

## THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

### I. THE INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE (1:1).

#### 1. "Paul."

- (1) It was Greek and Roman usage for the writer of a letter to put his name at the beginning, instead of, as our custom, at the close.
- (2) Thirteen of the epistles of the New Testament begin with "Paul."
- (3) He does not call himself "an apostle." The Thessalonians never questioned his apostleship.
- (4) The name "Paul" means "little."
- (5) Paul had been the means of organizing the church at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-15).
- (6) Silas and Timothy were also present with Paul at Corinth when he wrote this epistle. This is probably about A.D. 49.

#### 2. "And Silvanus."

- (1) This is Silas (Acts 15:22), a Hellenistic Jew and a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). His name means "woodland."
- (2) He was a prophet and a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22,32).
- (3) He accompanied Paul instead of Barnabas on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:37).

#### 3. "And Timotheus."

- (1) Timothy was Paul's own son in the faith (I Tim. 1:2), and he often traveled with him (Acts 16:1-3; 20:4; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; II Tim. 4:21).
- (2) His name means "honoring God." He would receive two letters from Paul.
- (3) He was a young man.
- (4) Silas and Timothy fully endorsed all Paul wrote. They were joint asserters and approvers of this letter.

#### 4. "Unto the church of the Thessalonians."

- (1) The word rendered "church" is the Greek word *ekklesia*. It is composed of the Greek preposition *ek* (out of) and the verb *kaleo* (to call). The term literally means "a called out company."
- (2) This letter is addressed to the "congregation" or "assembly" located in the city of Thessalonica---the entire church, not merely the pastor and deacons.
- (3) This church had officers (I Thess. 5:12-13).

#### 5. "Which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ."

- (1) This restricts the congregation in Thessalonica to truly regenerated people. It distinguishes it from all other political congregations or Jewish congregations in that city.
- (2) People not in spiritual union with the Father and Christ cannot be a church. The church is made up of saved people (Acts 2:47).
- (3) A church is a fellowship with God and Christ.
- (4) Paul puts God the Father and Christ side by side on a basis of equality. Here is proof of the deity of Christ.

#### 6. "Grace be unto you, and peace."

- (1) Paul's epistles all open with this salutation, or an expanded form of the same. It seems to have been the inspired coinage of the apostle himself.
- (2) "May God's grace flow in upon you, and may His peace be in you!"
- (3) This is an expression of Paul's own deep spiritual experience.
- (4) The order of the New Testament is always "grace and peace," never the reverse.

- (5) "Grace is the free and unmerited favor and love of God bestowed upon guilty men in and through Jesus Christ.
- (6) "Peace" is the result of receiving the grace of God, the peaceful well-being produced by the Spirit of grace.
- (7) "Unto to you" marks the writer's desire that both the grace and peace are to be theirs in personal experience.

7. "From God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

- (1) This is where grace and peace have their origin.
- (2) The Father conveys the blessings of grace and peace to His children.
- (3) This is done through the merits of Christ's blood and intercession.

II. THE REASONS FOR HIS THANKSGIVING (1:2-10).

1. He is thankful for the church (v. 2).

- (1) "We"---Paul, Silas, and Timothy, the three missionaries (I Thess. 2:18; 3:1).
- (2) Thanksgiving to God is a great duty and to be performed always. It should be a habit of life.
- (3) All of Paul's letters, with the exception of Galatians, commence with an expression of thanksgiving.
- (4) Thanks is always Godward, and it should never be skipped for a single day.
- (5) "You all"---the whole membership of the church. This was a young church in the bright beauty of its first love.
- (6) "In our prayers" This thanksgiving was a part of their prayers. The church at Thessalonica had a definite place on their prayer list.
- (7) The early missionaries united in preaching the gospel and in praying for those converted by their preaching.

2. He is thankful for their three Christian virtues (v. 3).

- (1) Some attach the words "without ceasing" to the previous clause "making mention of you unceasingly in our prayers." I doubt this is correct.
- (2) Their work of faith (I Cor. 13:13).

- A. Saving faith is manifested by good works (Tit. 2:7,14; 3:1,8,14; Jas. 2:17-26).
- B. Some old versions reads "the work of your faith" or "the works of your faith."
- C. Faith is a working grace, and the cause of all works.
- D. They had the faith of God's elect (Tit. 1:1), an unfeigned faith (II Tim. 1:5).

(3) Their labor of love.

- A. "Love" is *agape*, a divine, self-sacrificing love.
- B. Love produces labor. It is a laborious love.
- C. Faith has its works, and love has its labor.
- D. "Work" refers to what is done and "labor" to the doing of it.
- E. Love to God is expressed in obedience (John 14:15,21,23; I John 5:2-3; II John 6).

(4) Their patience of hope.

- A. "Patience" means enduring even under the greatest trial and suffering.
- B. "Hope" has to do with the unseen (Rom. 8:24) and future (Rom. 8:25).
- C. "In our Lord Jesus Christ" means either the hope of Christ's second coming (I Tim. 1:1; Titus 2:13) that faith, love, and hope have Christ as their object. All centers in Christ and cannot exist without Christ.

- (5) "In the sight of God"---in the very presence of God. Faith, love, and hope must be maintained in the consciousness of His presence.

3. He is thankful for their election (v. 4).

- (1) He believed his readers were God's elect. The doctrine of election is taught in the Bible.
- (2) "Knowing" (*dida*) intimates the knowledge came not by revelation, but by observation.
- (3) Others can know of our election, and it may be known by those who are elected (II Pet. 1:10). We know by charity and observation, but not by infallibility.
- (4) "Brethren beloved."

A. This is in the past tense, signifying a love existing in the past (Jer. 31:3), and realized in the present.

B. Some render "beloved of God" which agrees with II Thessalonians 2:13.

C. Election is an act of God's love (Eph. 1:4).

- (5) "Election" denotes the act of picking out or choosing some from among others who are not selected.
- (6) It is always the independent act of God. From the guilty masses of fallen men God chose some to salvation and eternal life.
- (7) Election is based on God's sovereign choice and is not based on the merits of the individual (Rom. 9:11).
- (8) A true church owes what it has to their election of God.

A. A church should be made of God's elect.

B. Every church member should live so that people do not doubt their election of God--pure doctrine and practice.

4. He was thankful for the manner in which they received the gospel (v. 5).

- (1) "Our gospel" means the gospel preached by Paul and his companions (Acts 17:2-3; I Cor. 15:1-4).
- (2) The gospel must come in word (Rom. 10), but not in word only.
- (3) Missionaries are sent to a place where there are some of God's elect (Acts 18:10; II Tim. 2:10). When men receive the gospel we know they are God's elect.
- (4) "In power."

A. Not merely preached in a powerful way, but the power of God was exerted through the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:16).

B. The gospel has a spiritual dynamic (*dynamis*---power) which proved that divine power was operative (I Cor. 4:20; II Tim. 1:7).

(5) "In the Holy Ghost."

A. When the gospel comes in power, it is to be attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; I Cor. 2:4-5).

B. Apart from the Spirit, the gospel is a dead letter (Acts 10:44).

C. The Spirit is the vital spark that causes the Word to become a firebrand and to burn up the conceit of the natural man. The Spirit makes the dry bones to live.

D. Do not mistake human eloquence for preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(6) "And in much assurance."

A. The Holy Spirit used the gospel to convince them of the truth of their message.

B. Some gospel preaching would never give assurance of salvation to anyone.

C. Some sermons are clear as crystal, but cold as ice.

(7) "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes."

- A. Integrity of life and devotedness of heart should characterize the proclaimer of the gospel.
- B. A holy minister is a tremendous weapon in the hands of God for the pulling down of strongholds of sin.
- C. Having trusted in Christ they took His servants as their example.
- D. "For your sake." We sought not our own profit or advantage, but your spiritual good.

5. He was thankful they followed the Lord and His servants (v. 6).

- (1) The gospel had been preached powerfully, and it had wrought powerfully upon them.
- (2) "Followers" can be translated "imitators."
- (3) Paul taught his converts to be followers of him as he was of Christ (I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; II Thess. 3:9).
- (4) This is what Jesus did (John 5:19).
- (5) "Having received the word."

- A. This is the equivalent of faith (Acts 2:41,44).
- B. The preached Word, for the New Testament was not complete at this time.

- (6) "In much affliction" (Acts 17:4-10; I Thess. 2:14; 3:2-3). After Paul departed, the Gentiles and unbelieving Jews united in persecuting the Christians.
- (7) "With joy of the Holy Ghost." This means the joy which proceeds from the Holy Spirit and of which He is the Author (Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22).

6. He was thankful for their example to other believers (v. 7).

(1) "Ye were ensamples."

- A. TUPOS---a mold, a type, a pattern, a model, referring to their Christian conduct.
- B. This would relate to a stamp made from a die. Having been stamped with the likeness of Christ in regeneration (Eph. 4:24), they became a stamp for the impression of the same likeness on others (I John 2:6).
- C. They were a pattern for imitation to other Christians and churches.

(2) "To all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

- A. Macedonia is now part of Turkey and Achaia is modern Greece.
- B. The epistle was sent from Corinth, the chief city of Achaia, to Thessalonica, the chief city of Macedonia.

(3) The whole church at Thessalonica was a stimulus to believers in these two places.

- A. The best Christian evidence is to evidence that we are Christians.
- B. Rowland Hill said: "We can do more good by being good than in any other way."
- C. How we need consistency and consecration in our churches today!
- D. Christians by example should influence others (Matt. 5:16).

7. He was thankful for their missionary zeal (v. 8).

- (1) "From you" means from among the members of your church. In N.T. times church members sent forth the gospel. All are to be missionaries, some at home and some abroad.
- (2) "Sounded out" (*execheomai*) commonly refers to the sound of a herald's trumpet (Rom. 10:18).

- A. It is close to our English word "echo," for the Greek word denotes the resounding reverberations of a loud noise.
- B. The message of the gospel through them echoed in the whole region like a roll of thunder (Isa. 58:1; Rev. 1:10).
- C. One of the first efforts made by this church was to send the gospel to those who were destitute of it.

(3) "The Word of the Lord."

- A. The message from the Lord made effective by the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:7; 20:32; II Cor. 5:19).
- B. As soon as the Thessalonians embraced the gospel, they preached it to others.

(4) "Your faith to God-ward is spread abroad."

- A. It indicates a new direction given to mind formerly occupied with idols (vv. 9-10).
- B. Faith has God as its object.
- C. This is so well known we need not mention it wherever we go.
- D. There was a lively intercourse among the early Christians.
- E. How blessed is the church whose pastor need not say anything, either to defend or to praise it. Its own life is trumpet-tongued.
- F. This church was known for its faith, not its building or pastor.

8. He was thankful for the manifestation of the power of the gospel in their lives (vv. 9-10).

(1) "For they themselves shew us what manner of entering in we had unto you."

- A. The Thessalonians knew how the missionaries lived and preached among them (v. 5).
- B. They knew they were not deceivers or impostors.

(2) "How ye turned to God from idols."

- A. This happened under the preaching of these missionaries.
- B. This church was chiefly composed of Gentiles (Acts 17:4).
- C. "Turn" (*epistrepho*) indicating an immediate change.
  - a. The word is literally used of turning oneself around (Mark 5:30).
  - b. It means to receive the gospel (Acts 11:21; 14:15; 15:29; 26:17-18) as the Thessalonians did.
  - c. Conversion is associated with repentance (Acts 3:19; 26:20).
  - d. The aorist tense in the Greek means they turned once for all---a single, definite act.

