

## CLASS 3: 1 Thessalonians 1- Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians

### I. GREETING 1:1

**1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ:** First-century letters customarily began with the name of the writer then the addressee followed by a greeting. Paul is the predominant personality, and the letter may be mostly his from 2:18 on. Paul does not mention his apostleship as he does with other letters; he is not a stranger to the Thessalonians neither is his apostolic authority questioned among them. It seems that Silvanus (Silas) and Timotheus (Timothy) played more of a part in the letter than simply having their names added to the top as a formality, but whatever their communications were to the Thessalonian brethren, they were channeled through the writing of Paul.

Silas is next mentioned probably because he would have been older than Timothy and also had more years of service. He was Paul's companion on the second missionary journey, instead of Barnabas (Acts 15:37-40). He is mentioned in Acts 15:22 as a chief man among the brethren who was chosen for service regarding the letters that were to be circulated among the Gentiles, and in Acts 15:32 as a prophet who exhorted the brethren with spoken words from the Lord in addition to those contained in the letters. His name is Roman (Silvanus the Latinized version and Silas the Greek translation of the Aramaic); he was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). Paul highly regarded the preaching of his associates Silas and Timothy (2 Cor. 1:19).

Timothy is introduced in Acts 16:1-3 as a young man at Lystra who, though having a Greek father, had a Jewish mother. She had taught Timothy the scriptures and showed an example of genuine faith (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15); as of Acts 16 she had become a disciple of Christ. Timothy went with Paul. Paul considered Timothy his son in the gospel. He was often sent on missions by Paul because he had a genuine concern for the brethren (Phil. 2:20), his youth also perhaps giving him the advantage of not being detected by persecuting authorities.

The addressees are the "church of the Thessalonians." Paul usually addressed his letters to the saints at certain places, but here (as also in the second epistle and Galatians 1:1) he refers to the body or assembly of people that made up the church. The phrase "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ" modifies the word *church* (assembly). The church is made of those baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; cf. Acts 2:41, 47). Those in the church live in Christ day by day, and acknowledge their being wholly dependent on Him (Acts 17:28).

**Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.** Greetings were customary in Greek letters, but God used a new form in Paul's letters. "Greeting" and "Grace" are similar in Greek (James 1:1). Accordingly, we speak of the social graces in regard to using proper etiquette. But grace here takes on a deeper meaning than merely the polite expression of kindness, it refers to God's kindness to man in the gift of Jesus Christ.

Peace is often characterized by us, and the Greeks, as the absence of war, but the Jews regarded peace as the presence of something: the wholeness of one's spirit with God. The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, was an ordinary greeting

among the Jews. Thus, Paul was wishing more for the Thessalonians than merely avoiding conflict, he was desiring that God would make their spirits complete.

It is significant that the first verse of the epistle twice mentions the “Lord Jesus Christ” on the same exalted plane as God. “Lord” is the regular word of Jehovah in the Septuagint. Jesus is the human name, derived from the Hebrew “Joshua.” “Christ” is Greek for “anointed one,” the equivalent of Hebrew “Messiah.” The three are used together as a title for the second person of the Godhead. The Thessalonian epistles, while not making a formal argument for the deity of Christ, are full of references which show how Paul recognized Christ is as much God as the Father is.

## II. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING 1:2-4

**1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;** Just as our nation has forgotten that Thanksgiving was originally a day of fasting and prayer including the confession of sins, the spiritual nation of the church may have lost some of the appreciation for thanksgiving regarding those who are remaining faithful. As a persecuted people, Christians in the first century were very driven for fellowship with faithful saints and prayers of thanks for them. Paul’s giving of thanks was more than just a customary opening to his epistles. Here he displays the warm affection he has for the Thessalonians and mentions how his prayers to God have been saturated with thanksgiving for them. He encourages them and all Christians to value thanksgiving highly (1 Thess. 5:18). These new converts in Thessalonica encouraged Paul by their example (1 Thess. 3:6); it is never too early for a Christian to be an encouragement to fellow Christians. Paul’s prayers of thanks to God for the Thessalonians would, in turn, encourage them. Though they were being persecuted, they knew Paul was constantly praying for them. We ought to tell our brethren when we are praying for them.

**1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;** The Thessalonians were regularly in Paul’s thoughts. Their godly example was a good subject to think on (Phil. 4:8).

