "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer). In no way did they take any credit for the new-found souls. All the credit goes to the Lord God. How wrong are some of us who credit systems, programs, management, fine preaching, contact keeping, or any other means as the "key" to their success! It is God, and only

God, who brings souls to salvation. How foolish it is to believe that we can somehow bring someone to Christ.

John 16

7 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

8 "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 "of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

10 "of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

11 "of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

(NKJV)

We must carry the good news to those who need it, but once it is given, it is the work of the Holy Spirit in that person that does the rest. We also see that they give thanks to God "*constantly*" (ADIALEIPTOS means: without omission). It was not a sporadic, once-in-awhile thing that they did. It was often on their minds how wonderful the Lord was to have brought them to the saving knowledge of Christ. May we also be constantly grateful for our brothers and sisters, and also for all the blessings we partake in.

v.13 ... that *when you received God's word that you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it truly is, the word of God, which also is at work in you who believe.*

They had "*received*" (PARALAMBANO means: to receive near, to take unto) God's "*word*" (LOGOS means: something said, utterance). They did not come with words of human wisdom or elegant speech. Do you recall what Paul wrote to the Roman Christians?

Romans 1

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

(RSV)

Paul knew that the power to save resided only in the words of the Lord. That is why we also need to bring the gospel message (and not ours) to those around us. They had heard God's word "from us." They did not refer this important task to someone else who might come along. They spoke to those who were in their midst, knowing that the Lord had placed them there at that precise moment. Have you ever thought that you also have to evangelize those who are close to you? Do you realize that it was God that brought you there or that it is God who has brought these people into your presence? It is never "by chance." God is always in control.

Paul continues with how they reacted when they heard the gospel and writes, "*you accepted it*" (DECHOMAI means: to receive, accept, to take). When they heard it, they truly believed that they were the very words of God and they accepted them as the word of God and not *as the* word of "men" (ANTHROPOS means: man-faced, human being). They knew the difference as soon as they heard the good news. This was not some story made by man but by the very words of God. Paul adds that this word is at "*work*" (ENERGEO means: to be active, efficient) in you who believe. The Holy Spirit works in the believer from the day he is born-again to his last breath. We are to facilitate the Spirit's work by being submissive to his directives and what we read in the Holy Scriptures.

¹⁴ For you became imitators, brothers, of the churches of God *which* are in Judea in Christ Jesus, because you also suffered the same *things* at the hands of your own people, just as *they* themselves *did* also at the hands of the Jews,

Paul brings up two facets of how the Holy Spirit was working in them. The first is that they became "*imitators*" (MIMETES means: an imitator, a follower) of the "*churches*" (EKKLESIA means: a popular meeting, calling out) of God. This little phrase is so important, churches BELONG to God. I have seen this over and over again where some people act and believe as though the church they are in belongs to them. This is true of many church leaders also. They do only what pleases them and do not accomplish what the Lord God wants of them-especially concerning disciplining wayward churchgoers. These Thessalonicien believers imitated the churches in Judea. This tells me that there was more than just the church in Jerusalem by the time this letter was written. In what way did they imitate these believers? It was because they also "*suffered*" (PASCHO means: painful, suffer, vex) the same things at the hands of "*our own*" (IDIOS means:

one's own, their own) people. Paul is referring to the persecution that they had endured at the hands of the Jews. Please read Acts 17:1-7 to find out about this persecution. Paul writes that they suffered the "*same things*" (KATHOS means: just, inasmuch, according to) as the believers in Judea under the hands of the "*Jews*" (IOUDAIOS means: Judaeans, a Jew). There has always been opposition from the Jews wherever the message of redemption in Christ Jesus was brought. It is unfortunately the same today.

¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and who persecuted us, and *who are not pleasing to God and are opposed to all people,*

Paul specifically mentions what the Jews (religious elite) had done to cause persecution. They first "*killed*" (APOKTEINO means: to kill, outright, to put to death) the Lord Jesus. Remember this famous event:

Matthew 27

21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas."

22 Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified."

23 And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified."

24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."

25 And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

(RSV)

The Jews had also killed the prophets. The Lord God had sent them so that they would stop their evil ways, repent of their sins, and come back to him.

Matthew 23

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, putting to death the prophets, and stoning those who are sent to her! Again and again would I have taken your children to myself as a bird takes her young ones under her wings, and you would not!

(BBE)

Then they "*persecuted*" (EKDIOKO means: to pursue out, persecute) us. Paul knows all about this since he was a persecutor of the followers of the Nazarene before his conversion. He chased them and when they were found, he chained them, jailed them, and even approved of their being stoned to death.

Acts 7

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;

58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

(NKJV)

Paul continues by writing:

v.15 ... and *who are* not pleasing to God and *are* opposed to all people,

These Jews are not "*pleasing*" (ARESKO means: to be agreeable, to please) to God. How many countless people believe that what they do pleases the Lord while this is false? How many wars of religion (even between true believers as in the Reformation) were made in the name of the Lord, while it was truly in their own name that they brought death and destruction? These Jews are "*opposed*" (ENANTIOS means: antagonistic, contrary) to all people. They never seem to stop being against those who are not like them.

¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles in order that they may be saved, so that *they* always fill up their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the end.

The opposition is manifested by "*hindering us*" (KOLUO means: to prevent, forbid, hinder). It seems that they did all they could to bring to a halt the work of God. They should have kept the wise advise of Gamaliel:

Acts 5

34 But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a while.

35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men.

36 For before these days Theudas arose, giving himself out to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

37 After him Judas the Galilean arose in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered.

38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail;

39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"

40 So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

(RSV)

This was the hindrance which Paul wrote about:

¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles in order that they may be saved...

They tried to stop them from "*speaking*" (LALÉO means: expression or speech, to utter) to the "*Gentiles*" (ETHNOS means: a race, a tribe, non-Jewish). The Jews (mostly the religious elite) did not want the Gentiles to be "*saved*" (SOZO means: to save, be delivered, protect). In his letter to the Romans, Paul speaks extensively about the salvation of the Gentiles. Out of the hardness of their hearts, many Jews did not want non Jews to participate in the grace of God and receive redemption. This speaks volumes about their hatred for the Gentiles.

v.16 ...so that *they* always fill up their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the end.

The consequence of their opposition not only to the gospel of Jesus Christ but directly to God himself who offered his beloved Son so that ALL of mankind could become righteous if they truly repent is the following. They always "*fill up*" (ANAPLEROO

means: to complete, fulfill, fill up) their sins. What Paul means is that they are constantly adding and adding sin upon sin. Can you imagine what their judgment will be like on the last day? Not only for them but for ALL who oppose the spreading of the gospel.

v.16 But wrath has come upon them to the end.

The "*wrath*" (ORGE means: punishment, anger, vengeance) of God is upon them, for this is no laughing matter. It is upon them to "*the end*" (PHTHANO means: to have arrived at, attain). The Greek phrase says "has come upon them at last". May all true believers pray and evangelize not only the Gentiles but also the Jews, for they are beloved by God.

08 - Paul's love for the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

¹⁷ But *when* we were made orphans by separation from you, brothers, for *a short time* (in face, not in heart), *we were* even more eager with great desire to see your face, ¹⁸ because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, *on more than one occasion*^[1]—and Satan hindered us. ¹⁹ For who *is* our hope or joy or crown of boasting? *Is it* not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

In our last section, we saw how the church in Thessalonica imitated the churches in Judea by suffering because they had become followers of Jesus. In this section, we will see the love that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had for the brethren.

¹⁷ But *when* we were made orphans by separation from you, brothers, for *a short time* (in face, not in heart), *we were* even more eager with great desire to see your face,

Because of the uproar in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas had to quickly leave (Acts 17:10) Thessalonica and went to Berea. Being separated from those who were new in the faith felt like a tearing-apart for Paul. He desired to stay with them, but his life was in great danger. He felt as though he had become an orphan because he had lived a "*separation*" (APORPHANIZO means: to take, separate) from them. He had no time to say goodbye because he had to run for his life. Paul thought that this would have been for a "*short*" (HORA means: short, instant) "*time*" (KAIROS means: an occasion, opportunity). In Greek, it literally means "the time of an hour". It is evident that Paul thought that his going away would be short-lived, but it was not.

He tells his beloved Thessalonians that although he was no longer present with them in "*face*" (PROSOPON means: countenance, presence, outward appearance), which means in person, he was with them in "*heart*" (KARDIA means: the heart, fig: the thoughts and emotions of the mind). They were always on his mind.

v.17 ... *we were* even more eager with great desire to see your face,

Since Paul was no longer with them and loved them dearly, he (as well as his associates) were "*more eager*" (PERISSOTEROS means: exceedingly, much more) and with a "*great*" (POLUS means: much, many, great) "*desire*" (EPITHUMIA means: a longing, desire, lust after) to see them. It seems that this unexpected separation caused a great deal of emotional heartache for Paul.

¹⁸ because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, *on more than one occasion*—and Satan hindered us.

Paul adds that they dearly "*wanted*" (THELESIS means: determination, option, will) to come to them. If they wanted to come and see the Thessalonians, why didn't they? On "*more than one occasion*," the Greek means: "both once and twice," they desired to visit them, but something happened. There was a "*hindrance*" (EGKOPTO means: to cut into, detain, hinder). Something or someone was able to stop them from doing their heart's desire. That someone is "*Satan*" (SATANAS means: the accuser, the devil). We don't know how this is accomplished, but we do know that Satan can intervene in the lives of true believers to prevent them from glorifying the Lord God.

¹⁹ For who *is* our hope or joy or crown of boasting? *Is it* not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming?