D. "To God."

- a. They did not turn because they had become disillusioned with idolatry. It was the attractive character of the true God preached by the missionaries.
- b. It was not reformation first and faith second. It was faith in Christ which resulted in idols being forsaken.

E. "From idols."

- a. An idol is an image which represents an invisible deity, or no god at all (Gal. 4:8; Acts 14:15).
- b. It is the worship of a demon (I Cor. 10:20-21).
- c. They turned their backs on paganism and idolatry.

(3) "To serve the living and true God."

- A. He is the living and true God in contrast to dead idols (John 17:3).
- B. The living God has eyes to behold, ears to hear, hands to help, lips to speak.
- C. He is the true God in contrast to false idols. He keeps His promises. He is not a liar.
- D. "To serve" (*douloo*) is to discharge the duties of a purchased slave. The present infinitive (*douleuein*) denotes a life of continuous, complete, and wholehearted service to God.
- E. This is an absolute law of which the gospel of the grace of God admits no exceptions.
- F. "Only the man who has learned to put himself wholly in subjection to God is truly converted to Him" (John Calvin).
- G. Man's freedom consists in his liberty to choose his Master, not to be without a Master.

(4) "And to wait for his Son from heaven."

- A. It was the constant posture of the little flock at Thessalonica to wait for the coming of Christ.
- B. His personal, visible coming was a daily hope and expectation.
  - a. The Old Testament saints looked for the first advent (Ps. 130:5; Luke 2:25,38).
  - b. New Testament saints look for the second advent (Luke 12:36-38; I Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20-21; Heb. 9:28).
- C. The infinitive "to wait for" (*anamenein*) means "to wait up for." They were eagerly looking forward to the coming of One whose arrival is anticipated at any time.
- D. "His Son."
  - a. His only begotten Son (John 3:16), His beloved Son (Matt. 3:17).
  - b. The word "Father" and "Son" are never used to suggest the Father existed before the Son.
  - c. Not to expect the Eternal Son of God is to reject the Father (I John 2:23) and to be void of eternal life (John 5:12).
  - d. The eternal sonship of Christ is the foundation of our salvation (Acts 8:37).
- E. "From heaven."
  - a. "From" in the Greek is *ek* which means "out of."
  - b. "Heaven" is "heavens." In His ascension Christ passed through the heavens (Heb. 4:14; 7:26; 8:1; 9:24).
  - c. It is literally "out of heaven."

(5) "Whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus."

- A. His resurrection proved His sonship and Godhead. It gave evidence to the acceptance of His atoning work to the Father.
- B. His resurrection is the ground and guarantee of His return.
- C. Had He not risen from the dead there could be no hope of His coming again.
- D. "From among the dead" is the Greek text.

(6) "Which delivered us from the wrath to come."

- A. The participle is present, not past. "Which delivereth us." Vine says "the Deliverer."
- B. King James Version follows the Latin Vulgate here.
- C. It is the office work of Christ to be a Deliverer.
- D. Christ's coming will rescue from wrath to come. The wrath to come upon this earth under the trumpets and bowls of wrath (Matt. 3:17; Rom. 2:5; Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; 19:15).
- E. Christ bore the penalty and has freed us forever from all divine wrath.

## I THESSALONIANS 2

### Chapter Two

#### I. THE MINISTRY AND SUFFERINGS OF THE MISSIONARIES AT PHILIPPI (2:1-2).

##### 1. The manner and spirit of their preaching (v. 1).

- (1) "For" look backs to chapter 1:5,9. Their preaching had resulted in genuine conversions and the planting of a local church.
- (2) "Vain" means "without success, or effect, or fruitless." This was not true of their preaching. They had preached the pure gospel which had solid and lasting results.
- (3) There were no false professions. No labor in the Lord is in vain (I Cor. 15:58).

##### 2. Though mistreated, they preached boldly (v. 2).

- (1) "Shamefully entreated" (Acts 16:23-24). It is not wrong to call things by their right name.
- (2) This persecution did not deter their preaching.
- (3) "We were bold in our God to speak."
  - A. They preached in a confident manner without a sense of restraint or restriction.
  - B. This boldness had its source, not in self, but in God---"in God." Note the personal relationship with God whose message they delivered.
  - C. This was to the wild, aimless effort of a reckless bravado. They preached with a deep conviction of the supreme authority of the truth of what they preached.

##### (4) "The gospel of God."

- A. God is the Author and Sender of the gospel (Rom. 1:1-2). It contains His good will toward sinful man.
- B. The word "gospel" means "glad tidings" or "good news."

##### (5) "With much contention."

- A. They preached despite much opposition (Acts 17:5-9).
- B. The word rendered "contention" (*agon*) is an athletic term taken from the Olympic games. A related word is transliterated into English in the word "agony."
- C. Bold preaching causes a struggle or battle. Have a riot or a revival.

#### II. THE MOTIVES OF THE MISSIONARIES (2:3-4).

##### 1. Paul denies the false motives imputed to them (v. 3).

##### (1) "Not of deceit"---not of error as a source.

- A. Their preaching was the unadulterated Word of God.
- B. Having received the truth from God, they transmitted it without error.
- C. He was not deceived, neither was he deceiving.
- D. The most dangerous kind of preaching is that which is partly true.

##### (2) "Nor of uncleanness."

- A. Their gospel did not lead to an impure life.
- B. It led to a life of purity and holiness (I Tim. 6:3; Tit. 2:11-12).
- C. They not only said, "Be clean," but they were clean.
- D. "Uncleanness" generally describes sexual immorality (II Tim. 3:6; II Pet. 2:18).
- E. Some say that it means their motives were not unclean. They did not preach to secure money or

prestige or honor.

(3) "Nor in guile."

- A. They did not act on the principle that the end justifies the means.
- B. Much deceit is used in modern evangelism. Some trick sinners and use questionable means.
- C. They did not manipulate the hearers apart from the working of the Spirit.
- D. They were straight forward in their presentation of the message.

2. They were sincere in their speech (v. 4).

(1) "We were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel."

- A. "Allowed" is old English for "approved." They had been tested and approved by God. The original word implies a fitness for election to public office.
- B. The minister of the gospel is God's steward (I Cor. 9:17; Gal. 2:7; I Tim. 1:11; Tit. 1:3).
- C. A divine commission involves a divine scrutiny (II Cor. 5:20). We bear the King's message.
- D. Before any man is given the ministerial office he must be tested. We need God's tested preachers.

(2) "Even so we speak."

- A. They preached as men tested and commissioned by God.
- B. We speak according to the gospel.

(3) "Not as pleasing men, but God."

- A. The aim in preaching is pleasing God (Gal. 1:10; II Cor. 5:9).
- B. Christ is our pattern (John 8:29).
- C. The gospel displeases men. It exposes depravity and helplessness---the severity of the law and the holiness of God.
- D. Hence some modify the truth to accommodate the carnal mind. They sacrifice faithfulness to popularity.

(4) "Which trieth our hearts."

- A. This truth is often asserted (I Chron. 28:9; 29:17; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; Ps. 11:4; Rom. 8:27).
- B. God knew all their aims and actions.
- C. Although God approved of them as messengers, they stood under His continual testing.
- D. This is the reason they could not be preaching from unworthy motives.

II. THE SPIRIT AND METHOD OF NEW TESTAMENT PREACHING (2:5-8).

1. The missionaries did not practice deception (v. 5).

(1) "Neither at any time used we flattering words."

- A. Flattery is the use of language to please and praise men. They did not gain converts this way.
- B. They did not soften the demands of the gospel.
- C. Every flatterer lives at the expense of his listener (Isa. 30:10; Ezek. 13:10).

(2) "Nor a cloak of covetousness."

- A. "Cloak" means "what is shown or appears before anyone." It is something put forward to conceal what is behind it.



B. Paul and his companions were absolutely disinterested so far as their own welfare was concerned.

C. He sought their spiritual good and not his own advantage (Acts 20:33).

D. A man's attitude toward money is an acid test of his character.

E. Woe to those who use their preaching to enrich themselves (Acts 13:6-11; II Pet. 2:3).

(3) "God is witness." As to flattery and covetousness he appeals to God as a witness.

2. Paul did not seek the honor of men (v. 6).

(1) "Nor of men sought we glory."

A. See John 5:44; Gal. 5:26; I Cor. 4:3-4.

B. He did not want to be put on a pedestal like Diotrephes (III John 9).

C. It is possible that a preacher may use his preaching ministry as a means of building up public esteem for himself rather than conveying God's message to men.

(2) "Neither of you, nor yet of others." The church at Thessalonica and other men in other churches.

(3) "When we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ."

A. The phrase "to be burdensome" can mean "to claim honor" or "authority."

B. It could be Paul intended to combine the thought of support and esteem (II Cor. 11:8-9; 12:16; II Thess. 3:8).

C. "The apostles of Christ."

a. he includes Silas and Timothy as apostles (Acts 14:14; II Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:15).

b. latter renders the phrase "as missionaries of Christ" or "Christ's official messengers."

c. "apostle" means "one sent as the representative of another." Christ was called such (Heb. 3:1).

3. They were gentle in their behavior (v. 7).

(1) "Gentle" (*epios*) used by the Greek writer of the kindness of parents toward children. Gentleness is not weakness. It is being mild in bearing with the faults of others.

(2) This is the opposite of self-seeking and self-assertion just disclaimed (II Tim. 2:24-25).

A. Against physical force they fought with moral weapons.

B. The power of a man is seen, not so much in what he can do, as in what he can endure.

(3) He looked upon them with the tenderness of a nursing mother, gazing into the face of her children. They were as a mother to believers.

(4) Elsewhere he compares himself to a father (I Cor. 4:15).

(5) Gentleness is desirable (II Sam. 22:36). Christ is gentle (Isa. 40:11).

(6) "Cherisheth" (*thalpo*) means "to keep warm like a bird in a nest" (Deut. 22:6; Eph. 5:29).

4. Their self-sacrificing love (v. 8).

(1) "So being affectionately desirous of you."

A. "Affectionately desirous" occurs only here in the New Testament, and it means "to love tenderly," or "being filled with earnest love."

B. He sought them, not theirs---to gain them, to be a gainer by them.

(2) "We were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls."

A. To communicate the gospel was in itself strong proof of love.

- a. Those in danger need to be told how to escape---the sick of medicine.
- b. We need to tell the lost how to escape everlasting ruin.
- c. The good news enriches for time and eternity.

B. The sharing of the gospel went beyond official duty.

C. "Our own souls" or "our own lives" (John 10:11,15,17).

- a. He does not mean he would lose his soul to save them.
- b. He was ready to lay down his life in order to preach the gospel to them (I John 3:16; John 15:13).
- c. To accomplish their salvation they were willing to surrender life itself (Matt. 20:28; Acts 20:24).

(3) "Because you were dear unto us."

A. By reception of the gospel, the Thessalonians won the tender love of the missionaries.

B. "Ye were" or more literally "ye became."

C. Love is the master-power of the preacher.

D. No amount of scholarship or eloquence can atone for the absence of a deep, impassioned, sympathetic love of human souls.

E. Gentleness is fostered and regulated by a deep, self-sacrificing love.

F. To impart the gospel is the work of a missionary, and to lay down the life is the work of a shepherd (John 10:11).

### III. MEMORIES OF THEIR SUCCESSFUL PREACHING (2:9-12).

1. The exhausting work of missionaries (v. 9).

(1) "For ye remember our labor and travail."