Paul thought of their work of faith. God was the object of their faith (1:8), and their faith in Him produced works. Though Paul taught that salvation is not achieved by works of human achievement (Eph. 2:8-9), he did acknowledge that works are a product of one being in Christ (Eph. 2:10). Many today have a misunderstanding of Paul’s teaching on works. The “work of faith” that Paul mentions here and in 2 Thess. 1:11 are just a couple of the many examples of the fact that Paul did not conceive faith and works to be opposed. The teaching of the Holy Spirit marries the two, works being an essential outgrowth of genuine faith (James 2:14-26). When Martin Luther questioned the letter of James as a “straw epistle” (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12) because he found Paul taught faith without works, he needed to return to Paul’s epistles and look at these such statements in order to clarify the context in which Paul’s attacks of works were made. Galatians is an example of Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, attacking a particular kind of works: works of the law. Many today, on this side of the Reformation, have lost the original context of the first-century debate in which an

important distinction had to be made between Christianity and the mother religion of Judaism; thus, they concoct a purported Pauline theology that is radically opposed to any works whatsoever. Faith is linked to works, as love is to labor, and hope to patience. True faith, love, and hope will transform our lives.

Love (*ἀγάπη*, *agape*) involves labor. Though it elicits emotions, it is more than a feeling. The Thessalonians labored for the Lord even when it was not attractive. Faith works, but love causes works to abound and go beyond the call of duty. Popular concepts of love in our day fall far short of the love we learn from God. God is love (1 John 4:8). His love is expressed not merely in words (1 John 3:18), but in actions and sacrifices He has made for our benefit (1 John 4:9). Thus, the Thessalonians saw what God's love really was and responded by giving of themselves in labor for the Lord. Their labor was prompted by love. Objects of their love would include other Christians both in their congregation (2 Thess. 1:3) and in other congregations (1 Thess. 4:9-10, the leadership of the church (1 Thess. 5:13), and all men, even those who were not converted to Christ (1 Thess. 3:12).

Patience (*ὑπομονή*, *hypomone*) is endurance or steadfastness. The trials of the Thessalonians produced more patience (Rom. 5:3). The Thessalonians could remain constant in their faithfulness to the Lord even in the face of persecution because they possessed patience (1 Thess. 2:14; 3:8). Hope is the source of this patience (Rom. 8:25). Biblical hope is more than a pipe dream; it is a certainty of what God will do in the future based on His word (Rom. 15:4). The Thessalonian letters are full of references to the coming of Christ (1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:1). The Thessalonians depended heavily on the future fact of Christ's return. It was the source of their hope (1 Thess. 4:13). Do we today display signs of a lack of anticipation for Christ's return? Do we not show that we have lost sight of our chief hope of Christ's return when we are slow to correct sin, become very angry over small slights, waste our time on mundane matters, or take for granted that we have tomorrow? Let's remember our hope: to have salvation in the day when Christ rewards all men according to their works. We can take a lesson from the Thessalonians in their eagerness for the Lord's return and the hope that sustained them.

Faith, love, and hope are all in the Lord Jesus Christ. The triad of faith, love, and hope recurs often in Paul's epistles (1 Thess. 5:8; Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Col. 1:4-5). Some verses have faith and loved joined together with patience, the fruit of hope (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:10).

**1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.** Paul addresses his readers as beloved brothers. He commonly used this terminology in his epistles especially in direct address (Rom. 1:13; 7:1, 4; 1 Cor. 1:10, 11, 26; 2 Cor. 1:8; 8:1; Gal. 1:11; 3:15; Phil. 1:12; 3:1; 2 Thess. 1:3). His direct appeal here is to express his assurance of their election.

The elect are those who believe and obey the gospel (Rom. 11:1-5; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:2). Paul is certain of the election of the Thessalonians because they demonstrated true faith and obedience. The Thessalonian church was made up of Gentiles who were persecuted by the Jews (Acts 17:5) and then by other Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:14). In the Mosaic age, God elected that one nation, Israel, would receive special blessings (Deut. 7:6-11; Rom. 9:11). But in the Christian

age, God elected (chose) that all nations would experience equal blessings from Jesus Christ. The Gentiles could be saved through faith and obedience to the gospel regardless of how the Jews regarded them (Gal. 3:14). Their acceptance in Christ was sure. Paul gives them the strong sense that they belong to God, regardless of their rejection by friends and family. The invitation is open to all, and each man must decide for himself whether or not to respond to the Lord's invitation (Rev. 22:17). Thus, the idea of election, rather than arguing against free will, communicates a sense of belonging to a family, that Christians are an exclusive group that is the saved community of God (Mk. 13:20; Lk. 18:7 Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10). We must make sure we remain in this blessed group (2 Pet. 1:10). Even though the election of the Thessalonians was sure, it did not mean apostasy was an impossibility. Paul, who was sure of their election, also was concerned about their continued faithfulness throughout this letter (3:5; 4:1-12; 5:1-11).