As a parent we can be very proud of the accomplishments of our children, and so was Paul (and his associates) with his spiritual children. He calls them our "*hope*" (ELPIS means: to anticipate, usually with pleasure). This reminds me of the satisfaction that the apostle John had with Christians he knew:

3 John 1

3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you,
just as you walk in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

(NKJV)

Then Paul describes them as their "joy" (CHARA means: cheerfulness, calm delight, joy). This is not the only congregation in which Paul rejoiced. We see the same thing with the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 7

13 Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all.

(RSV)

The third aspect concerning the Thessalonians was that they were a "crown" (STEPHANOS means: a badge of royalty, a crown) for them. They were proud of them, as one is proud of a crown one wears. Paul writes that they were able to "boast" (KAUCHESIS means: to boast, rejoice, glorying) concerning them. I wonder if our church leaders can boast of our walk in the Lord?

v.19 ... *Is it* not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming?

The boasting that Paul writes about is unique. This great rejoicing will be in the "presence" (EMPROSTHEN means: in front of, before) of Jesus Christ. But when will this happen? When will Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy be able to be exceedingly joyful before the Lord Jesus? Paul writes "at his coming" (PAROUSIA means: advent, coming, presence). As Paul writes, I believe that not only people like Paul, but all those who worked with people, brought them to Christ, taught and encouraged them, will also rejoice over them when Christ comes back.

²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

Paul says that the Thessalonians, their brothers and sisters in Christ, were their "glory" (DOXA means: glory, praise) and their "joy" (CHARA means: cheerfulness, calm delight, joy). What a contrast with many church leaders today. Regrettably, many rejoice in their church programs, attendance, and social status instead of rejoicing over the people they are shepherding.

09 - Paul sent Timothy to replace him

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

¹Therefore *when we* could bear *it* no longer, we determined to be left behind in Athens alone, ²and we sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker for God in the gospel of Christ, in order to strengthen and to encourage you about your faith, ³*so that* no one would be shaken by these afflictions. For *you* yourselves know that we are appointed for this, ⁴for indeed when we were with you we told you beforehand that we were about to be afflicted, just as indeed it happened, and you know. ⁵Because of this, I also, *when I* could endure *it* no longer, sent in order to know your faith, lest somehow the tempter tempted you and our labor should be in vain.

(LEB)

In our last section, we saw how Paul and his co-worker Silas missed the believers at Thessalonica. In this section, we will see what Paul did to remedy the situation.

¹Therefore *when we* could bear *it* no longer, we determined to be left behind in Athens alone,

It came to a point where Paul "*could bear it no longer*" (STEGO means: to cover with silence, endure patiently, bear, suffer). They wondered how the Thessalonians were doing after all they had run for their lives and a riot had broken out against the believers. This shows how much Paul cared for them. I wonder if we are as anxious about others and their welfare? So what did they do? They took action and "*determined*" (EUDOKEO means: to think well of, approve, be well pleased) to be "*left behind*" (KATALEIPO means: to leave down, behind, abandon) in Athens. The plan was to part ways, some staying in Athens, and one would go back to see what happened.

²and we sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker for God in the gospel of Christ, in order to strengthen and to encourage you about your faith,

Timothy was "*sent*" (PEMPO means: to dispatch, errand, send) back. Paul calls him a "*brother*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literal or figurative). As we know, Timothy was

not Paul's natural brother but his brother in the faith. He is also called a "*fellow worker*" (DIAKONOS means: an attendant, a waiter, a servant). Note that Paul does not give Timothy pompous titles, as we sometimes see today. He was a servant of God, plain and simple. May we not chase after recognition and titles that glorify us instead of the Lord God. Timothy served the Lord in the "*gospel*" (EUAGGELION means: a good message, the gospel). That was his mission field, to bring the gospel to those who had not heard it. Paul calls it the gospel of "*Christ*" (CHRISTOS means: anointed, the Messiah). Timothy did not bring a gospel of prosperity, nor of health, nor of "name it and claim it". He brought the gospel of Christ and how to escape the judgment to come through repentance in Christ.

v.2 ... in order to strengthen and to encourage you about your faith,

This gospel of Christ would have two effects on the believers in Thessalonica. The first would be in order to "*strengthen*" (STERIZO means: to confirm, fix, establish), which gives the idea of building-up and fortifying them. Make them stronger in the Lord. The second was to "*encourage*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near, invite, exhort) them about their "*faith*" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, moral conviction). This is what ministry is all about: to strengthen and encourage believers in the faith. May all who are in ministry remember this precious advice.

³ *so that* no one would be shaken by these afflictions. For *you* yourselves know that we are appointed for this,

Afflictions (THLIBO means: afflict, suffer, trouble) is what these believers were facing, and Paul sent Timothy to come to their side to strengthen and encourage them. Even if our present day afflictions vary depending on our individual situation, may we remember that it is the word of God that can strengthen us and keep us from being "*shaken*" (SAINO means: to shake, move, be disturbed). This also tells me that we need people who bring these encouraging words from the Lord to those who need them. May we never be afraid to encourage someone who we see as being oppressed.

v.3 ...For *you* yourselves know that we are appointed for this,

Paul states that they were "*appointed*" (KEIMAI means: to be appointed, set, or laid up) for this. In other words, encouraging believers was part of their ministry and they were called to look after the brethren. I'd like to remind everyone that taking care of and looking after those in the faith is something we're ALL called to do! Here are a few examples of this:

Rom. 12

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;
(NKJV)

Rom. 15

14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.
(NKJV)

Paul continues to speak about how he came about to send Timothy to see them.

⁴ for indeed when we were with you we told you beforehand that we were about to be afflicted, just as indeed it happened, and you know.

Paul did not only tell the Thessalonians the happy and wonderful things that awaited them as they walked with the Lord. He was also quite open to expressing the other side, the difficult side of being a follower of Christ. So he told them "*beforehand*" (PROLEGO means: to say beforehand, predict) that they were about to be "*afflicted*" (THLIBO means: afflicted, suffer, trouble). Not only was Paul going to be afflicted, but so did the Thessalonian believers. It is the same today, Christians are being persecuted for their faith in one way or another across the globe!

⁵ Because of this, I also, *when I* could endure *it* no longer, sent in order to know your faith, lest somehow the tempter tempted you and our labor should be in vain.

Knowing the afflictions they would face and no longer being able to "*endure*" (STEGO means: to cover with silence, endure patiently), not knowing how they were doing, Paul sent Timothy (v.1) to see them. Paul, wanted to know if their trials had broken

their faith. Had they persevered in the Lord, or did they abandon their walk? He wondered if the "tempter," and we know that it is Satan who tempts, as he did in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, "*tempted*" (PEIRAZO means: to test, to tempt) them. Paul wondered if all their "*labor*" (KOPOS means: toil, labor, weariness) would be in "*vain*" (KENOS means: empty, vain). Had the church in Thessalonica had its life snuffed out? This reminds me of what Paul later wrote to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

(RSV)

10 - Timothy and the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

⁶ But now, *because* Timothy has come to us from you and has brought good news to us of your faith and love, and that *you always think kindly of us*, desiring to see us just as also we *desire to see you*, ⁷ because of this, brothers, we have been comforted because of you in all our distress and affliction through your faith, ⁸ because now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord. ⁹ For what thanks can we repay to God concerning you, because of all the joy *with* which we rejoice because of you before our God, ¹⁰ night and day praying beyond all measure that *we* may see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

(LEB)

In our last section we saw that the apostle Paul feared for the young believers. Because of this he sent Timothy to encourage them. In this section we have an account of the report of Timothy when he came back to see Paul.

⁶ But now, *because* Timothy has come to us from you and has brought good news to us of your faith and love, and that *you always think kindly of us*, desiring to see us just as also we *desire to see you*,

In our first verse we see how joyful Paul had become when Timothy came back and brought "*good news*" (EUAGGELIZO means: to announce good news). This good news was fourfold. First Timothy had told them of their "*faith*" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, moral conviction). Paul must have been relieved since this was the main reason why he had sent Timothy to Thessalonica. Through all of their tribulations they stood strong in the Lord. What a witness for all true believers! The second had to do with their "*love*" (AGAPE means: affection, benevolence, charity). I can only guess that Paul is referring to the love they had for one another and how they lived out this love in the difficult days they were living. This is true spiritual love, a love that does not depend on the situation you are placed in to be manifested. The third is that the Thessalonians "*always think kindly*" (PANTOTE MNEIA AGATHOS means: at all times recollecting with affection) of them. We can see that Paul and Silas had a beneficial

impact when they were with the new believers. May we also work on having a positive spiritual impact on those around us. Finally we see that they were "*desiring*" (EPIPOTHEO means: to crave, desire, long) to see them. Great news for Paul to hear - all was well. And so he writes that "we also desire to see you". This feeling of love was mutual.

⁷ because of this, brothers, we have been comforted because of you in all our distress and affliction through your faith,

In this verse we see some of the results of the good news that Paul received from Timothy. "Because of this" refers to the news he had received. Because of the good news they had been "*comforted*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near). Their hearts were at peace and they rejoiced that the Lord had protected them from abandoning their faith. Paul writes that they were in "*distress*" (ANAGKE means: constraint, distress) and in "*affliction*" (THLIPSIS means: pressure, afflicted, anguish). As you can see Paul and his associates were not super-Christians who never had any fears or were never troubled in life. They were just like you and me made of flesh and blood and sometimes they were overwhelmed by difficult circumstances. Paul mentions that it was their "*faith*" (PISITS means: persuasion, credence, moral conviction) in Christ that enabled them to persevere in the Lord.

⁸ because now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord.