A. The Thessalonians remembered their self-sacrificing spirit while among them.

B. "Labor and travail." The first word denotes the weariness arising from continued labor, and the second the outward difficulties of the work.

(2) "For laboring night and day."

A. "Working" (*ergazomenoi*) denotes working for wages, especially manual labor or working a trade.

B. Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3; II Thess. 3:8; I Cor. 4:11-12).

C. Did Paul work up the haircloth into articles for a tent? cut and sow the actual tent? Or, was he a leather-worker of the skins of animals?

D. He was supported some from Philippi (4:15), but he mostly supported himself.

E. He had no mission board to support him or association.

(3) "Night and day."

A. Night precedes the day according to Jewish reckoning.

B. Not spasmodically or occasionally, but continuously.

C. They did not have a 40-hour work week. The Christian must not do as little work as possible.

(4) "Because we would not be chargeable unto any of you."

A. See I Cor. 9:7-12; 11:7-12.

B. He did not use the apostolic office as a money-getting profession (II Cor. 12:13-18).

C. He was a missionary, not a mercenary.

(5) "We preached unto you the gospel of God."

A. "Preached" means "heralded." It has neither here nor elsewhere any formal, ecclesiastical sense.

B. the ministry is a work (I Tim. 3:1). It requires prayer, reading, and much study.

2. Their manner of life among the Thessalonians was unblameable (v. 10).

(1) "Holily (conformity to God's character) and justly" (conformity to God's law). These are both positive things.

(2) "Unblameably" expresses the same idea negatively. There was no spot in the sun of their methods.

(3) They were deeply aware of the importance of living lives that commended the gospel they preached.

(4) Paul and his missionary team were scrutinized, and examined, and cross-examined, and their testimony held good (Acts 24:16).

3. They had a father's love for their young converts (v. 11).

(1) A mother's love was in verse 7.

A. The mother's love shows the tenderness of the missionaries' love; the father's is the same aspect of the same love (I Cor. 4:14; Gal. 4:19).

B. The father's task is to train and discipline.

(2) "Every one of you" stressing the individual character of their work with their converts. It could be translated "each of you, one by one."

(3) "We exhorted and conformed and charged" represents three mode of apostolic instructions.

A. "Exhort" means "to encourage and console."

B. "Comfort" denotes "support and sustaining."

C. "Charge" suggests pressing home of the exhortation to the hearers.

4. We are to walk in keeping with our destiny (v. 12).

(1) "That ye would walk."

A. "Walking" is used 50 times in the N.T. for the habitual conduct and daily life of a man.

B. The Christian walks in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4), in honesty (Rom. 13:13), by faith (II Cor. 5:7), in love (Eph. 5:20), in wisdom (Col. 4:5), in truth (II John 4), after the commandments (I John 5:4).

C. It means "keeping step" or to "walk orderly" (Acts 21:24).

(2) "Worthy of God" or better translated "worthily of God."

A. Compare with other scriptures (Col. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; Rom. 16:2; Eph. 4:1).

B. Paul was concerned, not about great numbers of converts, but in seeing them instructed and walking in a God-honoring way.

C. This describes the ideal Christian life (I Pet. 1:15; Matt. 5:48).

D. How many problems this solves about doubtful questions. Is this honoring God?

E. There are some things Christians can't do, for God has called us to a holy walk.

F. Paul believed there was a connection between faith and life. The daily life of a Christian must not be a matter of indifference.

(3) "Who hath called you."

- A. God effectually called them to salvation (II Thess. 2:13-14) and to the pursuit of holiness (Heb. 12:14).
- B. Calling is the divine act of grace through which God effectually calls the elect to faith.

(4) "Unto his kingdom."

- A. The spiritual kingdom of grace now (John 3:5; Luke 17:21; I Cor. 4:20; Heb. 6:5; 12:28; Col. 1:13). In the spiritual kingdom we have a foretaste of the coming kingdom (Rom. 14:17).
- B. There is a future kingdom with the King personally present (Matt. 25:31; II Pet. 1:10-11; Rev. 5:9-10; 20:4).
- C. Those who walk holily shall enter the future kingdom (Matt. 7:21).

(5) "And glory."

- A. This defines the aspects of the kingdom in view.
- B. This is the glory of Christ we shall partake of in the resurrection (John 17:5,22; I Cor. 15:43; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:4) and the glory of the millennial kingdom (Phil. 2:11).
- C. We are now waiting for this coming glory that shall be revealed (Rom. 5:3-5).

IV. RENEWED THANKSGIVING FOR THEIR CONVERTS (2:13-16).

1. Their reception of the Word of God (v. 13).

(1) "For this cause also."

- A. This is a reference to what follows and renews the thanksgiving with which the apostle opened this epistle (1:2).
- B. The first thanksgiving referred to their character and service. This second to their acceptance of the gospel.

(2) "Thank we God without ceasing."

- A. An illustration of the precepts he gives at the close of the epistle: "Pray without ceasing."
- B. While their reception of the gospel was voluntary on their part, it was also an act of God who ordained them to receive it (Acts 13:48; John 17:20).
- C. They gave thanks without leaving gaps.

(3) "Because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us."

- A. Best translated: "Because when ye received from us the word of hearing, which is of God."
- B. The gospel is called the word of hearing or the word heard because faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Gal. 3:2; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 4:2).
- C. This presupposes an open ear (Ps. 40:6,8) and an open heart (Acts 16:14), or a good heart (Matt. 13:23).
- D. In these early days the gospel was for the most part a spoken gospel.
- E. They heard the voice of God through His servants. The divine voice was made audible through human speech.
- F. "Of God" emphasizes the divine origin of the message (1:5,8). It is God's message; the missionaries were the medium. Ministers should be channels of the Word of God.

(4) "Ye received it not as the word of men."

- A. This second "receive" is properly "accept" or "embrace, a different word from the previous "re-

ceived.”

- B. Accepted implies not only a hearing of the gospel, but its acceptance into the mind and heart (I Tim. 1:15).
- C. The gospel did not originate with men but with God (Gal. 1:1-12; I Cor. 2:13).
- D. He who is convinced by human reasoning may have his faith shaken by the same.
- E. The words of men are frail and perishing, like themselves. They are false, foolish, and fickle, but God’s Word lives and abides forever (I Pet. 1:23).
- F. God’s Word is holy, wise, and faithful.
- G. Of what use is a man-made gospel, the teachings of religious quacks and charlatans? It can only confuse and deceive gullible people.

(5) “Which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

- A. “Worketh” is present continuous tense (Heb. 4:12; Col. 1:5-6; Acts 19:20; Rom. 1:16). It is like seed which has power within itself (Matt. 13).
- B. “Worketh” (*energeo*) is related to our word “energy.” The Word is operative and productive, continually producing an effect in the lives of those who receive it. The Word builds character and endurance for Christ (John 17:17; I Thess. 4:3).
- C. The Word “worketh” is expressive of the action of an inworking force different from “working” in verse 9. Satan also works (Eph. 2:2).
- D. Eighteen of 21 occurrences of the verb rendered “worketh” in the New Testament are in Paul’s letters.
- E. Some try to refer this to God, but God works by and with His Word.
- F. The Word caused the Thessalonians to turn to God from idols, to serve the Lord, and to look for the second coming of Christ.
- G. No humanly contrived message can produce such results.
- H. “You that believe” serves to indicate the condition under which the divine Word can operate in human hearts. Faith conditions its efficacy. The Word nurtures faith and keeps it alive.

2. Suffering because of embracing the gospel (v. 14).

- (1) “Became followers” (imitators) in endurance of suffering for the sake of the gospel (1:6).
- (2) Our love of the gospel is tested by what we suffer for it.
- (3) The churches in Palestine were the earliest sufferers.
- (4) “Of the churches of God which are in Judea.”

- A. This is local assemblies of baptized believers. There is no national or universal church here.
- B. They are called “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16) and “churches of the saints” (I Cor. 14:33).
- C. Note the local description: “which are in Judea.” Also “churches of Macedonia” (II Cor. 8:1; and “churches of Galatia” (I Cor. 16:1).

(5) “In Christ Jesus.”

- A. There is no such things as churches made up of people out of Christ. There is no church of the unregenerate.
- B. These were distinctive Christian assemblies, not Jewish synagogues.
- C. Churches in New Testament times were joined together by their common faith in Christ. Each church was directly responsible to God alone.
- D. There was fellowship, but not an ecclesiastical federation. Years later division, sectarianism, and ecclesiastical circles of fellowship, mutually antagonistic to each other came into being.
- E. True churches are founded on Christ and His teachings.
- F. Persecution is a mark of a true church.

(6) The Jews persecuted the churches in Judea, and they influenced the Gentiles to persecute the Thessalonians.

3. The awful crimes of the Jews (v. 15).

- (1) This denunciation of the persecution of the Jews is without parallel in Paul's writing.
- (2) "Who both killed the Lord."
  - A. Paul, writing 20 years after the crucifixion, places the guilt of our Lord's death squarely upon the Jews (Matt. 16:21; 21:33-39; Acts 2:23; 3:14-15; 7:52).
  - B. When we take a stand for Christ, we can expect opposition from the world.
- (3) "And their own prophets" (Matt. 23:31,34,37; Luke 11:47-48).
- (4) "And have persecuted us," referring to the events recorded in Acts 17:5-9.
- (5) "And they pleased not God."
  - A. They had made themselves obnoxious to God (Jer. 32:30).
  - B. They were highly displeasing to God.
  - C. The most cruel and sadistic persecution is that of religious bigots. During the past 50 years more people have died for their faith in Christ than any time in human history.
- (6) "And are contrary to all men."
  - A. They keep up an active opposition to all other people.
  - B. The Jews generally regarded all others as enemies.

4. The Jewish persecution of the Christians (v. 16).

- (1) "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved."
  - A. The Jews hindered the missionaries from preaching to the Gentiles the message necessary to their salvation (Matt. 23:13).
  - B. Faith in the gospel of Christ is necessary to salvation (Acts 16:31), and the preaching of the gospel is necessary to faith (Rom. 10:8-17; Luke 8:12).
  - C. Unbelievers seek to hinder the salvation of others.
- (2) "To fill up their sins always."
  - A. The hostility of the Jews to the gospel reveals their judicial blindness (Rom. 11:25-28).
  - B. The desire to sin grows with its commission. This desire is endless and requires endless punishment.
  - C. "To fill up" conveys the image of a cup being filled up drop by drop to the brim.
  - D. Each fresh act of hostility to the gospel was an additional drop in their cup of guilt.
  - E. There is a certain measure of wickedness which God will allow a nation, or individual, to complete before His judgment falls on them (Gen. 15:16; Dan. 8:23; Matt. 23:32).
  - F. God delays the display of His wrath till the offenders have reached a kind of saturation point, beyond which they may not pass (II Chron. 36:16; Dan. 9:27).
  - G. "Always" points to an uninterrupted succession of evil acts from a rebellious heart.
- (3) "For the wrath is to come upon them to the uttermost."
  - A. The verb translated "is come" is in the aorist tense and denotes God's wrath has fallen.
  - B. This is the wrath of God which must fall upon the iniquity of the reprobate and which remains (John 3:36).
  - C. Divine wrath had reached the point where it passed into judgment. God's patience had been exhausted.
  - D. "Uttermost" (*eis telos*) "to an end." Compare with John 13:1. There may be a reference to

70 A.D. here.

- E. God will not make a full end of the nation of Israel (Jer. 30:4-11; 31:35-37; 33:20-22), though heavier sorrows await the nation before their final deliverance (Matt. 24:15-28).
- F. When the measure of a man's iniquity is full, and he has sinned to the uttermost, then comes wrath and that to the uttermost.
- G. A man can sink into a lifeless formality and blind, infatuated opposition to good. The rage of a man against the gospel defeats his own ends, and recoils in vengeance on himself (Rom. 2:5).