### III. ASSURANCE OF CONVERSION 1:5-6

**1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.** Genuine conversion is not based on the eloquence of the one who delivers the message. The foundation of Paul's conviction regarding the election of the Thessalonians was the power of the gospel, not his polished speech. The message that Paul and his companions brought to Thessalonica is called "our gospel" (cf. 2 Thess. 2:14 and 2 Cor. 4:3). It was Paul's in the sense that he was the agent through whom God revealed it to the Thessalonians. In regard to the originator it was the "gospel of God" (1 Thess. 2:2, 8, 9) or the gospel of Christ (1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Thess. 1:8). The imperial cult in Thessalonica would give the gospel of the emperor describing his experiences, edicts, and messages to the people. The gospel Paul brought was far different. He made a distinction between himself and the ancient rhetors, a fact that gives even more weight to the conclusion drawn in the introduction regarding structure of the letters. Paul's gospel was not based on wise and persuasive words, but in honest appeals to the consciences of men with the accompaniment of the Spirit's power (1 Cor. 2:4). Miracles confirmed the proclamation of the gospel in the first century (Rom. 15:18-19; 1 Cor. 1:6-7; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). This was how the gospel came to the Thessalonians and how they recognized it was a divine message. Other messages may have had skilled rhetoric, but lacked the confirmatory power of God. Likewise today, there are many "gospels" which are flashy and impressive, but are not established by the word of truth.

Paul adds the phrase "in much assurance" to indicate the way he and his companions were convinced of the veracity of their claims. Connected to their conviction, their conduct also spoke volumes. Paul notes how the Thessalonians are aware of the behavior he, Silas, and Timothy exhibited while among them. This subject will be expounded upon in 2:1-12, an important purpose of this letter being to reassure the Thessalonians that Paul and his associates were not as the envious Jews may have painted them, charlatans who came to make a profit of them and left at the first sign of trouble. It is always important to distinguish the true servants of God from those who hijack religion for selfish gain.

**1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:** How the Thessalonians received the message was also an evidence for their genuine election. The subject shifts from “we” in the previous to “ye” in this verse. The Thessalonians became imitators (**μιμητής**, *mimetes* from which we get our English word *mimic*) of the apostles and the Lord. Paul encouraged people to follow him only as he followed the Lord (1 Cor. 11:1).

One key way in which the Thessalonians, and the Judean churches for that matter (1 Thess. 2:14) had become imitators of the Lord was in suffering (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 2:21; 3:17-18; 3:12-13). They “received the word in much affliction.” Part of being a Christian is suffering (Mt. 8:18-22; 10:22-25; Mk. 8:34; Jn. 15:18-21; 16:33; Acts 9:15-16; 14:21-22). The Thessalonians were made aware of this part of Christianity (1 Thess. 2:14; 3:3-4; 2 Thess. 1:4-7; 3:3-5); however, today it may be that we have forgotten it. Paul regularly taught new converts of the tribulations Christians must face (Acts 14:22). It was not as if they did not know what they were signing up for; if Paul was persecuted when he brought the gospel to them (Acts 17:5-9), then those who decided to follow the message Paul preached had to know that they would find themselves in a similar position. In spite of the persecution, the Thessalonians had received the word “with joy of the Holy Ghost.”

Christians, though it is their lot to suffer for the cause of Christ, also are a joyful people. This combination seems odd to the world, because they do have the Holy Spirit. The Spirit teaches us not to base our happiness on external circumstances, but on our right relationship with God. Paul had learned to be content in whatever outward state he was in (Phil. 4:11-13). It was the influence of the Holy Spirit in his life and the life of Silas that caused them to be able to sing while in prison at Philippi (Acts 16:25).