Paul writes that they can now "*live*" (ZAO means: to live, life-time). Paul is saying that now they can fully live or that they are fully alive because they "*stand firm*" (STEKO means: to be stationary, to persevere) in the Lord. This manifests the impact of someone's life upon another. May we always remember that what we do or say has an impact on fellow believers. Sometimes for the good, as we see here, and sometimes the opposite as we see in Paul's letters to the Corinthians.

⁹ For what thanks can we repay to God concerning you, because of all the joy *with* which we rejoice because of you before our God,

In this verse we see that Paul gives all the glory to the Lord God. What "*thanks*" (EUCCHARISTIA means: gratitude, grateful language) can we "*repay*" (ANTAPODIDOMI

means: recompense, render, repay) to God? He thanks God for them and not the Thessalonians for their steadfastness. We often thank the people who helps us in our pilgrimage but do we remember to thank the Lord that they have helped us? Paul thanks the Lord for all the "joy" (CHARA means: cheerfulness, calm delight) they have because of the believers. We often place God in the middle of our distress and afflictions, do we do the same when we are rejoicing?

¹⁰ night and day praying beyond all measure that we may see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

Paul reveals their desire, remember that he is not among them when he writes this letter. Night and day they were "*praying*" (DEOMAI means: to beg, petition, beseech). This was a fervent prayer since Paul writes that it was "*beyond all measure*" (PERISSOS means: superabundant, beyond measure). We see that it was a very deep desire for them to see your "*face*" (PROSGPON means: the front, a face). In his last letter Paul echoes this thought when he wrote to Timothy:

2 Timothy 1

3 I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day,
(NKJV)

Paul wanted to see them again to "*complete*" (KATARTIZO means: to complete thoroughly) what is "*lacking*" (HUSTEREMA means: a deficit, lacking, penury) in your faith. The Thessalonians were not complete in the Lord and needed further teaching. None of us ever arrive at a place where we no longer need some advice or wisdom from the Lord God. May we allow ourselves to be taught by those who, like Paul, can do this.

11 - Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

¹¹ Now *may* our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you, ¹² and *may* the Lord *cause* you to increase and to abound in love for one another and for all, just as also we *do* for you, ¹³ so that your hearts may be established blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

(LEB)

If you ever wondered how Paul prayed, this is an example set before you. I would like you to notice that Paul's prayer is not a L-O-N-G one. Some people believe that the longer it is, the better it is. This is not so. The greatest prayer in the Bible is probably what we call "the Our Father":

Matthew 6

9 "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

(NKJV)

It can be said in 25 seconds, but what counts is the honesty and reverence in our prayers, not the length (Mat. 23:14). So let's take a look at Paul's prayer.

¹¹ Now *may* our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you,

He begins by calling upon "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer). Our prayers should always be addressed to God the Father. This is what Jesus taught when his disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. Paul calls God "*Father*" (PATER means: a father, literal or figuratively). What a great privilege it is to

be able to call upon God as our Father, and he is because we have become his adopted children (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6).

1 John 3

1. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
(NKJV)

Let all true children of God never be afraid to come to their heavenly Father for worship, wisdom, and comfort. If we come with a sincere and pure heart, he will receive us. We are even invited to come to him:

Hebrews 4

16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
(RSV)

As Paul continues his prayer, he includes the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord because of what the Father has given him as mentioned in the following verse:

Matthew 28

18 And Jesus came to them and said, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.
(BBE)

Paul asks the Father and the Son to "*direct*" (KATEUTHUNO means: to straighten fully, direct) our "*way*" (HODOS means: a road, a journey) to you. Paul would not dare try to make his way back to the Thessalonians if it were not the will of God. He asks God to bless them and guide them as they would like to journey to see their beloved young believers. May we also be certain that we are in God's will before we move forward in life.

¹² and *may* the Lord *cause* you to increase and to abound in love for one another and for all, just as also we *do* for you,

After praying for guidance, the apostle Paul prays for the Thessalonians. Here we first see that Paul understands that it is the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) that will cause them to increase. He empowers the believers through the Holy Spirit to be able to "*increase*" (PLEONAZO means: to do, to make, to increase) and also "*abound*" (PERISSEUO means: to super abound, be in excess) in "*love*" (AGAPE means: affection, benevolence, love). The focus of his prayer was that the brothers and sisters grow more and more in true spiritual love for one another. No one was to be left out of this love. Each member of the body belongs to the Lord and should be cared for. May we have the courage to understand this and manifest interest, care, and love for each other also. Paul gives himself and his associates as an example of how to love each other.

¹³ so that your hearts may be established blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Here we see why it is so important for the brethren to honestly love each other. By loving each other, their "*hearts*" (KARDIA means: the heart, fig: the thoughts and feelings of the mind) may be "*established*" (STERIZO means: to set fast, to fix, strengthen) as "*blameless*" (AMEMPTOS means: irreproachable, blameless). There is a reproach that the Lord can bring to his children, and that would be to lack love. Remember what Christ told his disciples:

John 13

35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
(NKJV)

By loving our fellow believers in Christ, we will be established and firmly grounded in the Lord. Have you ever thought that the lack of love for certain believers actually hinders your relationship with God? Remember what Jesus said:

Matthew 5

22 But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire.

23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

(RSV)

Paul desires the Thessalonians to love each other so that they will be "blameless in holiness before our God." But he mentions something else, a specific time period.

v.13 ... at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

He desires the Thessalonians to be prepared for the day of the "*coming*" (PAROUSIA means: advent, coming) of our "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus. There is no other Lord but Jesus, and no human can ever take his place, for we are ALL sinners and unrighteous before the Lord (Rom. 3:9-20). Paul is speaking of the return of Jesus with all his "*saints*" (HAGIOS means: sacred, pure, consecrated). In our next chapter, Paul will write on the subject of the second coming.

12 - Walk in holiness

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

¹Finally therefore, brothers, we ask you and appeal to *you* in the Lord Jesus that, just as you have received from us how it is necessary for you to live and to please God, just as indeed you are living, that you progress even more. ² For you know what commands we gave to you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: *that* you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ *that* each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, just as also the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ not to transgress and to exploit his brother in the matter, because the Lord *is* the one who avenges concerning all these *things*, just as also we told you beforehand and testified solemnly. ⁷ For God did not call us to impurity, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore the one who rejects *this is* not rejecting man, but God, *who* also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

(LEB)

In our last section, we have seen the prayer of Paul, especially for the believers in Thessalonica. Here we will see what the Lord expects from all his children.

¹Finally therefore, brothers, we ask you and appeal to *you* in the Lord Jesus that, just as you have received from us how it is necessary for you to live and to please God, just as indeed you are living, that you progress even more.

In this section, Paul brings a charge to the believers he is writing to. May we remember that this charge concerning holiness is valid for all time for all true believers. Therefore, when Paul writes "*therefore*" (LOIPON means: something remaining, besides, henceforth), we can see that he wants to add to what he has already written. This charge is for the "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively). We know that this is a general term for all the believers, men and women. Paul is asking and even "*appeals*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near, comfort, exhortation) to the believers. To manifest the gravity, significance, and seriousness of what he is about to write, he calls upon the name of the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority)

Jesus. The Lord is the reason why believers should pay close attention to what is written.

For the apostle does not bring a new charge to the Thessalonians, for he wrote "*just as*" (KATHOS means: just, inasmuch, according to) you have "*received*" (PARALAMBANO means: to receive near, to associate with). He had already given this commandment when he was with them and now brought to memory what was taught.

v.1 ... just as you have received from us how it is necessary for you to live and to please God, just as indeed you are living, that you progress even more.

Therefore, Paul writes that it is "*necessary*" (DEI means: it is, ought, should, must), indicating that this is not optional in the believer's life. This was necessary "*to live*" (PARIPATEO means: to tread all around, walk at large), meaning in your everyday life and also to be able to "*please*" (ARESKO means: to be agreeable, seek to please) God. In other words, if you want to please God, you absolutely need to live this way. Paul notes that they were indeed living as such. So we can see that they already had it in their hearts to guard their lives before the Lord. This is a thought that all true believers should keep in mind: is my life pleasing to God?

The charge Paul is bringing is that you "*progress*" (PERISSEUO means: to super abound, excel) even "*more*" (MALLON means: more to a greater degree). They should not be satisfied but strive to abound in having a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

² For you know what commands we gave to you through the Lord Jesus.

Before bringing his specific exhortation, Paul speaks about the original source of these commandments. He writes, "*you know*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of). Knowing these commandments, they could not say they did not have any knowledge of them. They knew the "*commands*" (PARAGGELIA means: a mandate, a charge, command) "we gave you". Paul and his associates did a good job with these new believers. They did not waste their time and put off until a later date what needed to be done right away. Far too many wait too long to teach new converts what is expected of them, and this is a fault on their part. Paul did not waste his time and neither should we, for we do not know what the future has in store for us. These commands were

given "through the Lord Jesus." It was in his name that they taught, not their own. Never, ever, ever should we teach, preach, or evangelize in our own name!

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification

This is the opening general statement. He begins by stating that this is the "*will*" (THELEMA means: a determination, choice, desire, will) of God. The authority on which Paul stands is not his own, but that of the Lord God. It certainly adds weight to what he is about to write. Now what God wants is your "*sanctification*" (HAGIASMOS means: purification, holiness). Sanctification can be summarized as being the process that renders the believer more and more Christ-like. If salvation is of the Lord (Jonas 2:9), sanctification is achieved by the cooperation of the believer with the Holy Spirit to bring spiritual renewal in his life.

v.3 ...*that* you abstain from sexual immorality

This is the first aspect of sanctification that is mentioned. Believers need to "*abstain*" (APECHOMAI means: to refrain, to hold oneself off) from "*sexual immorality*" (PORNEIA means: harlotry, fig: idolatry). Sexual immorality comes in many forms (Lev. 18:6-18,22-28; 20:13-16; Deut. 22:22-29; 23:17; 27:21; Rom. 1:26,27; 1 Cor. 5:1-5). Sexual immorality also brings judgment on those who perform it (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5,6; Heb. 13:4; Jude 1:7; Rev. 21:8). As you can see, this is a very serious matter and we should all be warned to stay away from it.