V. PAUL'S DESIRE TO SEE THEM AGAIN (2:17-20).

1. Paul felt like a father bereaved of his children (v. 17).

(1) "Being taken from you."

- A. This means "fatherless," "comfortless," or "orphaned." This is in line with the mother-father-children relation of Paul and the Thessalonians.
- B. The RV has "bearing bereaved from you."

(2) "For a short time in presence."

- A. Greek "for the time of an hour." Paul had hoped he would be gone but a short time.
  - B. Paul fled to Berea, hoping soon to return, but it was five years before he came back.
- (3) "Not in heart."

- A. Their physical separation implied no alienation of heart (Col. 2:9).
- B. It was not a matter of "out of sight, out of mind."
- C. Love is not bound by space or time.
- D. Time on earth is short whether we are present with our friends or not.
- E. In Heaven we meet never to part any more.

(4) Endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire."

- A. What efforts he made are not recorded.
- B. Compare with Luke Luke 22:15 and Phil. 1:23.

2. Satan hindered an earnestly desired visit (v. 18).

(1) Paul and his companions made two attempts to return, but his plans to revisit the church were frustrated.

(2) "But Satan hindered us."

- A. "Satan" means "adversary." Satan is the adversary of God and man---the author of all hindrances in the kingdom of God. Satan's work is destructive and obstructive.
- B. Paul believed in the personality of Satan. Only a person has the power to hinder the work of missionaries.
- C. "Hindered" is literally "to cut into." It signifies to cut a trench in the way of a pursuing enemy, so as to hinder his progress.
- D. The exact nature of the hindrances is not indicated (Rom. 1:13).
- E. When the ungodly cause us trouble, they are fighting under the banner of Satan.
- F. Satan can hinder only within the limits allotted to him by God (Job 1:12; 2:6).
- G. Sometimes God hinders (Acts 16:6-7).

3. Success in evangelism is productive of great joy (v. 19).

(1) The merchant rejoices over his gain, the soldiers over his victory, the witness for Christ over the conversion of sinners.

(2) "For what is our hope"---his hope of reward as a servant (Phil. 4:1), or of being with Christ and his

converts forever (I Thess. 4:14-18).

(3) "Or joy."

A. Joy here and at the second coming of Christ.

B. Paul thought of his converts as trophies of toil, and this filled him with joy.

(4) "Or crown of rejoicing," or crown of glorying.

A. Compare with Proverbs 16:31.

B. As a victor boasts of his crowns, so Paul rejoiced in those saved under his preaching.

C. There are many ways to witness for Christ--by mouth, by tracts, praying, giving to missions.

D. Will you have some trophies of grace?

E. Paul pictures himself standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ and in the presence of his converts receiving his crowns.

F. "Coming" is *parousia* which means "being alongside of one," hence "presence." It is sometimes used in the sense of "coming, arrival," pointing to the act by which the "presence" is brought about.

G. The bodily presence of Christ--His coming as the Bridegroom for the bride.

H. If Paul knows his converts in the heavenly world, shall we not know our loved ones who have gone before.

4. The joy of a minister of the gospel (v. 20).

(1) His joy at the Judgment Seat of Christ as well as the conversion and salvation of souls.

(2) They are now and will be in the future our glory and joy (Luke 15:10).

(3) It is a joy to see sinners saved and to see them grow in grace (II John 4; Phil. 1:8-11; Col. 1:28-29; Heb. 13:17).



## I. PAUL SENT TIMOTHY TO SEE THEM (3:1-5).

### 1. Paul was left alone at Athens (v. 1).

- (1) Paul went from Berea to Athens (Acts 17:15), leaving Timothy and Silas at Berea (Acts 17:14). Paul waited till his two friends came to him (Acts 17:16). He then sent Timothy to Thessalonica. Both joined him again at Corinth (Acts 18:5).
- (2) Paul could not endure the suspense of the lack of personal communication with the Thessalonian church.
- (3) This anxiety sprang from the intensity of the apostle's love. Here is unselfish love.
- (4) "At Athens alone." Here is a single man, standing against a large pagan city.
- (5) There are certain risks in being left alone. Consider Eve.

### 2. Timothy was sent to establish them in the faith (v. 2).

- (1) Paul and Silas sent Timothy to Thessalonica. This mission is not mentioned in the book of Acts. Silas may have gone to the Macedonia Church (II Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:14-16).
- (2) "Our brother, and minister of God."
  - A. "Our brother" refers to his union with Christ (Gal. 3:26). A fellow-member of the family of God---to Paul and Silas as well as the church.
  - B. "Minister (*diakonos*---servant) of God." God called him and sent Him (Phil. 2:19-22). Paul helped ordain Timothy (I Tim. 4:14).
  - C. Ministers of the gospel of Christ are ministers of God.
- (3) "And our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ."
  - A. This describes Timothy in his relation to the Lord.
  - B. Timothy rendered service in connection to the gospel of Christ. He was limited in his ministry to what God had called him to do.
  - C. He was not concerned with social reform and medical missions.
  - D. The ministry is a labor (I Thess. 5:13; I Tim. 3:1; 5:17).
- (4) "To establish you, and comfort you concerning your faith."
  - A. "Establish" means "to strengthen, to fix, make firm or solid (Acts 15:32,41; 16:5; 18:23; Rom. 1:11; I Thess. 3:13; II Thess. 2:17; 3:3).
  - B. "Comfort" means "encourage or exhort (Acts 14:21-22).
  - C. There is a danger new converts may be misled.
  - D. There needs to be systematic education in Christian doctrine. Stability in the faith is important.
  - E. There are none so strong in the faith but need confirmation.

3. Afflictions are the lot of God's people (v. 3).

- (1) Those strong in the faith will not be moved.
- (2) Afflictions may cause us to waver in the faith.
- (3) Suffering is a part of our Christian education (John 16:33; Acts 14:22).
- (4) Conversion does not secure immunity from suffering; on the contrary, it assures suffering will come. They are appointed (II Tim. 3:12; I Pet. 4:12).
- (5) Our afflictions are according to God's purpose and control.
- (6) They are for our discipline and culture---exposing our hypocrisies and cleaning our moral nature.

4. They were warned that afflictions would befall them (v. 4).

- (1) To be forewarned is to be forearmed.
- (2) The missionaries did not falter their converts with an expectation of worldly prosperity in religion.

5. Paul was concerned about the faith of the Thessalonians (v. 5).

- (1) The Devil designs to move people from the faith of the gospel (Luke 22:31-32).
- (2) Timothy was to strengthen their faith and to discover the condition of their faith.
- (3) "Know" means "to get to know, to ascertain."
- (4) "The tempter" is Satan (Matt. 4:3).
- (5) "Had tempted you" means the tempter had succeeded in tempting you.
- (6) "Our labor should be in vain."

- A. Faithful ministers are concerned about their labors. No one would willingly labor in vain.
- B. The suffering of God's people is a cause of ministerial anxiety (Gal. 2:2; 4:11; Phil. 2:16).
- C. Work for the Lord can be in vain with regard to the object to which our efforts are directed.
- D. Satan uses afflictions as a means of temptation.

II. THE EFFECT OF TIMOTHY'S REPORT ABOUT THE THESSALONIANS (3:6-13).

1. His return and report (v. 6).

- (1) "But when Timotheus came from you unto us."

- A. More literally: "But Timothy has just now come."
- B. This is a reference to Acts 18:5. Timothy must have stayed some time with them.
- C. Before the return of Timothy and Silas Paul seems to have been discouraged and a bit inactive

- D. Timothy's report of their spiritual stability was a shot in the arm for Paul.
- E. Paul's whole soul was bound up with the churches he founded. he lived for nothing less.
- F. This news greatly disappointed the Devil.

(2) "And brought us good tidings of your faith."

- A. "Good tidings" is *evangelizomai*---evangelizing---the word generally used for preaching the gospel.
- B. Their faith had not been shaken.
- C. Faith is not simply a belief, but a life--a life springing from God and leading to God.

(3) "And charity (love)."

- A. Faith and love go together (I Thess. 1:3; Gal. 5:6; Phil. 5; I John 3:23).
- B. There is no mention of hope.
- C. Love is the fruit of faith.
- D. This love is impartial and universal.

(4) "And that ye have good remembrance of us always."

- A. Loving remembrance of former teachers is a Christian duty.
- B. This is one of the evidences of possessing faith and love.

(5) "Desiring greatly to see us as we also to see you."

- A. They wanted to see Paul and Paul wanted to see them.
- B. There was a strong mutual attachment (II Cor. 7:7; Phil. 1:8; Rom. 1:11; 15:22-23; II Tim. 1:4).

2. Paul's comfort and satisfaction in this good report (vv. 7-8).

- (1) The Thessalonians were the personal ground for the encouragement which the missionaries received in their distress and affliction.
- (2) This report put new life and spirit in Paul.
- (3) It would have broken Paul's heart if they had departed from the faith.
- (4) Their steadfastness intensified the pleasure of living (II John 4). It made life worth living.

3. His thanksgiving because of them (v. 9).

- (1) This is the third outburst of thanksgiving we find in the letter.
- (2) His gratitude was so great he could not adequately express it.
- (3) "We joy for your sakes before our God"---a pure, holy joy in God's presence.

- (4) To rejoice before God is to spiritualize your joy.
- (5) Thanksgiving is due unto God. Don't take credit to yourself for what God only can produce.

4. He prayed for the perfection of their faith (v. 10).

- (1) They prayed night and day, but not all night and all day.
- (2) When we are most thankful we should give ourselves to prayer.
- (3) The best of men have something lacking in their faith. Faith is perfected by degree.
- (4) They needed pastoral care and doctrinal instructions.
- (5) Their faith had deficiencies in knowledge in many points.
- (6) Faith is based on knowledge, and so faith may continually increase.
- (7) True ministers cannot be indifferent at the spiritual state of their people.
- (8) Religious joy is occasioned by the religious progress of others.
- (9) The ministry of the Word improves imperfect faith.

### III. PRAYER FOR GROWTH IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (3:11-13).

1. The petition of the writers (v. 11).

(1) "Now God himself and our Father."

- A. In the Greek "himself" is strongly emphatic, and it indicates a God who can accomplish all.
- B. It turns the reader's thoughts to God as the supreme Disposer of events (Prov. 16:9).
- C. God could open up a way for these missionaries to visit the church again.
- D. The first person of the trinity is the Father.

(2) "And our Lord Jesus Christ."

- A. The name "Jesus" stands in opposition with "Lord" as identifying the Lord with the human Jesus.
- B. Jesus Christ our Lord is equally God as much as the Father. Here full deity is ascribed to Christ.
- C. Prayer can not only be offered in the name of Christ, but also offered up to Christ Himself (Acts 7:59; Rom. 1:7; II Thess. 2:16).