#### IV. INFLUENCE 1:7-10

**1:7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.** Because the Thessalonians had received the gospel with joy even in the midst of suffering they became an example to the other congregations in the region of Greece. At this time there were only a few congregations that we know of in the region. Philippi, Berea, and Corinth are the three of which we can be fairly certain. It is likely that Athens ought to be added to this number and perhaps Cenchrea since later in Romans 16:1, Paul mentions a church existed there. In the church we warm by the fires others have lighted. We see the chain of example from the Lord to Paul to the Thessalonians to these other congregations in Macedonia and Achaia. This was Paul's plan in planting these congregations; not only would the cities in which these congregations existed be evangelized but also the entire region would be influenced by the presence of Christians in these key areas. What is impressive regarding this statement is that the entire congregation is deemed a model by Paul. We know of particular persons in every congregation that are models we should imitate, but for an entire congregation to be described this way indicates that Thessalonica was an exceptional church. The aforementioned members of the Thessalonian church which travelled are a likely means by which this influence was spread. This is not the only as an example. The churches of Macedonia are an example in 2 Corinthians 8 regarding giving. It is likely that Thessalonica was the catalyst to this attitude from what we can ascertain of Paul's remark about the demonstration of love by the Thessalonians to other Macedonian brethren in 1 Thessalonians 4:10.

**1:8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.** The reason Thessalonica was such an example is due to the manner in which the reports of their faith went out to other regions. The words "sounded out" come from ἐξηγήομαι *execheomai* indicating a clap of thunder that echoes forth, or a rumor that runs everywhere. Their example was heard loud and clear. The key geographical location of the city and the itinerant character of some of the members of the congregation were key in getting the message out, but the reason it spoke volumes was due to the exemplary faith in the reception of the gospel among all of the converts in Thessalonica. Some of the most powerful evangelists are those who are newly converted. The evangelistic effort of the church of Thessalonica was producing dynamic results. The example was so powerful that Paul did not have to say to others what the gospel had done for those in Thessalonica; this work was already done.

**1:9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;**

The statements here indicate a primarily Gentile makeup of the congregation. They had turned from something: idols. Thessalonica was filled with cults dedicated to the Roman emperors, Serapis, Cabirus, the Greek Olympians and many other idols. They had then turned to something: God. The many gods worshipped in Thessalonica had once possessed the minds and garnered the devotions of the members of the Thessalonian church, but they had turned from that. Repentance is necessary for salvation. Repentance is often described as turning (Hos. 14:2; Joel 2:19; Amos 4:8; Acts 14:15; 15:19; 2 Cor. 3:16). It is the most difficult of commands because it requires a drastic change first in the will, then in action in regard to sin. There was no mixing of God with the idols that they once had. They recognized that no man can serve two masters (Mt. 6:24). They completely renounced all of their idols and served God alone. The Thessalonians removed idols from their lives, but they did not leave a void; they replaced the living and true God where the idols had once been (Mt. 12:43-45; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). They turned to serve. Many may turn, but how many turn to serve? Turning to God is more than just singing praises to Him, it involves daily sacrificial service (Rom. 12:1). Their faith in God produced works and their love for Him produced labor (1:3).

**1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.** Whereas the previous verse described the past, (serving idols), and the present (serving the living and true God), this verse looks toward the future for the hope of Christ's return, a fact Paul mentions to as certain as Christ's resurrection. Christ's ascension into heaven indicates a return, almost vice versa of Ephesians 4:8-10. The resurrection and the return of Christ both occupied an important place in Paul's preaching to the unconverted (Acts 17:30-31). The idea of wrath to come is a motivating factor in decided to turn to God (Acts 24:25; 2 Cor. 5:10-11). God's legal wrath on those who do not know or obey Him is a certain event that we can only escape through Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:5-10). The coming of Christ finds its place near the end of every chapter of this epistle (1:13; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23). An eager longing for that day was forefront in the minds of the Thessalonians, and it ought to be in ours as well.

## CLASS 4: 1 Thessalonians 2 - Paul's Ministry

### I. THE SUCCESS OF PAUL'S MINISTRY 2:1-8

**2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:** Paul now elaborates on the character of his initial visit to Thessalonica, a theme introduced in 1:9. Whether it was persecuting unbelievers who were smearing Paul's character or those within the church who were left to face adversity alone and began to wonder if Paul really cared for them, the appeal to the conduct of Paul and his companions during the initial stay at Thessalonica would go a long way in easing the minds of the members of the Lord's church there. It seems that some were saying that Paul had a criminal record and the reason for his quick departure was that he was on the run from justice. But the Thessalonians knew what kind of people Paul, Silas, and Timothy were; they needed to think back to the blameless character these men exhibited in their presence to assure their hearts while the evangelists were absent from them. Paul calls them to remember here and frequently in other portions of this letter (1:5; 3:3-4; 4:2; 5:2). Paul's entry into Thessalonica was not a failure, (not empty or vain cf. 1 Cor. 15:14; Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8; James 2:20); his motives were pure and his doctrine was sound. In 1:9-10, Paul mentioned the great results of his efforts in Thessalonica. It was always a joy for Paul to know his labors were not in vain (1 Cor. 15:10, 58; 2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 3:5).