⁴ *that* each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, just as also the Gentiles who do not know God;

This is the second aspect of sanctification that Paul writes about. Notice that Paul writes "*that each of you*" (HEKASTOS means: each or every, any). This includes every single believer. No one has any "right of way" or "special permission" to disregard the will of God concerning sexual matters. Far too often, we hear about "men of God" who find themselves caught in a sexual scandal. We all need to "*possess*" (KTAOMAI means: to get, acquire, obtain) our own "vessel" (SKEUOS means: implement, equipment, vessel). Paul is speaking about being able to control our own bodies and the passions of the flesh. This vessel is to be kept under the rules of "*sanctification*" (HAGIASMOS

means: purification, holiness, consecration) and "*honor*" (TIME means: a value, esteem, dignity, honor). If it is not pure and honorable, this sexual act should not be done. We are to use God's standards and not our own or mankind's.

⁵ not in lustful passion, just as also the Gentiles who do not know God;

Paul describes what sanctification and honor ARE NOT. They are NOT a "lustful" (PATHOS means: a depraved or vile passion, inordinate affection) passion. Therefore it must be according to the will of God for his child. Paul writes that it is the "*Gentiles*" (ETHNOS means: a race, a tribe, a non-Jew) who do such things because they do not "*know*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of) the Lord God. The Lord had warned his people not to follow the ways of the flesh:

Numbers 15

39 So that, looking on these ornaments, you may keep in mind the orders of the Lord and do them; and not be guided by the desires of your hearts and eyes, through which you have been untrue to me:

40 And that you may keep in mind all my orders and do them and be holy to your God.

41 I am the Lord your God, who took you out of the land of Egypt, so that I might be your God: I am the Lord your God.

(BBE)

Believers are not to follow the ways of the world concerning sexual activities but the holy standards given by God to his people.

⁶ not to transgress and to exploit his brother in the matter, because the Lord *is* the one who avenges concerning all these *things*, just as also we told you beforehand and testified solemnly.

This is the third aspect of sanctification brought by Paul, and this time it deals with brotherly relationships. We are ordered not to "*transgress*" (HUPERBAINO means: to transcend, go beyond) and also not to "exploit" (PLEONEKTEO means: to be covetous, to take advantage) your "*brother*" (ADELPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively) in the "*matter*" (PRAGMA means: a deed, business matter, work). Paul is speaking concerning exploiting a brother or sister in the Lord. There are people who are more

"simple" or "naive" and can easily be taken advantage of. We see that Paul and his associates applied this aspect of sanctification to their own lives. To the Corinthian church, he writes the following:

2 Corinthians 12

17 Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you?

18 I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you?

Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?

(RSV)

Paul will now give one of the reasons why no one should take advantage of a fellow believer in Christ.

v.6 ...because the Lord *is* the one who avenges concerning all these *things*, just as also we told you beforehand and testified solemnly.

He reminds them of the gravity of such a sin and warns them that the "Lord" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) will not forget what they have done. He is the one who "avenges" (EKDIKOS means: carrying justice out, punisher) concerning all these things.

Romans 12

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written,

"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

(NKJV)

Hebrews 10

30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people."

(NKJV)

Paul writes not to take advantage of a brother or sister because God will take revenge (bring justice) on the person who has mistreated a brother or sister. This thought should stop everyone from taking advantage of another: - God will judge you. Paul reminds the believers that they had told them "*beforehand*" (PROEPO means: to say

already, to predict) about this and "*testified*" (DIAMARTUROMAI means: to attest, protest, witness) solemnly about it. The Holy Scriptures continue to testify to us never to take advantage of those who are in the faith. For that matter, we should never take advantage of anyone, whoever they are!

⁷ For God did not call us to impurity, but in holiness.

This is Paul's general conclusion concerning the believer's walk in holiness. The children of God have not been "*called*" (KALEO means: to call, bid, call forth) to "*impurity*" (AKATHARSIA means: impurity, lustful living, immoral). This is NOT our calling. The Lord God called his people to be holy in the Old Testament:

Lev. 11

45 'For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.
(NKJV)

He also calls his people to be holy in the New Testament:

1Peter 1

16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."
(NKJV)

Your sanctification matters a lot to the Lord. Being able to master the illegitimate desires of the flesh with the help of the Holy Spirit is what is expected of us. When we fail to do so, we need to confess, repent, and ask for forgiveness. It will be given if you have a sincere heart.

1 John 1

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are false to ourselves and there is nothing true in us.

9 If we say openly that we have done wrong, he is upright and true to his word, giving us forgiveness of sins and making us clean from all evil.

10 If we say that we have no sin, we make him false and his word is not in us.

(BBE)

In our final verse we see that the apostle Paul gives a stern warning.

⁸Therefore the one who rejects *this* is not rejecting man, but God, *who* also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

He begins with the word "*therefore*" (TOIGAROUN means: truly, therefore, consequently). After reading this section and understanding what is written Paul says that the one who "*rejects*" (ATHETEO means: to set aside, cast off, reject) what is written is not "rejecting" (ATHETEO means: to set aside, cast off, reject) a "*man*" (ANTHROPOS means: man faced, a human being) but is rejecting "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer). This is not just a silly human commandment that we can just reject! This is from God himself-our sanctification is what he desires from us. To be able to grow in the Lord and become more Christ-like, it is written that God "*gives*" (DIDOMI means: to give, bestow, grant) his Holy Spirit to the believer. Therefore, we have no excuse for living in such a way. We have received the commandment and also the means (the Holy Spirit) to be able to follow it. May we remember how important our sanctification is to the Lord.

13 - *Walk in love and be diligent*

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

⁹ But concerning brotherly love, I do not have need to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another, ¹⁰ for indeed you are practicing it toward all the brothers in all of Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to progress even more, ¹¹ and to aspire to live a quiet life, and to attend to *your own business*, and to work with your hands, just as we commanded you, ¹² so that you may live decently toward those outside, and may have need of nothing.

(LEB)

In our last section, we saw the importance of a life that is sanctified. Paul reminded the believers that the Lord God expects them to live a life that is different from that of unbelievers: a life of holiness by having control over their bodies.

⁹ But concerning brotherly love, I do not have need to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another,

There is one aspect of this church that differs from other churches, and it is their "*brotherly love*" (PHILADELPHIA means: a fraternal affection). Not that other believers did not love each other, but this congregation stands out as a model for all of us. Their reputation for caring and compassionate concern for one another was well known. Paul writes: I do not have the "*need*" (CHREIA means: necessary, need, use) to "*write*" (GRAPHO means: to grace, to write, describe). There was no need for Paul to teach the Thessalonians how they ought to love one another. There was no need for them to be reminded of the importance of loving one another for the Savior Jesus had taught:

John 13

34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

(NKJV)

Did you know that Jesus repeated three times the fact that his disciples needed to love one another (John 13:34; 15:12; 15:17)? Did you also know that John repeated this commandment six times in his epistles (1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11,12 and 2 John 1:5). The apostle Paul also mentions this in Romans 13:8 as well as Peter in 1 Peter 1:22. It is repeated twelve times in the New Testament that believers ought to love one another. May we be impressed by the continuous echoing of this commandment and begin to truly live a life of love.

v.9 ... for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another,

One may wonder: "How could they love each other so much?" I believe Paul gives us the answer. He writes that they were "taught" (THEODIDAKTOS means: taught of God) by God. It was the Lord God who, through the Holy Spirit, changed the hearts of these young believers and poured out His love on them. Humanly speaking, we are very limited in our capacity to love, so this communal love is not of human descent; it comes from above. The same Holy Spirit lives in each and every true believer and also empowers us to love our brothers and sisters. It is certainly not God who refrains us from loving but our own self! If you do not love, then you are sinning against the Lord, and the Lord's hand stands against you! The following verses should make us reflect on our capacity to love or not.

1 John 3

10 In this way it is clear who are the children of God and who are the children of the Evil One; anyone who does not do righteousness or who has no love for his brother, is not a child of God.

(BBE)

1 John 3

14 We are conscious that we have come out of death into life because of our love for the brothers. He who has no love is still in death.

(BBE)

1 John 4

8 He who has no love has no knowledge of God, because God is love.

(BBE)

1 John 4

20 If a man says, I have love for God, and has hate for his brother, his words are false: for how is the man who has no love for his brother whom he has seen, able to have love for God whom he has not seen? (BBE)

May I encourage all of God's children to place themselves before the Lord and ask him to reveal to them if they lack love.

¹⁰ for indeed you are practicing it toward all the brothers in all of Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to progress even more,

Here we see that the notion of love in one's life was not a subject matter to study, analyze, and investigate. The actually "*practicing it*" (POIEO means: to make or do, abide). Loving each other was not only in their minds, but mostly in their hearts. Please note that Paul writes that they loved "*all*" (HOLOS means: whole, all, complete) the "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively). Not a select few, closer friends or family members. Not only the ones close to your age or of the same ethnicity, but ALL the members of the Body of Christ. Paul even says that they loved everyone in Macedonia, not just those in their own congregation. Their love overflowed to anyone who was also a believer in Christ. This church was overflowing with love.

v.10 ... But we urge you, brothers, to progress even more,

This phrase teaches us that we can never become perfect in our love. That we never reach the point where we no longer have to learn how to love. There should be no limit to our love. Paul "*urges*" (PARAKALEO means: exhort, entreat, teach) the brothers to "*progress*" (MALLON means: more, better, much) even more. Since love for one another is the centre of our Christian testimony, it should not only be present in our lives but grow as time passes.