(3) "Direct our ways unto you."

- A. The verb "direct" in the Greek is in the singular although the subject is plural. This denotes the unity between God the Father and Jesus Christ (John 10:30).
- B. "Direct" in its original sense means "open, make straight and clear" a way by which we may come to see you.
- C. God can remove all impediments from men. God must be recognized in the

simplest affairs of life.

D. That path is safest and best in which God's finger points.

2. A prayer for them to increase in brotherly love (v. 12).

- (1) "Lord" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ (3:11,13), not the Holy Spirit as some say. This is a petition to the Lord Jesus Christ as the foundation of all grace and goodness.
- (2) "Make you"---literally "you may the Lord make." Spiritual growth depends on Jesus Christ.
- (3) "To increase and abound" can read "to increase in abundance and to overflow."
- (4) They wanted their converts to increase and overflow in brotherly love.
- (5) The Thessalonians were known for their love (I Thess. 1:3; 4:9-10; 5:6; II Thess. 1:3).
- (6) Mutual love is required of Christians (John 13:34; I John 3:14; 4:7-8, 20-21).
- (7) Christian love is progressive and mutual.
- (8) It is to be unselfish---"toward all men" (Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:32-35; Gal. 6:10; II Pet. 1:7).
- (9) "Even as we do toward you." The love of the missionaries increased more and more.

3. A petition for their perseverance (v. 13).

- (1) There is no stability in Christian graces apart from love---"To the end he may establish your hearts."
  - A. The more we grow in love (which is the fulfilling of the law), the more we are established and confirmed in it.
  - B. Christ alone can develop our love and stability. Perseverance comes from Jesus Christ.
  - C. The "heart" means the whole inner life, including thought, feeling, and will.
  - D. Today much attention is given to the head and hand, but the inner spiritual life is often neglected.
- (2) Stability in holiness is the results of Christ working in the heart---"unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father."
  - A. Holiness denotes not the process of becoming holy, but the quality of being holy. It is an ethical quality which reveals itself in purity of life.
  - B. An unloving man cannot be a holy man.
  - C. "Unblameable" means "to find no fault, free from censure." You live in no known sin (I John 2:1).
  - D. "Before God" removes this holiness from the realm of fallible men. God tests our character (Heb. 12:23; John 5:22), especially at the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10).

(3) Holiness screens us from divine censure at the second coming of Christ---"at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

A. "Coming" is *parousia* (presence), and it points to the rapture coming.

B. "All his saints."

a. Some make this the angels (Deut. 33:22; Jude 14). Angels are called saints in the Old Testament, but it is never so employed in the New Testament.

b. The reference is to redeemed saints (I Thess. 4:13-18). This is all believers Eph. 1:1; Acts 26:18).

c. Angels do come with Christ (Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38; II Thess. 1:7).

C. Jesus Christ will come a second time. This is a purifying hope (I John 3:1-3).

D. The second coming of Christ demands on our part diligent moral preparedness.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### I. EXHORTATION TO PROGRESS IN CHRISTIAN CONDUCT (4:1-2).

#### 1. The exhortation to be God-pleasers (v. 1).

(1) An appeal made in Christ---"Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you."

A. "Furthermore" marks a transition rather than a conclusion. We might render it "for the rest."

B. The missionaries had converted and taught the converts. They had given them the gospel and moral duties.

C. Paul goes from precept to practice, and he is asking nothing new.

D. "Beseech" or "ask" or "request." "Exhort" or "admonish" or "beg."

(2) Our conduct must be modeled after godly examples---"by the Lord Jesus as ye have received of ours."

A. This exhortation was made by one united to Christ and in virtue of that union.

B. He did this in the name of Christ and by His authority.

C. He wanted them to receive what he had received from Christ (I Cor. 11:1-2,23; Gal. 1:12).

(3) Our chief joy should be divine approval---"how ye ought to walk and to please God."

A. "Walk" is to regulate one's life. The present tense speaks of continuous action, steady progress in Christian conduct.

B. Christ walks (Rev. 1:13) and Satan walks (I Peter 5:8).

C. Most people seek to please somebody---wife, himself, parents, employer, or some person.

D. Our supreme desire is to please God (II Cor. 5:9; Heb. 11:5).

E. To please God is to please Christ (Rom. 15:1; I Cor. 7:22; Gal. 1:10; Col. 1:10; II Tim. 2:4). The natural man cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

(4) Christian living is capable of great expansion---"so ye would increase more and more."

A. God has made every provision for our increase in holiness. It has no limit.

B. We must never be satisfied with what we have already achieved.

#### 2. Godly living is enforced by authorized messengers and well-understood precepts (v. 2).

(1) The missionaries taught their converts to observe what Christ commanded (Matt. 28:19-20).

- (2) Obedience should be in proportion to knowledge, and practice should nurse knowledge.
- (3) These are really Christ's commandments or charges. They were given by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## II. AN EXHORTATION TO PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION (4:3-8).

### 1. An exhortation to sanctification (v. 3).

#### (1) Basis for this charge---"For this is the will of God."

- A. What does God desire of us?
- B. The Bible is God's revealed will.
- C. "Will" means not so much decreed but what God desires and delights in.

#### (2) The need of progressive sanctification---"even your sanctification."

- A. "Sanctification" has the basic idea of being set apart for or dedicated to God upon the atoning work of Christ.
- B. It does not denote a state of holiness, but the process of being made holy.
- C. It is to renounce the world, to cleanse ourselves from the pollution of the flesh, to offer ourselves to God as if in sacrifice (Rom. 12:1; I Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14).
- D. Sanctification involves learning to do well and ceasing to do evil.

#### (3) The negative aspect of sanctification---"that ye abstain from fornication."

- A. "Fornication" denotes every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse. Moral evil is spiritual evil.
- B. The pagan world regarded sexual intercourse as a necessity of nature, like eat-and drinking.
  - a. Fornication was sanctioned by some religious cults in that day.
  - b. No one thought it was a heinous sin against God or others.
  - c. Adultery was a common subject of poems.
  - d. We live in days of neopaganism. The new morality is only the old immorality brought up to date.
- C. Christianity does not adapt itself to the practice of contemporary practice. It condemns immoral practices (Acts 15:29).
- D. Self-control must be exercised to preserve holiness.
- E. The modern world has almost lost the idea of chastity and virtue.

### 2. The proper care and government of the body (v. 4).

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- (1) Chastity is more than abstinence from sexual impurities (I Cor. 6:13,15-16). It



requires instructions and discipline.

- (2) It involves control over the body for holy and honorable service (I Cor. 9:27).
- (3) "Vessel" means the body (I Cor. 7:4; II Cor. 4:7; II Tim. 2:21; I Pet. 3:7). We must gradually obtain the complete mastery of our body. The body is the vessel which contains the soul (I Sam. 21:5).
- (4) The idea that Paul means here to acquire a wife is to be rejected.
- (5) This is to be done "in sanctification and honor." The body must be set apart for the service of God. This gives honor to the body (Rom. 6:12,19).
- (6) The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19) and is an heir of the resurrection (Rom. 8:11,23; Phil. 3:21).
- (7) Nothing is worse than for a rational soul to be enslaved to brute lusts (Prov. 6:32-33).

### 3. Do not let the body enslave the soul (v. 5).

- (1) "Lust" means "passion, excited emotions." "Concupiscence" (*epithumia*) means "desire, craving."
- (2) Immorality follows idolatry. Denial of the Creator leads to degradation of the creature (Rom. 1:19-29).
- (3) The Gentiles did not know God (Rom. 1:21,28; Gal. 4:8; Eph. 2:12; II Thess. 1:8) and the reprobate Jews were hypocrites (Tit. 1:16).
- (4) A Christian must not be overwhelmed and carried away by his passions.

### 4. We must avoid wronging a brother (v. 6).

- (1) "Go beyond" is "transgress, to go beyond right."
- (2) "Defraud" means "to take advantage of, to cheat, to enrich one's self at the expense of another."
- (3) "Brother" means a fellow believer (v. 10). It does not follow we may defraud a non-Christian.
- (4) In what sense is a brother not to be wronged?

- A. The context is about sexual impurity.
- B. This forbids adultery and sodomy.
- C. Instead of "in any matter" the Syraic has "in this matter."

### (5) There is a just God and a judgment day (Eph. 5:6; Heb. 13:4).

- A. "All such" is better rendered "all these things." The reference is to carnal impurity.
- B. Sexual impurity brings God's vengeance. God demands sexual purity.
- C. "The Lord" is Jesus Christ (John 5:22; II Thess. 1:7-9). He satisfied justice by inflicting punishment upon wrongdoers.
- D. Paul does not stress here the bitter physical, psychological, and social conse-

(6) "As we also have forewarned you and testified."

A. The missionaries had in the past warned them about these sins.

B. "Testified" means "to solemnly affirm." This was a warning intended to penetrate the conscience.

5. Sexual uncleanness is out of harmony with effectual calling (v. 7).

(1) The divine call is into communion with Christ who hates uncleanness. The gospel of grace teaches against worldly lusts (Tit. 2:11-12).

(2) We should fulfill the purpose for which we were effectually called.

(3) "Uncleanness" means moral uncleanness of all kinds.

(4) We are called to a life of holiness (Eph. 1:4; Heb. 12:14; I Pet. 1:14-15).

(5) Holiness is the whole sphere of our Christian life.

6. A life of sexual impurity is a rejection of God and a defiling of the temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 8).

(1) "Therefore" means "for this reason." This is the logical conclusion from the preceding.

(2) "Despiseth" is better translated as the margin has it "rejecteth." "He that rejecteth" means "an active, deliberate rejecter." The verb means "to set aside, to make void or cancel."

(3) The person takes God's demands for sexual purity so lightly he refuses to obey them. He rejects the divine call to holiness.

(4) To set aside these injunctions was to reject, not merely the men, but God whose will they declared (2:13; I Sam. 8:7; 10:19; Luke 10:16; Acts 5:4).

(5) The gift of the Holy Spirit.

A. A person who engages in sexual impurity has dishonored the Holy Spirit and repudiated the will of God Himself.

B. The mission of the Holy Spirit in the believer's body is to sanctify him.

### III. EXHORTATION TO BROTHERLY LOVE AND INDUSTRY (4:9-12).

1. Brotherly love is divinely taught (v. 9).

(1) Brotherly love is the love of Christians for Christians---the love of the family of God.

(2) This virtue was so well practiced in the primitive church as to call forth the admiration of their heathen adversaries: "Behold how these Christians love one another."

(3) This virtue is commanded in Scripture (Heb. 13:1; I John 3:14).

(4) Our Lord commanded it a proof of real discipleship (John 15:17). Brotherly love

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is a fruit of Christianity.

- (5) The world does not teach this. The natural heart is selfish and cruel and delights in aggression on the rights of others.
- (6) Brotherly love should be pure, humble, self-denying, fervent, unchangeable.
- (7) Love was so engraven upon their hearts that there was no need of a letter written on paper.

A. There is a Divine Teacher (John 6:45; I John 2:20,27).

B. God Himself was their Teacher. His teaching is secret and silent.

## 2. Their brotherly love was practically manifested (v. 10).

- (1) Brotherly love is not limited by locality or distance.
- (2) They did not need to acquire this virtue, for they were already practicing it.
- (3) Macedonia was a Roman province of which Thessalonica was the capital.
- (4) Their love reached unto "all the brethren."
- (5) The Christian must be constantly trying to improve and grow. Brotherly love must be constantly cultivated.
- (6) The more we apprehend the love of God for us, the more our hearts will enlarge love to Him and all the saints.
- (7) Brotherly love is the practical manifestation of the love of God in man.