**2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.** The treatment Paul and Silas received at Philippi, (the degrading punishment of being stripped of their robes, beaten with rods, and placed in the stocks in the inner prison), was a test of their genuineness. Paul demand for the magistrates to admit their wrong by coming themselves to free himself and Silas was to highlight the integrity of the preachers (Acts 16:35-40). It was the magistrates that had violated the law by beating and incarcerating Paul and Silas without a trial. Maintaining their integrity before the Thessalonians was Paul's reason for reminding Thessalonians of his suffering. No charlatan will continue to preach a message that continually brings him suffering; frauds are in it for benefiting themselves, not suffering for the sake of others. Thus, in spite of their treatment at Philippi, they continued to preach in Thessalonica in the face of opposition. Why? Because they loved the souls of men and were willing to suffer that others might be saved.

The word *contention* comes from a word that can mean internal conflict (Col. 2:1) or fight (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7), but the context here indicates that it was external conflict (cf. Phil. 1:30). Paul was not a stranger to suffering (2 Cor. 11:23-28), but he did not allow suffering to make him timid in proclaiming the gospel. In God, Paul and his companions were bold; they knew God approved of their work even if men didn't. Christians today may not be bold on their own standings, but can be bold in God to speak His message. Notice the message is called the "gospel of God" because God is the source of it. When we declare the message of God, we can be bold in the face of opposition because we know the message is right. We are not proclaiming a concoction of fallible men that contains error, but the truth of God. For the Thessalonian converts, it was

helpful for them to remember that Paul and his companions were involved in the same struggles they were facing.

**2:3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:** Paul refers to his preaching as exhortation (*paraklesis*). This word has a wide range of meanings. The familiar definitions of encouragement and consolation are involved since the message of the gospel is a comfort to those in turmoil, but the word also involves the idea of beseeching, (to strongly urge someone, invoking them to obedience), as it is rendered in 2 Cor. 5:20 and 6:1. This exhortation of Paul's company when it was first delivered in Thessalonica did not spring from error or impurity, neither was it proclaimed in deceit. The word *of* in this verse indicates origin, while the word *in* indicates atmosphere. It did not come from being mistaken or having impure motives and it was not proclaimed in an attempt to lead the audience astray. Paul distinguishes himself from the traveling religious quacks who preyed on the gullibility of their followers.

**2:4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.** God approved of Paul being entrusted with the gospel message because he had a true heart. God has always examined the hearts of men (Psa. 7:9; 17:3; Jer. 11:20; 12:3; 17:9-10). God described Paul as a chosen vessel (Acts 9:15), He knew the heart and will of this man from Tarsus. In Galatians 1:15-16, Paul describes God's plan in using him if and when he chose to obey the gospel. Paul decided to please God rather than men (Gal. 1:10), and that commitment is what made him so instrumental in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles.

**2:5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:** In his refusal to please people over God, Paul denies that he ever spoken with flattering speech, a theme introduced 1:5. Flattery was often used by wandering preachers to ingratiate themselves to their audience in hope of material gain. Efforts to mask the simple greed for money are called a "cloke of covetousness;" it is an attempt to hide the real motive of an eager desire for what one does not have (cf. Mt. 23:14; Mk. 12:40; Lk. 20:47; Acts 27:30; Phil. 1:18). Covetousness is a self-seeking, desire for material wealth (Luke 12:15); greediness (Eph. 4:19); idolatry (Col. 3:5). The religious quacks in first-century Thessalonica preyed on the same caliber of people that internet scams, email phishing, and check fraud victimize in the twenty-first century: people unable to detect when something is too good to be true. The Thessalonians, like us, were attuned to be on the lookout for such culprits. But Paul's sudden departure was not because he was a sham; God is Paul's witness that he had pure motives. Paul announced on several occasions that God was his witness for what he was saying (Rom. 1:9; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:10; 2 Cor. 1:23). It shows how intensely serious he was about his conviction. Old Testament characters mentioned a witness in heaven (Job 16:19; Psa. 89:37). Paul demonstrated how he did have a secret covetousness that he was masking by the fact he worked with his own hands among them (2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8; 1 Cor. 4:12; Acts 20:33-34). Paul's handling of financial contributions made by congregations was done in honesty (2 Cor. 8:20-21), and through the inspiration of the Spirit he commanded that elders be the same way in the money they handle (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2).