¹¹ and to aspire to live a quiet life, and to attend to *your own business*, and to work with your hands, just as we commanded you,

In this verse, Paul adds three more goals for them to achieve. The first is to "*aspire*" (PHILOTIMEOMAI means: to labor, strive, study) to live a "*quiet*" (HESUCHAZO means: to keep still, rest, be quiet) life. What a contrast to our current circumstances! We are always pressed to do more, be more, and never miss a thing— to be always on the go. Most of our lives are far from being restful and calm. Some of us may need to re-think our lives and the priorities we hold. The second goal is to "*attend*" (PRASSO means: to practice, perform repeatedly) "*your own business*". The Greek text reads, "your own things." In other words, we are not to be busybodies and to put our noses into other people's businesses! We have our own lives to attend to, and we should take care of our families. The third goal is to work with your "*hands*" (CHEIR means: a hand, fig: power). One should not be lazy in life. The book of Proverbs has fourteen verses on the subject of laziness. None of them describe laziness as a good thing, quite the opposite. Here is an example of one of them.

Prov. 20

4 The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing.
(NKJV)

Paul writes: just as we "*commanded*" (PARAGGELLO means: a message, a charge) you. These three items to live by were not just suggestions that they could agree with or not or set aside if they wanted to. These were commandments that they had to live by. Nothing has changed for the current believers. We also need to live a quiet life, mind our own business, and not be lazy people.

¹²so that you may live decently toward those outside, and may have need of nothing.

Paul concludes with the reason he tells the Thessalonians to live in such a way, and it is two-fold. The first reason is because of living "*decently*" (EUSCHEMONOS means: decently, honestly, in a fitting manner) towards those outside. He is speaking about our testimony towards the unbelievers. What would they think if we were lazy, busybodies, or living a riled-up lifestyle? What would they think of our Christ? Would they not mock our faith? The second reason is so that we may have "*need of nothing*" (EXO CHREIA means: without want). By working and leading a good life, we should not be in need of

anything. So let us have a good testimony and work with our hands, for this is the will of God for his children.

14 - Walk in hope

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you will not grieve as also the rest, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose *again*, thus also God will bring those who have fallen asleep through Jesus together with him. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who remain until the Lord's coming, will not possibly precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who remain, will be snatched away at the same time together with them in the clouds for a meeting with the Lord in the air, and thus we will be together with the Lord always. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

(LEB)

This is the first time Paul will tackle a theological subject. If we understand the book of Acts correctly, Paul did not stay with the Thessalonians very long. Because of this, he was not able to teach extensively about all there is to know. This left these believers wondering exactly what would happen after a believer dies. The teachings of this section have brought much comfort to many.

¹³ Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you will not grieve as also the rest, who have no hope.

Paul writes, we "*do not want*" (THELO means: to determine, choose, prefer) you to be "*ignorant*" (AGNOEO means: not to know, not to understand). It was a priority for Paul to know that the Thessalonians knew about the following subject. Unlike some religions we hear about that have kept their followers in the dark about the Sacred Book, even saying that if they read it they will become insane, Paul welcomes knowledge among the believers. Remember the last words of Jesus in Matthew:

Matthew 28

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

(NKJV)

This is what Paul will do, he will teach the believers what all of God's children need to know.

v.13 ... concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you will not grieve as also the rest, who have no hope.

Here we see the subject matter and it is about those who have "*fallen asleep*" (KOIMAO means: to put to sleep, Fig. dead). In other words, what happens to a believer when his body dies? Where does he go, what happens to him? There are so many false teachings concerning this that it is very important to know what will be taught so that you will not be misled. Paul says that he is speaking concerning this so that you will "*not grieve*" (LUPEO means: to distress, to be sad, to grieve). He does not want the brethren to be like the "*rest*" (LOIPOY means: remaining ones, rest, remnant). The "*rest*" are the ones who have "*no hope*" (ELPIS means: to anticipate, usually with pleasure, expectation, hope). Paul is speaking about the non-believers. Do not be like the non-believers who have no hope, and he explains why.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose *again*, thus also God will bring those who have fallen asleep through Jesus together with him.

He begins with the foundation of the Christian faith. We "*believe*" (PISTEUO means: to have faith, entrust, believe) that Christ has "*died*" (APOTHNESKO means: to die off, be dead, be slain) and "*rose again*" (ANISTEMI means: to stand up, arise, rise up). Certain verses confirm the death and resurrection of Christ (Mark 16:9; Acts 3:14,15; 4:2; Rom. 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:4; 2 Cor. 5:15). Paul points to the death and resurrection of Jesus and confirms that God "*will bring*" (AGO means: to lead, bring forth) those who have "*fallen asleep*" (KOIMAO means: to put to sleep, fig. dead). Not everyone that dies, but only

those who have fallen asleep through Jesus, who is the Messiah. They will be united with Christ (together with him). In other words, since the Father raised Jesus from the grave, he will do the same thing with you, so that all true believers will be with God the Son.

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who remain until the Lord's coming, will not possibly precede those who have fallen asleep.

Paul brings another assurance concerning those who have passed away. Note that Paul is not speaking from his own mind but by the "word" (LOGOS means: something said, speech, talk) of the "Lord" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority). Because these are the words of the Lord, they are a solid foundation to place our confidence on. Here is his second statement concerning those who are "sleeping in the Lord." Paul says that those who are "alive" (ZAO means: to live, lifetime), those who "remain" (PERILEIPO means: survive, remain) until the Lord's "coming" (PAROUSIA means: being near, advent, coming). Paul introduces the assurance that Jesus, who was raised from the dead and ascended into the heavens where he is now seated at the right hand of the Father (Col. 3:1) will come back. He speaks of the Lord's coming. When the Lord comes back, the living will not "precede" (PHTHANO means: precede, come) those who have fallen "asleep" (KOIMAO means: to put to sleep, slumber). The dead in Christ will not be forgotten. At the second coming of Christ, they will be with him before the believers who are alive.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Paul continues to explain what will happen at that moment. First, the Lord himself will "descend" (KATABAINO means: to descend, fall down) from "heaven" (OURANOS means: the sky, heaven). He will descend from heaven because that is where he is. Second, a "shout" (KELEUMA means: a cry of incitement, a shout) will be heard around the world. The "voice" (PHONE means: a tone, noise, sound, voice) of an "archangel" (ARCHAGGELOS means: a chief angel) will pierce the sky, followed by the "trumpet of God". This will be the call to assemble with the beloved Son. The "dead in Christ," which refers to those who have been born again and have fallen asleep (died) in the Lord, will "rise" (ANISTEMI means: to stand up, arise, lift up) first. But what will happen to those who are alive?

¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who remain, will be snatched away at the same time together with them in the clouds for a meeting with the Lord in the air, and thus we will be together with the Lord always.

Here Paul speaks about those who are living on earth, his true followers. They will be "*snatched away*" (HARPAZO means: to pluck, pull, take by force). This is what we call the rapture. Christ will come and those who belong to him will assemble with the resurrected dead in the "clouds" (NEPHELE means: cloudiness, a cloud). There, in the clouds, the believers who were asleep and the believers who were alive on earth will have a "*meeting*" (APANTESIS means: a friendly encounter) with the Lord. Once this happens, will there ever be another separation between disciples of Christ? Will they stay united - yes! because they will be with the Lord "*always*" (PANTOTE means: at all times, evermore). Forever we will be with our Lord and Savior and also with all other true believers. What a marvelous day that will be!

¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

This is the "*comfort*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near, comfort, consolation) that the Thessalonians needed to hear. Their beloved who have passed away are not lost somewhere but will be united with Jesus at the same time as those who are alive. May we also be comforted, knowing that we will also be with those who have placed their faith in Christ, all in the presence of our Lord.

15 - *The day of the Lord*

1 Thessalonians 5:1-5

¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need *of anything* to be written to you, ²for *you* yourselves well know that the day of the Lord is coming in the *same* way as a thief in the night. ³Whenever they say "Peace and security," then sudden destruction will overtake them like the birth pains of *a pregnant woman*, and they will not possibly escape. ⁴But you, brothers, are not in the darkness, so that the day should catch you like a thief, ⁵for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

(LEB)

In this section, the apostle Paul will continue to describe what is called the "day of the Lord." This is the greatest event that believers have been waiting for.

¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need *of anything* to be written to you,

I can only imagine that the believers in Thessalonica were wondering when this event would take place. Will it be in a little while or will it take years to come? The return of Jesus Christ has fascinated many since his departure. Here are some examples of false predictions of the return of Christ.

- William Miller dated his return on April 28th 1843, when it failed, he changed the date to May 21, 1844.

- Jones Wendell dated his return to 1873.

- In 1901, the Catholic Apostolic Church dated his return before the death of their 12 founding members.

- Many believed that Jesus would return in the year 2000. Ed Dobson, Timothy Dwight the IV (President of Yale University), Edgar Case (American mystic), Isaac Newton (physicist and mathematician), and others were among them.

- James Harmston, the leader of the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days) believed he would return on April 6, 2001.

The list of false prophets goes on and on; they were all declared to be liars! I'd like to remind everyone that the Bible states that no one knows exactly when the Son of God will return.