## 3. The apostolic injunction to a quiet, orderly life (v. 11).

### (1) "And that ye study."

A. Literally, "That ye be ambitious," or make it a point of honor to do so.

B. Strive to outdo each other in this.

C. If His coming was imminent, why bother to do any work?

### (2) "To be quiet."

A. There was a restlessness in the young church over the soon coming of Christ.

B. Paul says to make it a point of honor to avoid religious excitement (I Tim. 2:2).

C. Avoid contention in your family and other families, in your church and community. Don't be in some mob!

D. The ambition of the world lies along the path of strife toward the good of personal distinction.

E. The world has a restless spirit. There is nothing some people dread so much as being quiet.

F. The Christian home should be a place of peace and harmony. Satan ever seeks to disquiet us.

G. A Christian is to be meek and mild, have a gentle and peaceable disposition. He must avoid strife, contention, and division.

### (3) "And to do your own business, and to work with your own hands."

- A. We are not to be busybodies meddling in other people's matters (I Pet. 4:14; II Thess. 3:11).
- B. The man who tends to his own business has no time to concern himself with the business of others.
- C. All strife---domestic, social, ecclesiastical, and political--may be traced to meddlesomeness.
- D. Religion teaches no man to neglect his business (I Cor. 4:12; Mark 13:34; I Cor. 7:24).
- E. We are to earn our own livelihood by manual labor (Rom. 12:11).
- F. There is no such thing as a secular and sacred life for a Christian. We are to live for God always.
- G. There is no greater foe to piety than idleness (Gen. 2:15; 3:19).

(4) "As we commanded you" (Eph. 4:28). Honest labor is not beneath the dignity of any man.

#### 4. The purpose of this exhortation (v. 12).

(1) We are to conduct ourselves honorably toward others---"That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without."

- A. Proper treatment of those not converted is enjoined (Col. 4:5).
- B. "Honestly" means "honorably, decently."
- C. "Them that are without" means unbelievers outside God's family and church.
- D. Lost sinners cannot know spiritual things (I Cor. 2:14), but they can appreciate the difference between order and confusion, idleness and hard work (I Pet. 2:12,15; 3:16; II Pet. 2:2).

(2) We should have sufficiency for life---"and that ye may have lack of nothing."

- A. The Greeks despised manual work and had slaves do it.
- B. Every Jewish boy was taught a trade no matter how much wealth he had.
- C. The world respects a hard-working, honest man (Eph. 4:28).
- D. No man should be dependent on others due to idleness (I Tim. 5:8).

#### IV. COMFORT CONCERNING THE DEAD IN CHRIST (4:13-18).

##### 1. Sorrow for the departed saints is due to ignorance of their future (v. 13).

- (1) The Thessalonians were grieved over departed brethren. They feared the decrease would be at a disadvantage at Christ's return. Would the departed saints be excluded from the millennial reign on earth?
- (2) "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren."

- A. This phrase is often used by Paul when he makes a transition to new and important truths (Rom. 1:13; 11:25; I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; II Cor. 1:8).
- B. Ignorance is the mother of mistake, error, and grief.
- C. Paul followed this expression by "brethren." This softened what implied gross ignorance.

(3) "Concerning them which are asleep."

- A. Sleep is frequently applied to dead saints in the O.T. (I Kings 2:10; 11:43; Dan. 12:2) and the N.T. (Matt. 27:57; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; I Cor. 11:30; 15:18, 20, 51).
- B. "He fell asleep" is a common epitaph on early Christian tombstones.
- C. Sleep denotes restfulness and peace; it implies an awakening by Jesus.
- D. In natural sleep the person still exists while the body is asleep. There is no soul sleep here (II Cor. 5:1, 8; Phil. 1:23).
- E. Our English word "cemetery" is derived from the Greek word *kometerion* which means "the sleeping place."

(4) "That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

- A. Grief over departed loved ones is not inconsistent with acceptance with God's will nor does it deny the Christian hope (John 11:35; Phil. 2:27; Gen. 23:2).
- B. We must not bewail the dead beyond due bounds, for they shall rise again. They are only asleep in Jesus.
- C. Mourning over the dead is not forbidden, but moderation is required. Don't grieve like unbelievers. Don't water your plants so as to drown them.
- D. "Have no hope" means the heathen world who had no hope of a resurrection (Eph. 2:12).
- E. Aeschylus wrote: "Of a man once dead there is no hope of resurrection." Theocritus: "Hopes are among the living, the dead are without hope."
- F. The Sadducees, Stoics, and Epicureans all denied the resurrection. Some of the Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul.
- G. Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.
- H. Conybeare and Howson refer to a heathen sepulchral inscription at Thessalonica which proclaimed that "after death there is no revival, after the grave no meeting of those who have loved each other on earth."

2. Sorrow for the dead is moderated by their present and future blessedness (v. 14).

(1) "For if we believe Jesus died and rose again."

- A. Christians believe the gospel (Rom. 10:9-10; I Cor. 15:1-4).
- B. Faith in the death and resurrection of Christ are fundamental articles of faith.
- C. Our belief in the resurrection of Christ is founded on Christ's resurrection (I

(2) "Even so them which sleep in Jesus."

- A. The union of Christ and the believer is not dissolved by death (I Cor. 15:18). In death the believer's body is refreshed and refined.
- B. "In" in the Greek is *dia* and it generally is translated "through."
- C. Some render "that are fallen asleep" or "Them that are put to sleep by Jesus" (John 17:24).
- E. It is through Jesus that believers die. He changed the nature of death to a gentle sleep. Through Him we will awake to eternal life.
- F. Their spirits are in Christ's presence and their dust under His care and protection. We are gainers by death.

(3) "Will God bring with him."

- A. The resurrection of Christ is the assurance and a type of the resurrection of all of His people.
- B. The order of the original makes God emphatic, stressing he is the Actor in what takes place.
- C. The departed saints are with Christ in Heaven (Rev. 7:15). When He comes from Heaven they will come back with Him.
- D. The Greek verb rendered "bring" is frequently translated "lead." This pictures the departed saints as following their Lord in his triumphant train as he returns from Heaven.

3. The second coming of Christ (v. 15).

(1) The authority for this statement: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord."

- A. This is literally "by a word from the Lord."
- B. Some make this a direct revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ to Paul.
- C. With John Calvin, I believe this is a reference to a discourse of Christ's (John 11:25-26; 14:1-3).

(2) "That we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord."

- A. The sense is "we who shall be alive---who shall be left unto the coming of the Lord."
- B. There shall be some true believers on earth when Christ comes---some faith, a seed shall be serving Him---a whole generation of people.
- C. Paul expected to be alive when Christ came. He believed in an imminent coming of Christ (II Cor. 5:1-4; Phil. 3:20; Tit. 2:13; II Tim. 4:8).
- D. Both writer and readers were alive when this was written.

- E. Paul could not have said "they who are alive" without denying his own hope of seeing Christ's return and robbing his own generation of that hope.
- F. The time of the Lord's appearing is secret (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:35-37; Acts 1:7).
- G. That day is hidden that we may look for Him every day that we live.

(3) "Shall not prevent them which are asleep."

- A. "Prevent" is old English for "go before." "Prevent" now means "to hinder."
- B. The dead saints will not be at a disadvantage.

4. His appearing and the resurrection of the deceased believers (v. 16).

(1) "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven."

- A. His appearing will be personal---"the Lord himself" (Acts 1:11). This is not some spiritual appearing, but a personal, visible appearing of Christ.
- B. He comes down from the Third Heaven where He has been since His ascension (Acts 3:20-21).

(2) "With a shout."

- A. This means a loud word of command---a war shout. The word implies authority and urgency (John 11:43-44).
- B. This is the shout of Christ (John 5:28-29; Rev. 1:15).
- C. Christ comes with might commanding power over the dead saints and the angels.

(3) "With the voice of the archangel."

- A. This is Michael (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7).
- B. The archangel in O.T. is connected with the Jewish people (Dan. 12:1), showing the O.T. saints are also raised at this time.
- C. The word "archangel" denotes "chief or ruler of the angels." Some say this is Christ.

(4) "With the trump of God."

- A. A trumpet sounding long and waxing louder and louder (I Cor. 15:51-55; Rev. 1:10; 4:1).
- B. This is not the trumpet to gather Israel in millennium (Matt. 24:31).
- C. This is the last trumpet for the church.
- D. The rapture is not a silent affair for the saints, but it will mean little for the world (Acts 9:7; 22:9; John 12:29).
- E. There is some difference between this trumpet in Matthew 24:31.

- a. in Thessalonians it concerns raising the dead, but no resurrection is mentioned in Matthew 24.
- b. in Thessalonians the dead are raised and the living translated to meet Christ in the air; in Matthew the living are gathered from all over the earth.

(5) "And the dead in Christ shall rise first."

- A. Those who are fallen asleep in Jesus (v. 14).
- B. The dead saints are first in the order of the resurrection.
- C. It might be literally translated "the dead in Christ shall stand up first."
- D. The dead out of Christ are not raised at this time (Rev. 20:4-6).

5. The rapture of the saints (v. 17).

- (1) The risen dead and the living dead shall join in company.
- (2) This describes irresistible power by which the saints shall be caught up (Acts 8:39; II Cor. 12:2; Rev. 12:5). It might be rendered "snatch up, sweep up, carry off by force."
- (3) This is the time when we shall be rapt away to meet the Lord in the air.
- (4) The Greek verb is *rapturo* from which we get our English word "rapture."
- (5) "To meet the Lord in the air."

- A. Literally "into a meeting with the Lord."
- B. "In the air" means between earth and Heaven.
- C. This is Satan's stronghold (Eph. 2:2)---the demons' home ground.

(6) We go from the air to Heaven (John 14:1-3).

6. The comfort of this doctrine (v. 18).

- (1) This is the best comfort we can give living believers concerning the dead in Christ.
- (2) Midtrib and posttrib give very little comfort.
- (3) We will see dead believers when Christ comes. Glorious thought!



## CHAPTER FIVE

### I. THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH TOWARD THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST (5:1-11).

#### 1. The times and the seasons of His coming (v. 1).

- (1) The writer passes from instructions concerning the dead in Christ to give exhortations to the living.
- (2) The times and seasons is found three other times in the singular (Eccl. 3:1; Dan. 2:21; Acts 1:7).
- (3) The reference is to the times and seasons of Christ's coming. We can know the times and seasons (Heb. 10:25), but we cannot know the day nor hour (Matt. 24:36).
- (4) Both words relate to time. The first deals with the measurement of time, and the latter with the critical nature of the time.
- (5) "The times" (*chronoi*) points to the chronological ages which may intervene before He comes.
- (6) "The seasons" (*kairoi*) indicates the times in their critical nature.
- (7) "Ye have no need that I write unto you."

- A. There is a certain time when Christ will come, but I have already informed you of this when I was among you.
- B. "Writing" is contrasted with oral teaching here.
- C. The Bible does not sanction setting dates for the coming of Christ.
- D. John Calvin says on this: "Now Christ designed that the day of his coming should be hid from us, being in suspense, we might be as it were upon watch."