**2:6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.** The Lord Jesus Christ

did not seek glory from men but from God, and His disciples should follow the example (Jn. 5:41, 44). While it is evident from his tone that the Thessalonians admired Paul, the point of this verse is that admiration from men was not what he was seeking. It is not wrong to respect preachers, but it is wrong for men to seek vainglory (Phil. 2:3). Paul, Silas, and Timothy refused to be supported by the Thessalonians, a practice which plainly showed their motives were not to make money off their converts. Paul mentioned how they might be burdensome to them, as apostles of Christ. Silas and Timothy were apostles in the generic sense of being ones sent (Acts 14:14; 2 Cor. 8:23), Paul in the proper sense of holding the office on par with the twelve (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11). As an apostle or even a preacher, there is a right to be supported by those to whom one preaches (1 Cor. 9:4-14). Paul makes the point clear that preachers have this right, but he himself frequently chose not to exercise it so that the church would be benefited (1 Cor. 9:18-19). The word *burdensome* comes from *baros*, a weight. Paul could be referring to being a financial burden, but in the context it can be understood in the sense of the burden of authority. It conveys the idea that they could have made demands as apostles of Christ, but did not.

**2:7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:** Instead of throwing the weight of authority around, Paul was gentle among the Thessalonians. Paul compares himself to a nurse among her own children. A nurse may be hired to care for other children, but as good as that care was, there would be a difference when it was her own biological children she was nursing. This natural affection is the way Paul illustrates his love for the brethren at Thessalonica; Paul could be relied upon to genuinely care for them.

**2:8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.** The primary reason for the preachers being at Thessalonica was the gospel of God. Without the gospel, the preachers would not have been there. It was in service to God that they imparted the good news that can save souls. But also Paul, Silas, and Timothy were wholly devoted to their task. They gave of their own souls when they gave the message of salvation (cf. 2 Cor. 12:17; Phil. 2:17). The motivation for giving all of this is stated at the beginning and ending of this verse: because the Thessalonians were dear to them.

## II. THE INTEGRITY OF PAUL'S MINISTRY 2:9-12

**2:9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.** Paul calls to their remembrance the toil that he undertook while in their midst. Paul's particular trade was the making of tents (Acts 18:3), and the fact that canvas for tents was made from goats' hair manufactured in Paul's homeland of Cilicia may have been a reason why he chose this trade. What Silas and Timothy did in toil we do not know, but what is clear from this verse is that the preachers engaged in wearisome work night and day. The original indicates that the work was in the night and in the day. Jesus indicated that in the first century labor contracts customarily took place between sunrise and sunset (Jn. 9:4). Paul, Silas, and Timothy went above and beyond, even laboring in the night. It seems that they were not working all night and all day, but rather whatever time they had outside of preaching the gospel in the

night or in the day was taken up in toil. Paul did receive financial help from the brethren at Philippi while at Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16); however, the gift was used only for the furtherance of the gospel. Paul and his companions also stayed in the house of Jason during their time in the city (Acts 17:5-7), but they were not involved patronage (2 Thess. 3:8). Paul did not receive gifts from the Thessalonians while among them because he was illustrating the great biblical principle of industriousness. Perhaps those converts who came directly out of idolatry (1:9) were won by Paul's preaching at the workplace where Paul was selling tents.

**2:10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:** The Thessalonians are witnesses of what Paul is claiming in this section. His character was known to all. God and the Thessalonians were both witnesses. Thus, there were two witnesses to establish the integrity of Paul and his companions (Deut. 17:6; Jn. 5:31-37; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28). They bore witness that Paul, Silas, and Timothy conducted themselves in a holy manner. They also acted justly, that is fairly, or righteously. Additionally, they behaved unblameably. Though they were brought before the politarchs and blamed, this accusation was made by "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort" (Acts 17:5). Thus, to behave "unblameably" is that no true accusation can be made against you, not that false, envious people will never to defame you.