Matthew 24

35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

(NKJV)

Acts 1

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

(NKJV)

Let us come back to our text and the return of Jesus. Paul writes about the "*times*" (CHRONOS means: a space of time) and the "*seasons*" (KAIROS means: an occasion, due season, opportunity). When, is the big question! When will Jesus come back? When will he reign and when will his kingdom come?

v.1 ... brothers, you have no need *of anything* to be written to you,

Paul continues to call them "brothers" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively) which is a sign of acceptance and unity in the Lord. There was "*no need*" (CHREIA means: necessity, want, need) for anything to be "*written*" (GRAPHO means:

to grave, to write, to describe) for you. For a simple reason, Paul did not see the necessity to write about the time of the return of Jesus.

² for *you* yourselves well know that the day of the Lord is coming in the *same* way as a thief in the night.

From this verse, we see that they had already been taught concerning his return. Paul writes that they "*well*" (AKRIBOS means: exactly, perfect) "*knew*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of). This subject was not something new as it had already been discussed, probably when Paul was with them. Paul writes about the "*day*" (HEMERA KURIOS means: the time space between dawn and dark) of the "Lord" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority). That specific day when Jesus will come back (which is unknown) is described by the following. It is "*coming*" (ERCHOMAI means: to come or go, come, enter) in the same way as a "*thief*" (KLEPTOS means: a stealer, a thief) in the night. In other words, his coming is not known and it will surprise us. A thief does not announce himself by saying: "I will come to your house next Tuesday at 2:45 in the morning!" The Lord's return will surprise everyone, even his own disciples!

³ Whenever they say "Peace and security," then sudden destruction will overtake them like the birth pains of *a pregnant woman*, and they will not possibly escape.

Paul continues and turns to the Holy Scriptures as the foundation of his teachings. We ALL should have the same spiritual instinct and always trust the Bible as our perfect source of information.

There will come a time when people will say "*peace*" (EIRENE means: peace, quietness, rest) and also "*security*" (ASPHALEIA means: safety, certainty, security). This may be the time period when the Anti-Christ will head a world alliance and bring a period of stability to the world before turning his back and beginning a world-wide persecution of the Jews and Christians, as it is spoken of in Daniel chapter nine. It is during this time that "sudden" (AIPHNIDIOS means: unexpected, sudden, unaware) "*destruction*" (OLETHROS means: to destroy, ruin, punishment) will occur. This sudden destruction will be like the "*birth pains*" (ODIN means: pain, sorrow, travail) of a "pregnant woman". These words in Greek are translated to be "one who has in the belly". Just as the birth pains surprise the mother, so too will the return of Christ surprise all.

v.3 ... and they will not possibly escape.

We know that when Christ will return he will bring judgment along with him.

Revelation 19

11 And the heaven was open; and I saw a white horse, and he who was seated on it was named Certain and True; and he is judging and making war in righteousness.

12 And his eyes are a flame of fire, and crowns are on his head; and he has a name in writing, of which no man has knowledge but himself.

13 And he is clothed in a robe washed with blood: and his name is The Word of God.

14 And the armies which are in heaven went after him on white horses, clothed in delicate linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth comes a sharp sword, with which he overcomes the nations: and he has rule over them with a rod of iron: and he is crushing with his feet the grapes of the strong wrath of God the Ruler of all.

(BBE)

No one will be able to escape, judgment is at hand, and all who do not belong to the Lord will taste the cup of wrath of the Lord God. Christ will establish his kingdom here on earth, which will last a thousand years and then the closing of time will be at hand.

⁴ But you, brothers, are not in the darkness, so that the day should catch you like a thief, ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

We have already seen that the brethren had already been taught these things. That is why Paul could write that they were not in "*darkness*" (SKOTOS means: shadiness, obscurity, darkness). Their minds knew it was not obscure to them that Jesus would come back. Unfortunately, the time is unknown. Since the day of his return would resemble a thief in the night, unknown and surprising, they were to live a certain way. Paul says that they should not be caught by this day! He encourages them to remember three things.

I would like to note that they were "all", I would like to stress that all who have been born again are the body of Christ and no one is unlike the other. By the grace of God, we have all been given Christ's righteousness. The first reminder is that they were all "sons" (HUIOS means: a child, kinship, a son). It may have been preferable to write: you are all children instead of "sons." They were children of "light" (PHOS means: to shine, light, luminous, fire). In Ephesians 5:8, Paul also calls the believers "children of light". Since Jesus is the light of the world, all of those who belong to him are also "light" (Mat. 5:14). The second reminder is that they were "sons" (HUIOS means: a child, kinship, a son) of "day" (HEMERA means: the time space between dawn and dark). Here we see the sharp contrast between darkness and light and also between day and night. The children of God belong to the light and the day.

v.5 ... We are not of the night nor of darkness.

True disciples of Christ are definitely not of the night nor of the darkness. Believers do not walk in darkness, nor do they live in the night. Their lives reflect the light coming from the Lord that shines upon them. They bear the fruit of the Spirit and not of the flesh, as we see in the following verses.

Galatians 5

19 Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness,
20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit,
21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that
those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and
desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

(RSV)

May we remember that we are light and day and walk in the light of the Lord and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit until he comes back.

16 - Walk in the Light

1 Thessalonians 5:6-11

⁶ So then, we must not sleep like the rest, but must be on the alert and be self-controlled. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸ But *because* we are of the day, we must be sober, *by* putting on the breastplate of faith and love and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation, ⁹ because God did not appoint us for wrath, but for the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live at the same time with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up *each other*, just as indeed you are doing.

(LEB)

In our present section, Paul will continue to bring to mind what the Thessalonians have become in the Lord. As with all the other epistles, we find encouragement to walk in a fashion that is worthy of who we have become in Jesus.

⁶ So then, we must not sleep like the rest, but must be on the alert and be self-controlled.

The words "*so then*" (ARA means: drawing a conclusion) are important because they make a link between what has been taught and what should be done. It happens far too many times that a believer will hear a biblical truth, appreciate its spiritual worth, but do nothing to practice it in their life. It is more of an intellectual agreement that does not reach the person's heart. In our last section, Paul wrote that the believers were children of light as well as of day. He begins with "*so then*," reflecting on what they had become. Paul writes that we **MUST NOT** "*sleep*" (KATHEUDO means: to sleep, rest, lie down). He is speaking about slowing down or even stopping to live like children of light and of day. In other words, they must not lose their zeal for the Lord. Remember these words from the Lord Jesus to the church of Laodicea:

Revelation 3

15 "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!

16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

18 Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

19 Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.

(RSV)

The Laodiceans had lost their first love for Jesus and their zeal had been set aside. Paul encourages the Thessalonians not to sleep like the "*rest*" (LOIPOY means: remaining others, remnant, residue). The "*rest*" speaks of people who are not children of light or of the day. True believers are not to imitate unbelievers, as Moses wrote:

Deuteronomy 18

9 "When you come into the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations.

(RSV)

But what are the Thessalonians to do? How are they supposed to live? Paul answers this and writes:

v.6 ... but must be on the alert and be self-controlled.

If the unbelievers normally live a life of debauchery and self-indulgence, the believers, who should not sleep, must be on "*alert*" (GREGOREUO means: to keep awake, be vigilant). Remember the disciples whom Christ had chosen to be with him as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and how they had fallen asleep?

Matthew 26

42 Again, a second time he went away, and said in prayer, O my Father, if this may not go from me without my taking it, let your pleasure be done.

43 And he came again and saw them sleeping, for their eyes were tired.

44 And he went away from them again, and a third time said the same prayer.

(BBE)

The disciples had stopped being alert and gave way to their weariness, and fell asleep. May this never represent our relationship with the Lord! After writing that they need to be alert, Paul continues and writes to be "*self-controlled*" (NEPHO means: to abstain from wine, to be sober). People often lose their "self-control" when they become intoxicated and do or say things they later regret. A true believer in Christ who is alert, keeps his composure, and is in full control of himself.

⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

Paul will speak of others (*like the rest*) who believers should not imitate. We see that he calls them "*those who sleep*" (KATHEUDO means: to sleep, to lie down to rest). He is not speaking of physically sleeping as we do every night. But rather, those who are asleep spiritually. Those who have not come to Christ for their salvation. These are spiritually asleep and are enemies of God.

John 3

36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

(NKJV)

These unbelievers sleep at "*night*" (NUX means: night). They are the children of the night. Again, this does not refer to nighttime, but rather spiritual night or darkness, as the case may be. These unbelievers are spiritually asleep, tucked away in spiritual darkness. The sad truth is that they do not even know it! They are unaware of the grave danger they are facing and certainly do not know of their need for Christ to become their Messiah. Another example of those they were not to imitate are those who get "*drunk*" (METHUSKO means: to be intoxicated, be drunk) and are drunk at "*night*" (NUX means: night). They seem to live for the pleasures of the night, often hidden from plain sight. Now not all of mankind manifest themselves in doing this but all of mankind is spiritually asleep until they come to the cross for salvation. These are the ones who believers should not imitate.

⁸ But *because* we are of the day, we must be sober, *by* putting on the breastplate of faith and love and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation,

In this verse, Paul begins to explain why believers are not to imitate those who live in the night. He writes, "*because*" (ON means: being, have, come), there is a specific reason why we cannot live as they live. We are of the "*day*" (HEMERA means: the time space between dawn and dark). Believers no longer belong to the kingdom of darkness, where spiritual truth is obscured by the cloak of lies.