#### 2. The rapture coming of Christ introduces the Day of the Lord (v. 2).

##### (1) "For ye know perfectly."

- A. Or, we might put it "perfectly well."
- B. There is a paradox in this verse: "You know accurately that nothing accurate as to the precise day for the day of the Lord cannot be known."
- C. There is nothing more certain than the fact that the Lord will come; nothing more uncertain than the precise day he will come (Matt. 24:44; Mark 13:35-36).

##### (2) "That the day of the Lord."

- A. This expression occurs in the N.T. (II Thess. 2:2; Acts 2:20; II Pet. 3:10). It is "day of wrath" in Revelation 6:17.
- B. It is found nearly 100 times in the O.T. (Isa. 2:12; 13:9-11; 33:14; Jer. 30:7; 46:10; Joel 2:1-3; Zeph. 1:14-18).
- C. The day of the Lord is a day belonging to the Lord.

- D. It is not a 12-hour day, but a long period of time beginning with the rapture of saints and extending to the new heaven and earth (II Pet. 3:10).
- E. It is a day when God judges the wicked and vindicates His justice by the establishment of His righteous rule on earth.
- F. In O.T. it is the day of Jehovah, and in the New Testament it is Jehovah-Jesus.
- G. The day of the Lord begins with the rapture of the saints which results in the beginning of God's judgment on the earth dwellers.
- H. Paul is about to deal with the judgment of the earth dwellers or the wicked in that day.

(3) "Cometh as a thief in the night."

- A. The Greek reads: "the day of the Lord as a thief in the night so comes." The word "night" goes with "thief."
- B. The rapture coming of Christ is like a thief (Matt. 24:42-44; Rev. 3:3). This refers to the manner of His coming. It will be sudden and unexpected.
- C. Since the rapture of the saints inaugurates the day of the Lord, it also comes as a thief in the night to the wicked.
- D. The rapture take some believing by surprise (Mark 13:35-36; Luke 21:34; I John 2:28).

3. The second coming will be terrible to the unsaved (v. 3).

(1) "For they shall say Peace and safety."

- A. "They" is the unbelieving world. Some read the Bible from cover to cover and do not know the difference between "we" and "they" or "us" and "them."
- B. The language of men's hearts is: "We are secure and safe." They are wrapped up in a self-deceived carnal security.
- C. "Peace" denotes internal rest, and "safety" external security.
- D. When men feel most secure they are in the greatest danger.
- E. When Christ comes, the world will be sunk down in peace and prosperity.

(2) "Then sudden destruction cometh upon them."

- A. "Sudden" indicates their doom is unexpected and unforeseen, catching them totally unprepared (Matt. 24:36-41).
- B. "Destruction" does not mean annihilation, but hopeless ruin, the loss of all that gives worth to existence.
- C. It is not the loss of being, but it is the loss of well-being.

(3) "As travail upon a woman with child."

- A. Birth pains are sudden and unavoidable.

B. Compare with (Isa. 13:8-9; Jer. 4:31; Hos. 13:13; Micah 4:9; Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8).

(4) "And they shall not escape."

A. None can avoid the hand of God's judgment. Their doom is inevitable (Rev. 6:12-17).

B. This is in sharp contrast to the believers addressed in verses 4-11 (Luke 21:34-36).

4. True believers are not ignorant of the Day of the Lord (v. 4).

(1) "But ye brethren" shows the sharp contrast with the unbelieving world caught unprepared for the day of judgment.

(2) "Ye are not in darkness" ---not in moral and spiritual ignorance of the unredeemed.

(3) They had been spiritually enlightened (Col. 1:13).

(4) "That day should overtake you as a thief" (v. 2).

A. It will not be a surprise to them when it comes upon the unbelieving world.

B. The day of the Lord will not overtake believers, for they will be in glory (I Thess. 4:13-18).

5. They were sons of light and sons of the day (v. 5).

(1) "Children of light."

A. "Children" (*huiioi*) means "sons" (Luke 16:8; John 12:36). It expresses relationship.

B. A man is said to be a son of any influence which dominates his character.

C. "Sons of Belial" (Jud. 19:22), "sons of peace" (Luke 10:6), "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17), "son of consolation" (Acts 4:36).

D. Spiritual light is the pervading element of our character (Eph. 5:8; II Cor. 6:14; Col. 1:12).

(2) "Children (sons) of the day."

A. Not "the day of the Lord." There is no definite article in the Greek.

B. We belong to spiritual day rather than night.

(3) "We are not of the night, nor of the darkness."

A. We are day people, not night people. We must not hide our work under the veil of night.

B. Note the change from "you" to "we" which includes Paul and his friends.

C. Paul did not know of any twilight zone.

6. The need of constant vigilance (v. 6).

- (1) If sons of light, all our time is day-time.
- (2) We must not be indifferent to spiritual realities.
- (3) "Watch" means mental alertness with reference to our enemies---wakeful spiritual activity. It especially has reference to Christ's coming (Matt. 24:43-44; Mark 13:33-36; Luke 12:37).
- (4) "Sober" means "freedom from the influence of intoxicants---sober stability.
- (5) "Sleep" is a figure of spiritual insensitivity, the attitude of the unsaved.

7. Don't be like night people (v. 7).

- (1) "Sleep" and "drunkenness" are to be taken in their literal sense.
- (2) We must not be like drunkards steeped in slumber---not be immersed in deep sleep of sin and unconcern, neglecting duty, and never thinking of judgment.
- (3) Sleep is natural in the night.
- (4) The practice of spending a night in drunken revelry was common in pagan society. To get drunk in the day was a disgrace (Acts 2:15; II Pet. 2:13).
- (5) The Christian should be free from the stupefying effects of sin, the world, and self-indulgence.
- (6) Watchfulness and sobriety are features of the children of the day (Luke 21:34).

8. The attitude of military courage (v. 8).

- (1) We are soldiers in the Christian army---a soldier on guard duty---not a soldier on parade, but a soldier during wartime (II Tim. 2:3-4).
- (2) The Christian life is not one of ease, but one of hard, fierce conflict.
- (3) Since we are of the day, we are obligated to be mentally alert.
- (4) Our mission may jeopardize our life (Phil. 2:25-27). We are not only watchmen but also warriors.
- (5) "Putting on" is in the aorist tense meaning the armor is to be put on and kept on (Rom. 13:11-13).
- (6) Paul may be thinking of Isaiah 59:16-17.
- (7) "The breastplate of faith and love."

- A. The breastplate was an iron coat with two sides.
- B. This is a believing and loving heart. Faith and love go together (I Thess. 1:3; 3:6).
- C. This guards the heart against errors of the world.
- D. Faith is the proper attitude of the believer toward Christ, and love his proper Attitude toward the saints.
- E. These virtues inspire bravery. They will keep our hearts from sinful lusts.

(8) "And for a helmet, the hope of salvation."

- A. This protected the head of the soldier, and it was the brightest and most conspicuous piece.
- B. This is the salvation of the body at the coming of Christ (Rom. 8:23; 13:11-12; Phil. 3:21).
- C. This heavenly hope covers our heads in the day of battle. We must keep our eyes on the future if we are to resist the spirit of this evil age.

9. Salvation by God's appointment and Christ's atonement (vv. 9-10).

(1) "For God has not appointed us to wrath."

- A. If we would trace our salvation to its first cause, it would be God's appointment.
- B. The whole scheme of salvation was divinely conceived and divinely carried out in all its essential details.
- C. Some are appointed to the wrath of the day of the Lord (5:3; Rev. 6:15-17; 14:10; 19:15)) while others will escape it (4:13-18; Rev. 3:10).
- D. Jesus will snatch us away before the wrath is poured out.
- E. Because we are sinners we all deserve wrath (Eph. 2:2).

(2) "But to obtain salvation."

- A. This is salvation in every sense, especially the salvation of the body at the coming of Christ---"the hope of salvation" (v. 8).
- B. Since glorified saints will no longer have a sinful body, they cannot be the objects of any wrath.
- C. Those for whom Christ suffered must obtain salvation. He will give it to them and they will receive it.
- D. Salvation is an act of God's sovereign will (Rom. 9:22-23; Eph. 1:4,11; Jas. 1:18). He determines our final state and the means of our salvation.

(3) "By our Lord Jesus Christ."

- A. Salvation is acquired solely by Christ (Acts 4:12).
- B. The Father appointed no other person to be the Savior.

(4) Salvation is eternal fellowship with Christ (v. 10; 4:17).

- A. The death of Christ for us in the meritorious cause for our deliverance from the wrath of God against sin (II Cor. 5:21).
- B. To wake or sleep means waking in life or sleeping in death (4:13-15).
- C. The death of Christ atoned for our sins. The dead believer receives a glorified

body at the coming of Christ (Rom. 14:8-9; I Cor. 15:23).  
D. Both groups will be united to Christ in the air (I Thess. 4:17).

10. A call for comfort (v. 11).

- (1) Compare with 4:18.
- (2) "Together" and "one another" denotes a mutual activity and a mutual benefit.
- (3) "Edify" (*oikodemenō*) means "to build up." The church is built up by love (I Cor. 8:1; Eph. 4:16), prophesying (I Cor. 14:3-4), and exhortation (Heb. 10:25).

## II. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING CHURCH RELATIONS (5:12-15).

1. The duty to know church leaders (v. 12).

- (1) "Know" means recognize and regard their labor and consider their position (Phil. 2:29).
- (2) God-sent pastors are to be recognized. Non-spiritual persons cannot be recognized.
- (3) These leaders are elders (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5) who have qualifications (I Tim. 3:1-6).
- (4) The duty belonging to the ministerial office.

A. "Which labor among you."

- a. the work of a pastor taxes the brain and muscle (I Tim. 5:17).
- b. it demands earnest study and ceaseless toil (I Tim. 3:1)
- c. we are to be laborers, not loiterers.
- d. this involves the preaching of the gospel (John 4:38).

B. "And are over you in the Lord."

- a. "over you" (*proistamenous*) literally "standing before," hence "to be at the head, to direct, to rule."
- b. "in the Lord" limits the scope of their leadership. They are not political or civic leaders, but they are spiritual leaders (I Thess. 5:17; Rom. 12:8).
- c. the lordship of Christ implies their leadership. It should be such as Christ will approve.

C. "And admonish you."

- a. this is open rebuke of wrongdoing (I Tim. 5:20) and warning against wrong doing.
- b. while the tone is brotherly, it is big-brotherly.

(5) These three expressions refer to the same persons for the definite article is before

the first term only. Literally "the (ones) laboring...being over...and admonishing."

2. The duty to esteem them for peaceable church relations (v. 13).

- (1) The hard-working and faithful elders are worthy of honor and affection.
- (2) Think rightly of your pastor and feel rightly toward him.
- (3) "In love"---love is to govern the attitude of church members toward their pastor.
- (4) "For their work's sake."

- A. The work of the Lord has appointed them to entitle them to your loving regard.
- B. Right relations with the elders in the church are essential to having peace in the church.
- C. The people can never profit under a minister they do not respect.

3. Three types of church members (v. 14).

- (1) "Warn them that are unruly."

- A. This is a command to the member of the church, not to the officers only.
- B. These must be constantly admonished that their faults might be corrected.
- C. These were guilty of disorderly living of various kinds. They neglected daily duties and had fallen into idleness and careless habits.
- D. "Unruly" (*tous ataktous*) in the Greek is a military term to denote a soldier who does not keep rank and who has become idle and worthless in their lives.
- E. Such people should be reprov'd of their sins and warned of their danger (Tit. 3: 10; II Thess. 3:6).