The conduct of Paul and his companions exhibited all these qualities in front of those who believed. Paul is not saying that they acted differently among unbelievers, but simply to reiterate that those in the church had responded in faith to the message of these preachers.

**2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,** Another appeal is made to the knowledge of the Thessalonians regarding their stay in the city. The affection of the mother used in verse 7 is now coupled with the encouragement, comfort, and charge of the father. Paul often used the imagery of a father to convey how he begat children in the gospel through his preaching (1 Cor. 4:15; Philemon 10), and also how he continued to instruct these children in the fundamentals of the faith (1 Cor. 4:14-15; 2 Cor. 6:11-13). A father not only tells children their duty, but also encourages them when they fail to try again. He also warns of the danger of forsaking his instruction. A father often bases his instruction on the experiences of his own life, as Paul's own faithfulness through suffering is mentioned here to be a basis for the Thessalonians to follow the instruction he gave them in the Lord.

**2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.** To walk worthy of God is a high calling with great demands. Paul's fatherly exhortations and charges involved this moral instruction. Walking is a way of designating the entirety of a man's life (4:1). Turning from what Christians should do for God, a consideration of what God has done for man occupies that last half of this verse. God is the one who called the Thessalonians. He calls all people by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). This call is to enter to kingdom, the church (Mt. 16:18; Col. 1:13). Through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection the way is opened for men to enter the church. They do so by being baptized into the church (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 1:18). Though we reflect the Father's glory while here on earth (Mt. 5:16; 2 Cor. 3:18). When Christ

returns and resurrects us to be with him, we will experience even greater glory (Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:10).

### III. THANKSGIVING FOR THEIR RECEPTION OF THE MESSAGE AND ENDURANCE IN SUFFERING 2:13-16

**2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.** Paul returns to thanksgiving with which he began the letter. His thankfulness here is the reception the Thessalonians had of the instruction Paul gave them. They had recognized what the message truly was: the word of God, not the word of men (1:6, 8; 4:15; 2 Thess. 3:1. God's word has much more power than the words of men, by it the universe came into existence (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26; Psa. 33:6). Paul always recognized that what he spoke was not his own words but God's (cf. 2:9; 1 Cor. 14:37). He did not owe his message to human wisdom, but to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13). The effectual working of the word in the Thessalonians was due to the fact that they recognized the divine nature of the message. When people wholeheartedly believe the word of God they will respond to it in true obedience.

The word of God works in them that believe. Notice in this verse that they word of hearing on the outside of a man becomes the word working on the inside if he accepts it in faith and puts it into practice (Eph. 3:20; Col. 3:16; Heb. 4:2). It is the seed of the kingdom (Lk. 8:11-15). It is God's living and active word (Heb. 4:12) that causes us to be born again (1 Pet. 1:23), saved (James 1:21), sanctified (John 17:17; 1 Tim. 4:15), and edified (Acts 20:32).

**2:14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:** Paul calls them "brethren" again in maintaining the family concept of the church. Here they are brethren in experience. There was a similarity between the Thessalonian congregation and the converts in Judea, namely each suffered from their own countrymen. In their suffering at the hands of their own people, they became followers not only of the Judean congregations, but ultimately of the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles. When God's word is operative in us, as the previous verse indicates, we immediately find that we come in conflict with an evil world. Paul had already mentioned how the Thessalonians were imitators of the Lord and himself in 1:6. All of these had suffered for their faith (2 Thess. 1:5). Judea is the region surrounding Jerusalem, particularly the southern province of Palestine, which had the oldest congregations (9:31; 11:1, 29; Gal. 1:22), and thus, might have had a certain status among other congregations (Rom. 15:26-27; Acts 15). These congregations were in Christ Jesus, where salvation is located (Gal. 1:22; 2 Tim. 2:10). Ownership is indicated by the phrase "churches of God" (cf. Rom. 16:16). It was in Judea where the Jewish influence and persecution was the strongest. The first persecutions of the church were there (Acts 5:27-42). Paul, himself, was formerly committing this persecution in Judea before he became a Christian (Acts 8:3; Gal. 1:22-23; 1 Tim. 1:13). The Jewish Christians in Judea suffered at the hands of unbelieving Jews as the Gentiles Christians in Thessalonica had suffered at the hands of their unbelieving compatriots. Though the term "own

countrymen” may be geographical to include the Jews in Thessalonica, the contrast seems to more particularly refer to Gentile persecutors. In the Acts 17 account, the Thessalonian congregation had the Jews as their initial persecutors (Acts 17:5-7), but the aversion for Christians spilled over into the Gentile world in short time (Acts 17:8-9), partly due to Jewish accusations and partly due to conversions to Christ taken as an insult to the idols. There is no direct link between the Jewish persecutors in Judea and those in Thessalonica, but Paul is making a comparison in highlighting how suffering persecution was the lot of all Christians (2 Tim. 3:12).