Colossians 1

13 He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

(RSV)

Paul continues his explanation:

v.8 ... we must be sober, *by* putting on the breastplate of faith and love and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation,

Believers are not to be drunk like the unbelievers but remain "*sober*" (NEPHO means: to abstain from wine, be sober). I believe that Paul's intent is for believers to be sober in life, which deals with much more than just alcohol! So, how were they supposed to live a sober life? First it is by "*putting on*" (ENDUO means: clothe with, put on, slip into) the "*breastplate*" (THORAX means: the chest, a corset) of "*faith*" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, moral conviction). Why faith first? I believe it is because believers are "targets" for their flesh and also for their spiritual enemy. Faith is what will keep the believer from being injured, and falling asleep or even abandoning the narrow path on which the Lord walks. This breastplate also contains "*love*" (AGAPE means: affection, benevolence, charity). Since love is an important part of the believer's character, it must also be protected as well as his faith. The second thing that he has to "put on" is the "*helmet*" (PERIKEPHALAIA means: encirclement of the head). The helmet is there to protect the "*hope*" (ELPIS means: to anticipate with pleasure) of our "*salvation*" (SOTERIA means: defender, salvation). Our salvation is to be protected from the evil one and his domain of darkness. Our hope in life is certainly the return of

Christ and the hope of eternal life with him in his kingdom. I can see that the heart and the heart of the believer need protection, and it is up to us to be spiritually protected with the protection that the Lord gives us.

⁹ because God did not appoint us for wrath, but for the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live at the same time with him.

The apostle Paul gives another reason why believers should not be asleep or imitate those of the night. This one deals with God himself! He "*did not appoint*" (TITHEMI means: to place, ordain, purpose). In other words, God did not ordain his children for "*wrath*" (ORGE means: anger, vengeance, wrath). Unfortunately, there are true believers who are afraid of losing their salvation. Who are taught that if they fail to meet some sort of Godly standard, God will reject them and they will end up in the lake of fire! How unfortunate is that! God does not appoint believers to taste his wrath. The Lord Jesus has tasted his Father's judgment cup for us:

Matthew 26

38 Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

(RSV)

Believers are appointed for the "*obtaining*" (PERIPOIESIS means: acquisition, purchase, obtain) of "*salvation*" (SOTERIA means: deliverance, salvation, safety) through our "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus Christ. This is the gift of God, forgiveness and safety from the coming judgment. All of this is because of the beloved Son of God. Remember Jesus' final words when he said:

John 19

30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

(NKJV)

Paul, continues and speaks of the hope that believers have.

¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live at the same time with him.

Jesus "*died*" (APOTHNESKO means: to die off, be dead, be slain) for us. He died in our place, he was our substitute at the cross. For this, believers must remember whether we are "*awake*" (GREGOREUO means: to keep awake, vigilant) or "*asleep*" (KATHEUODO means: to sleep, to lie down to rest). In this context, Paul is referring to whether we are alive or dead. Please note what Paul says: we will "*live*" (ZAO means: to live, a life-time) at the "*same time*" (HAMA means: at the same time, together, with) with him. All here on earth, or those who are in the afterlife, - ALL will be with the Lord. This is what believers have been appointed to, and that is why we should not fall asleep and lose our first love and zeal for the Lord.

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up *each other*, just as indeed you are doing.

This is what believers should "*encourage*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near, comfort, exhort) one another with and also "*build up*" (OIKODOMEIO means: a house builder, edify, construct) each other. These are the words of encouragement we should give to one another. Yes, we are living in difficult times, but we have been called by God, through Jesus Christ, to be with him for all eternity. Paul ends by saying "*just as*" (KATHOS means: according to, just, inasmuch) indeed you are "*doing*" (POIEO means: to make or do, execute). Paul must have been very proud of this little group of believers in Thessalonica!

17 - *The final exhortations*

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

¹² Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and rule over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them beyond all measure in love, because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the disorderly, console the discouraged, help the sick, be patient toward all *people*. ¹⁵ See to it that no one pays back evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue good toward one another and toward all *people*. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray constantly, ¹⁸ give thanks in everything; for this *is* the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but examine all *things*; hold fast to *what is* good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.
(LEB)

We are coming to the end of the epistle, and Paul has a few short commandments and exhortations that he wants the believers to remember. Remembering how we should act is an important part of our Christian life.

¹² Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and rule over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them beyond all measure in love, because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

The first subject that Paul writes about has to do with church leadership. I can understand this because leaders are often the target of criticism and disagreement with the church leadership can bring churches to the brink of implosion. In verse twelve, Paul mentions three things that leaders should be actively doing within the church membership.

This is a request for the "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively), so this is for every born-again disciple of Christ who was meeting in Thessalonica. He asks them to "*respect*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of) the church leaders, and he gives a partial description of their spiritual duties. First they "*labor*" (KOPIAO means: to feel fatigue, work hard, toil) among you. This gives the idea that laziness in

ministry was not found among them. A church leader should be an example of a busy servant of the Lord. He certainly does not look like the lazy person described in the book of proverbs:

Proverbs 24

30 I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding;

31 And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down.

32 When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction:

33 A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest;

34 So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.

(NKJV)

The second description is that they "*rule over you*" (KURIOS means supreme in authority). These men had authority that was given by God. They have authority, but it should be manifested by serving the brethren and being a model for them. The apostles had difficulty with humility and sought greatness instead. But do you remember what Christ taught them?

Mark 9

33 And they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?"

34 But they were silent; for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest.

35 And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."

(RSV)

A godly Christian leader is not a dictator and does not seek things to be done his way. He is a servant and does as it is written in the Scriptures. Note that Paul writes "in the Lord." This shows that the leaders are themselves under the rule of Jesus Christ. They do his bidding and lead as he wants them to lead. The third description of a godly leader is that they "*admonish*" (NOUTHETEO means: to put in mind, reprove gently) you. They teach, exhort, and encourage people to walk in the ways of the Lord. They

are there when you need wisdom and they reprove you when you walk in darkness. A good leader does not allow you to act in the flesh but shows you the path of the Spirit.

¹³ and to esteem them beyond all measure in love, because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

Believers are told to first respect the leaders, and now Paul says that believers should also "*esteem*" (HEGEOMAI means: to deem, consider) them. Paul describes this esteem as "*beyond all measure*" (PERISSO means: superabundant, exceeding). This gives the idea of greatly respecting and esteeming them. But why should they have such an attitude of respecting and esteeming their leaders? Paul answers that it is because of their "*work*" (ERGON means: to work, toil, labor). They work for YOUR benefit in the Lord, so love, respect, and esteem them.

v.13 ... Be at peace among yourselves.

This phrase could be a continuation of our relationship with our church leaders. We should be at "*peace*" (EIRENEUO means: peaceful, to live in peace) with them. But it could also be in relationship with everybody else in the congregation. One way or another, disciples of Christ should be peace abiding people.

¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the disorderly, console the discouraged, help the sick, be patient toward all *people*.

We have four other commandments in this verse. They are short, simple, and to the point. Paul writes I "*urge you*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near, to comfort, consolation). Paul calls on the Thessalonians to act in a certain way. A way that is worthy of their calling. He does not threaten them but gently points out what ought to be done. Paul begins with "*admonish*" (NOUTHETEO means: to put in mind, caution) the "*disorderly*" (ATAKOS means: unarranged, insubordinate, unruly). This is never easy to do. No one likes to tell others that they are walking in darkness, but it has to be done. This applies not only to the elders, but to all brothers toward one another. May we share God's wisdom with those who lack it. Secondly, Paul writes "*console*" (PARAMUTHEOMAI means: encourage, console, comfort) the "*discouraged*" (OLIGOPSUCHOS means: little-spirited, feeble-minded). There are those who are "simple-minded" or "emotionally unsteady." These beloved brothers and sisters need

our special care and protection. We should be there to hold them up when they are weak. The third commandment is to "*help*" (ANTECHOMAI means: to care for, hold to) the "*sick*" (ASTHENES means: more feeble, without strength). It can speak of those who are physically sick, but it can also refer to those who simply do not have the strength to do what is needed. Believers should take special care of these unfortunate believers. The fourth commandment is to be "*patient*" (MAKROTHUMEO means: to be long spirited, longsuffering) toward ALL people. Again, this is not an easy commandment to live out. There are people, and we don't know why exactly, with whom we can have a lot of patience, but with others it is not the same. We are told to exercise our patience. It does help when we remember how patient the Lord God is with us.

¹⁵ See to it that no one pays back evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue good toward one another and toward all *people*.

Believers are warned that NO ONE "*pays back*" (APODIDOMI means: to give away, deliver, render) "*evil*" (KAKOS means: worthless, harm, wicked) for "*evil*" (KAKOS means: worthless, harm, wicked). This is not the first time that this commandment has been given; we see it in two other verses in the New Testament:

Romans 12

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.
(NKJV)

1 Peter 3

9 Do not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling; but on the contrary bless, for to this you have been called, that you may obtain a blessing.
(RSV)

Our natural reaction to someone who does us wrong is to hit back with as much or more force than what was first given. But the Lord God says not to do so. Jesus is our perfect example of someone who has the right spiritual reaction.

1 Peter 2

22 Who did no evil, and there was no deceit in his mouth:

23 To sharp words he gave no sharp answer; when he was undergoing pain, no angry word came from his lips; but he put himself into the hands of the judge of righteousness:
(BBE)

So, what are believers to do if they do not return evil for evil? Paul gives us the answer:

v.15 ...but always pursue good toward one another and toward all *people*.

Instead of "hitting back," we are told to always (not just from time to time) "*pursue*" (DIOKO means: to pursue, ensue, follow after) "*good*" (AGATHOS means: good, benefit, well) towards one another. In other words, follow what Jesus said:

Matthew 7

12 "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.
(NKJV)

Please note that once more, Paul writes ALL people. Not just a select few, but be good with all the brethren even the ones who are more difficult than the others. If we pursue, then it means that we are pro-active instead of passive. We should be looking to do good to others. Searching for opportunities to encourage them in the Lord. Don't wait for people to ask you for help, offer it before they come to you.