- (2) "Comfort the feebleminded."

- A. The word "feebleminded" (*tous oligopschous*) means "small souled" or "fainted hearted."
- B. The word does not suggest mental deficiency as KJV translates.
- C. "Comfort" (*parmutheomai*) is "to encourage, to console."
- D. These members are discouraged because of the loss of loved ones (4:13) or persecution (2:14).
- E. They need sympathy and understanding.

- (3) "Support the weak."

- A. Spiritual weakness can take many forms. These are morally and spiritually weak.
- B. "Support" (*antechesthe*) literally means "to hold one's self over against." Let the strong put their arms around the weak and hold them up.

- C. These had a lack of moral courage and stamina and needed help (Rom. 15:1).
- D. They linger in the misty borderland between doubt and certainty, ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

(4) "Be patient toward all men."

- A. This means believers and unbelievers, the bitterest enemies and persecutors.
- B. God is patient with us (Ex. 34:6; Rom. 2:4; I Pet. 3:20). Let us strive to imitate His longsuffering and kindness.
- C. The Greek word (*makrothumeo*) means "long-tempered." The idea is to keep self-control when dealing with people (I Cor. 13:4)
- D. This is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
- E. There is no place for anger or the desire for retaliation here.

4. The need of proper relations with others (v. 15).

(1) "See that none render evil for evil unto any man."

- A. "See" calls attention to a common failure and the need of special oversight.
- B. Watchfulness is necessary to keep this prohibition.
- C. "Evil" means "harm caused by evil intent."
- D. This maxim is distinctly Christian, one of the loftiest in the Christian ethical code, and it is one of the hardest tests of Christian character (Rom. 12:17).

(2) "Follow that which is good."

- A. This means morally and spiritually good---beneficial and helpful.
- B. The original means "keep up the chase after the good."
- C. God's people in their contact with others must leave every man the better in body and soul (Matt. 5:43-44).

### III. INSTRUCTIONS IN GODLY LIVING (5:16-24).

1. The command to rejoice (v. 16).

- (1) God wishes His people to be happy, and He does not want us indifferent to our peace.
- (2) Christian joy is not dependent upon external circumstances. It is a product of the indwelling Spirit (Gal. 5:22; I Thess. 1:6; Acts 13:52; Col. 1:11).
- (3) Even suffering is not incompatible with rejoicing in the Lord (II Cor. 6:10).
- (4) This rejoicing is "in the Lord" (Phil. 4:4). Joy arises from the possession of present good and from anticipation of future happiness.
- (5) A religious life should be one of constant joy even in a world of sin, sorrow, and death.
- (6) "Evermore" (*pantote*) means "at all times." This is not only a privilege, but a



duty.

- (7) By conversion a man trades fading earthly joys for never-fading joy unspeakable (Ps. 32:11; 33:1).
- (8) The wicked may not rejoice (Hos. 9:1).

3. Be praying all the time (v. 17).

- (1) We must be in a prayerful attitude at all times, and there are to be stated seasons of prayer.
- (2) We are to be prepared for communion with God at all times (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Luke 18:1; Col. 4:2).
- (3) It is not possible to be always on bended knees, for other duties call.
- (4) We would rejoice more if we prayed more.
- (5) The adverb does not mean uninterrupted praying, but rather constantly recurring prayer.

3. Perpetual thanksgiving commanded (v. 18).

- (1) Prayer and thanksgiving go together (Phil. 4:6).
- (2) Every event and circumstance of life should furnish an occasion for thanksgiving.
- (3) The worldling considers that society owes him a living. Anything he has, he has earned by his own efforts, and he has no need of thanksgiving.
- (4) This age is known for being "unthankful" (II Tim. 3:2).
- (5) It is God's will we have a thankful spirit.
- (6) Failure to give thanks is evidence of alienation of a man from God (Rom. 1:21).

4. Do not repress the manifestation of the Spirit (v. 19).

- (1) We must not disregard the Spirit's presence, or refuse His guidance.
- (2) Do not stifle, but cherish and honor every impulse of the Spirit (Eph. 4:30).
- (3) There is always the danger that the impulse of the flesh might usurp the Spirit in the assembly.
- (4) The present continuous tense means "stop continually stifling the Spirit---don't attempt to put down the fire."
- (5) Our churches do not need a cold intellectualism, nor wild excess.
- (6) The influence of the Spirit on the soul is compared to fire (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:3). There may be an allusion to fire on the altar which was to be kept constantly burning (Lev. 6:12-13; II Chron. 29:6-7).
- (7) "Stir up" in II Timothy 1:6 is "kindle up" or "cause to burn."

5. Do not treat prophecy with contempt (v. 20).

- (1) Some of the members of this church had a low evaluation of prophesying. Pro-

- phesy is preaching (I Cor. 14:3).
- (2) Some may have abused the gift of prophecy, and this turned some against it.
- (3) Prophecy is a declaration of what cannot be known by natural means (II Pet. 1:21). It is foretelling of the will of God with reference to the past, present, and the future.
- (4) This gift was to comfort and to encourage believers (I Cor. 14:3) and convict of sin on the part of unbelievers (I Cor. 14:24-25).
- (5) This gift passed away with the completion of the canon of Scripture (I Cor. 13:8-9).

#### 6. Put to test spiritual gifts (v. 21).

- (1) "Prove" is *dokimazete* present imperative of *dokimazo*, "to try to examine" (I John 4:1). It means to put to the test for the purpose of approving.
- (2) There are deceivers and false prophets. We must not be gullible (I Cor. 12:10).
- (3) The Spirit helps to distinguish between what is true and false (I John 2:20,27).
- (4) We can test things by the Bible (Isa. 8:20; Acts 17:11).
- (5) What is right and true must be held fast.
- (6) It is the spirit of Christianity to examine everything. There is the right of private judgment.
- (7) We must not accept anything blindly, but we are to exercise the spiritual judgment bestowed upon us.

#### 7. Abstain from every form of evil (v. 22).

- (1) This precept is to be closely joined with the preceding (v. 21; Rom. 12:9). We must lay hold on the good and reject the evil (II Tim. 3:5).
- (2) "Evil" refers to moral and ceremonial practices which seem evil because they are evil.
- (3) "Abstain" (from *apecho*) "to hold back, to keep from." Keep away as far as possible from any visible form in which evil shows itself.
- (4) One of the worst evils is erroneous doctrine presented in an attractive way.
- (5) Some things which do not appear to be wrong are evil.
- (6) We must abstain from what looks like sin, leads to it, and borders upon it.

#### 8. Prayer for their entire sanctification (v. 23).

- (1) "And the very God of peace."

A. God is the author of peace and concord.

B. He is the Author of the covenant of peace and the Giver of peace (Rom. 15:33; 16:20).

- (2) "Sanctify you wholly."

- A. God alone can accomplish what we exhort you to do. All human efforts will fail unless God works in us (Phil. 1:6).
- B. The word "sanctify" means "to separate from evil and consecrate to God." There is also the thought of holiness of character in the consecrated.
- C. "Wholly" means complete sanctification.

(3) "And I pray God your whole spirit."

- A. These terms are arranged in the order of merit, the highest and purest part of man being put first.
- B. Sanctification begins with the inner (the spirit) and reaches to the outward (the body).
- C. The spirit of life imparted to man by God who is Spirit, enabling him to know and communicate with God.
- D. Even man's spirit is not yet totally sanctified (II Cor. 7:1).

(4) "And soul."

- A. The soul is the inferior part of man's mental nature, the seat of passions and desires.
- B. Some say the spirit and soul are the same, but this verse teaches otherwise. The Bible sometimes speaks of man as body and spirit (Luke 8:55; I Cor. 5:3; 7:34; Jas. 2:26) and at other times body and soul (Matt. 6:25; 10:28; Acts 20:10).
- D. Man is a trichotomous being (Heb. 4:12). The spirit and soul make up the non-material part of man, but the functions of these two sometimes overlap (Ps. 35:9; Luke 1:47; Isa. 36:9).

(5) "And body."

- A. This is the natural life of man---the animal life (Matt. 6:22).
- B. The body needs to be sanctified (I Thess. 4:3-8; I Cor. 6:12-20).

(6) "Be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- A. Paul prayed they might be preserved without blame or blemish until the coming of Christ. A pastor should pray thus for his people.
- B. Sanctification and preservation go together.
- C. "Entire" is literally "whole-lot" or complete and sound in every part.
- D. When Christ comes our works are to be tested (I Cor. 3:13; II Cor. 5:9-10).
- E. "Unto" is "in" (*en*). "In the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This points to the consummation of the work of sanctification in the believer at the rapture.
- D. Sanctification is the supreme end of the Christian life, and everything should contribute to the grand results. This is the purpose of election (Eph. 1:4) and predestination (Rom. 8:29).

9. The faithful God will sanctify (v. 24).

- (1) God will keep His word ( Ps. 36:5; 119:90; 138:8; I Cor. 1:9; II Thess. 3:3).
- (2) He will completely sanctify all His elect (Rom. 8:29-30).
- (3) God is the Caller and Doer, the Promiser and the Performer.
- (4) The Thessalonians were the objects of God's effectual call (I Thess. 2:12; II Thess. 2:14).
- (5) God's decrees are immutable and infallible, yet they are accomplished in a way prayer.
- (6) Prayer must be founded upon the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises.
- (7) God's faithfulness encourages us to confess our sins (I John 1:9), hope for His coming (heb. 10:13), and endure trials (I Cor. 10:13).
- (8) Oh, the never-failing aid of God!

IV. THE CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE (5:25-28)..

1. An important request (v. 25).

- (1) The most gifted saints have need of the prayers of God's people.
- (2) Paul often did this (Rom. 15:30-31; II Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; II Thess. 3:1; Heb. 13:18).
- (3) Ministers and people need each other's prayers.
- (4) Your prayers make ministers more useful to others.

2. A Christian salutation (v. 26).

- (1) The kiss of love in those days was a token of friendship, something like shaking hands today.
- (2) This kiss was pure and chaste---holy because it was the symbol of Christian affection (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12).
- (3) The brethren would include the sisters as well.
- (4) There was no romantic love in this kiss. This was on the cheek and a common form of Oriental greeting among friends (Luke 7:43).
- (5) Judas kissed Christ, but not with a holy kiss (Matt. 26:47-49).
- (6) Some historians say the men and women sat on different sides of the room in the churches for many centuries.

3. Public reading of the Scriptures (v. 27).

- (1) What the Roman Catholic Church forbids Paul enjoined.
- (2) The word "charge" means "to bind with a solemn oath." Paul put them under oath to perform that which he requested them to perform.
- (3) The word "read" means "to read aloud" (Neh. 8:8; Luke 4:16; Acts 8:28; I Tim. 4:13).
- (4) Paul realized this epistle was the inspired Word of God.

(5) It is important that the Scriptures be duly and daily read by all (John 5:39; Acts 17:11).

(6) The New Testament epistles belong to the churches. To deprive the churches of the Bible is a terrible sin!

4. A gracious benediction (v. 28).

(1) This is a typical Pauline practice. He often opened his letters and closed them with reference to grace (Col. 4:18; I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 4:22).

(2) The subscription is a scribal blunder. Paul wrote from Corinth, not Athens (3:1,6 Acts 18:1,5).