¹⁶ Rejoice always,

Along with John 11:35: "Jesus wept" and also 1 Thes. 5:17 "pray constantly," this is the shortest verse in the Bible. It can sometimes be misunderstood. Does this verse force us to ALWAYS have a happy face with a big grin? Of course not! We are also told the following:

Romans 12

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
(NKJV)

The word "*rejoice*" (CHAIRO means: to be cheerful, calmly happy). Paul writes this thought in two other places, and both are found in the letter to the Philippians (3:1; 4:4). They should rejoice because they have a wonderful Savior who is taking care of them. The rejoicing is in the Lord and not in the circumstances that are before us.

¹⁷ pray constantly

This is another verse that is sometimes misunderstood. Are we to "*pray*" (PROSEUCHOMAI means: to pray to God) "*constantly*" (ADAILEIPTOS means: uninterruptedly). Does this verse say that we should always be in prayer? Of course not! No one can pray indefinitely! This can have different meanings. The first is that believers should have regular periods of time where they pray, either individually or with others. Another thought is that believers are to maintain a "spirit of prayer", ready to pray when an occasion that demands prayer comes up. It may also give the idea of being dependent at all times on God and coming to him in prayer for advice and guidance. Remember what Jesus said about prayer:

Luke 18

1 And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man;

3 and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.'

4 For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man,

5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'"

6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says.

7 And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

(RSV)

The next commandment deal with giving thanks to the Lord.

¹⁸ give thanks in everything; for this *is* the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Believers are told to "*give thanks*" (EUCCHARISTEO means: to be grateful, express gratitude). It is easy to give thanks for the good and wonderful things that happen, but give thanks for "everything"! How can a believer give thanks for everything? One of the reasons that has comforted me when I passed through severe trials (1 Peter 1:6,7) is the following verse:

Romans 8

28 And we are conscious that all things are working together for good to those who have love for God, and have been marked out by his purpose.

(BBE)

I can give thanks to God for something that is happening to me because I know that somehow, in some way, this will work for my good. I often do not understand or can not imagine how this is true, but with faith, this verse secures me in what I am living.

v.18 ... for this *is* the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Giving thanks is not an "option" in Christian living. Do I choose when I give thanks or if this is worthy of giving thanks - no! I give thanks because it is the "*will*" (THELEMA means: a determination, volition) of God for you! This is what God desires of his children: that they be grateful to him throughout their lives. If we just take time to refresh our memories and understand what God has done, we can become righteous before him. - Christ died for us! Then this should suffice for our hearts to overflow with thankfulness.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has been given to each and every child of God. He is there to guide and encourage us, as well as so many other things. The worst thing a believer can do is "quench" (SBENNUMI means: to extinguish, go out) Him. There are things (sins) that we do, and if we do not repent of them, the Holy Spirit is slowly being quenched, as we see in the following verse:

Ephesians 4

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The word "grieve" (LUPEO means: to distress, to cause grief, to affect with sadness, offend) is applied to the third person of the God-head. Our actions and thoughts actually grieve the Holy Spirit, which hinders our relationship with Him.

²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but examine all *things*; hold fast to *what is good*. The Thessalonians were not to "*despise*" (EXOUTHENEO means: contemptible, despise, to make no account of) "*prophecies*" (PROPHETEIA means: prediction, utterance of divine inspiration). The canon of the New Testament had not yet been finished, and the believers did not have the finished bible like we have today. People would speak in the name of the Lord God. It seems that sometimes what people were saying was not accepted by others. Paul writes not to despise what is said but rather to "examine" (DOKIMAZO means: to test, to approve, discern) all of what was being said. After that, he instructs the believers to "hold fast" (KATECHO) means to hold down, retain, or seize) only to what is "good" (KALOS means good, virtuous, or worthy). How could they do this? The believers in Berea knew exactly what to do, and so should we.

Acts 17

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

(RSV)

Believers are told to examine what is being taught, search the Scriptures (Old and New Testament) and only keep what is good, what is from God.

²² Abstain from every form of evil.

This is the last commandment in this section, and it should be understood and applied in every disciple's life. We are told to "*abstain*" (APECHOMAI means: refrain, to hold

oneself off), in other words, have absolutely nothing to do with "every", which gives the idea of every kind of "*form*" (EIDOS means: a view, fashion, appearance) of "*evil*" (PORNEROS means: hateful, evil, malice, bad). In other words, everything that corresponds with the world of darkness, everything that opposes the character of God, believers should not have anything to do with it.

Luke 11

34 Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness.

35 Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.

36 If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

(RSV)

The "eye" personifies the "mind", your thoughts, what seems right or wrong to you. Because of this, when your eye (mind) is sound, when your thoughts align with God's thoughts, you will be full of light, God's light. When believers abstain from every form of evil, we walk in the light, and this pleases the Lord. Remember what Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

Eph 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light
(NKJV)

18 - Last words

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *this*. ²⁵ Brothers, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I adjure you by the Lord, have this letter read aloud to all the brothers. ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.
(LEB)

These are the final words of Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians. He begins and ends with a blessing.

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul calls the Most High the "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer) of "*peace*" (EIRENE means: to join, peace, rest, quietness). He is the God of peace because it is the Lord God who has made peace with us through His beloved Son.

Romans 5

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
(NKJV)

On three other occasions, Paul uses the phrase "*God of peace*." First in Rom. 15:33 where he writes: "Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen." Our God of peace is for every single true believer, not only for the elite or those who seem to be spiritual. Second, in Romans 16:20, "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly." Our God of peace brings to his children total victory over the enemy of their souls. In him, we are victorious! Third in Phil. 4:9 "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."

Our God of peace promises to be present especially with those who put into practice what they have learned and received.

Paul asked the God of peace to "*sanctify*" (HAGIAZO means: to make holy, purify). It gives the idea of being set apart, especially for the Lord. This process of sanctification is to be brought to its fullness as Paul writes "completely" (HOLOTELES means: complete to the end, absolutely perfect). God will not stop perfecting his children half way through. He promises that one day we will be Christ-like.

v.23 ... and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we see that the apostle Paul declares that man is made up of three different parts. The "*spirit*" (PNEUMA means: a current of air, breath, spirit) is what links us with God. The "*soul*" (PSUCHE means: life, mind, you) is what links us with our physical world. Some describe it as our five senses. The "*body*" (SOMA means: the body as a whole) which is our instrument of life. Some believe that man is only made of two parts, linking soul and spirit together. Some believe that the three-part definition is the Greek view and the two-part definition is the Hebrew view of man. All that we really know is that all three or all-two make a person. Paul asks the Lord God to make his children "*complete*" (TEREO means: to guard, hold fast, keep). Our completeness is in the Lord Jesus Christ:

Colossians 2

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

(NKJV)

We are "kept" complete, as we have seen, we are already complete because of Christ. Paul asks that they also be kept "*blameless*" (AMEMPTOS means: faultless, blameless). This probably refers to Paul's desire for the Thessalonians to be kept from the devastation of sin and of falling into darkness. He asks that they continue their walk in the light of the Lord. He also asks that they be in that state until the "*coming*" (PAROUSIA means: being near, coming, presence) of the Lord. In other words, they walk honourably until the return of Jesus Christ.

²⁴The one who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *this*.

Paul reminds the believers that they have been "*called*" (KALEO means: to call aloud) by the Lord God himself to partake in his glorious plan. This reminds me of these unbelievable verses:

Romans 8

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

(NKJV)

Keeping you complete and blameless is possible because the one who called you is "*faithful*" (PISTOS means: trustworthy, faithful, sure). He is not like a man, he does not lie. God will bring to pass what he says he will do. We can fully trust the Living God. Paul is confident that God "*will do this*."

²⁵Brothers, pray for us.

Paul asks the brethren to "*pray*" (PROSEUCHOMAI means: to pray to God) for "us". Paul is including his associates, who also need the prayers of the Thessalonians. Praying is a sacred duty for all believers.

Ps. 32

6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found

(NKJV)

May we also understand the need for praying. We are to come to the throne of God with our supplications (Heb. 4:16). It is there that we will find grace in our time of need.

²⁶Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

This is how they were to "*greet*" (ASPAZOMAI means: to enfold in the arms) fellow believers with a "*holy*" (HAGIOS means: sacred, pure, morally blameless) "*kiss*" (PHILEMA means: a kiss). This kiss is non-sexual in its intent and morally blameless. Certainly not a kiss on the lips, but on the cheeks, as it is still done today in certain circles.

²⁷ I adjure you by the Lord, have this letter read aloud to all the brothers.

Paul writes, I "*adjure*" (HORKIZO means: to solemnly enjoin, put to oath) you by the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority). By doing so, we can see the importance of what he is telling the Thessalonians to do! He tells them to have this "*letter*" (EPISTOLE means: a written message, a letter) "*read*" (ANAGINOSKO means: to know again, to read) "*aloud*". This would be the means of transmitting his thoughts to the brothers and sisters. Unlike today, parchments were not a household commodity! The original of the letter would be kept for the congregation, and often a copy would be written and sent to other congregations.

Colossians 4

16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea.

(RSV)

Paul ends with his blessing upon the Thessalonians.

²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.

The word "*grace*" (CHARIS means: favor, gift, benefit). This grace was from our "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus Christ. His grace was to "*be with you.*" It was to accompany God's children wherever they were. May the same be said for all true believers today.