These statements would be considered antisemitic today, but they are from God, and flowed from the pen of a Jewish man upset with his own countrymen who desired that they be saved (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1-3). The unbelieving Jews were a perpetual threat to Paul and his companions; after all, they were the ones who followed Paul from Thessalonica to Berea to persecute him (Acts 17:13), just as envious Jews had followed him in order to persecute during his first missionary journey culminating in his stoning (Acts 14:19). How far the persecution in Thessalonica was carried is hard to tell, but the discussion of those fallen asleep in Christ Jesus (4:13) could certainly include martyrs.

**2:15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:** The unbelieving Jews who were responsible for the death of Christ and the persecution of the church were haters of all men. Tacitus accused the Jews of being haters of every race. Jesus had exposed many of the Jewish leaders in Judea to be like their forefathers who killed the prophets (Mt. 23:31-37). They not only would not obey themselves, but they refused to let others obey (Mt. 23:13). How amazing it is that God used the stubbornness of this people in His own plan to save all men (Rom. 11:25).

**2:16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.** Sins, not repented of and not forgiven will bring about the wrath of God. They are spoken of as massing together in a collection that fills to the brink (Gen. 15:16; Dan. 8:23; Mt. 23:32). God allows men to continue in sin because He is longsuffering (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 2:4). But eventually sin must be dealt with and the longsuffering reaches its limit. It is not necessary to see in this that the Jews were conscious that they were amassing sins, neither that God had predetermined how many sins they were to commit. God knows the hearts of men and can use their decisions to execute His precise timing in a way that is beyond our understanding (Rom. 11:33-36). He may wait until many others see the need for a nation to be punished, before unleashing His fury. Wrath would extend to the uttermost: that is to the time when God would execute judgment upon them, at last. Wrath was coming (1:10), and it was certain enough that Paul could use the past tense here, almost like a prophetic past (Isa. 53:5). Through belief and obedience to Christ the Thessalonian Christians would escape the wrath to come. Afforded so many opportunities through the preaching and miracles of Jesus Christ and His apostles, the obstinate heart of the Jew who rejected it all would have to be so hardened that no other end but wrath could be envisioned. The final ruin of the Jewish nation was at hand because of their sins. The siege of Jerusalem in AD 70 was such an event. God’s wrath may come many times through history. In fact, when Paul wrote these words, he was not too far

removed from Claudius' decree in AD 49 expelling Jews from Rome and a massacre in the temple during Passover the same year, events of which we cannot be if God's hand played a part. But God's wrath will ultimately come to the fore at the end of time, on that final day when He will also reward His saints (2 Thess. 1:5-10).

#### IV. PAUL'S INTEREST TO SEE THEM 2:17-20

**2:17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.**

A contrast is begun here. In spite of the opposition from unbelievers, Paul's mind was to return to Thessalonica. Some have conjectured that between Paul's initial visit and this letter a period of six months intervened. What we know for sure is that Paul calls it a "short time." Whatever the exact time, Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know that he has been so desirous to see them and reassures them that his absence was due to the fact that he had been torn from them by persecution. Acts 17:10 shows how they were obliged to leave the city to keep the peace. Paul often felt the desire to be with brethren he had converted so that he could help them to be established in the truth (Col. 2:1; Gal. 4:20).

**2:18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.** More than just been an frivolous desire, Paul had attempted to see them. Paul mentions himself here to express how personal his attempt was. Silas and Timothy were at times not with him. Paul may have attempted a trip to Thessalonica when he was on his own. Satan had barred the way so that Paul could not return. One of the influences of Satan would be the Jews that had continued to threaten Paul's life. While Paul was in Corinth the Jews opposed him (Acts 18). This may have occupied him so he could not return. Satan is behind anything that hinders the work of God.

**2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?**

**2:20 For ye are our glory and joy.**

Just as the Philippians were (Phil. 2:16; 4:1), the Thessalonians, his next converts were his joy and crown, as were the Corinthians whom he converted after those in Thessalonica (Acts 18:1-17; 2 Cor. 1:14). A crown is a figure of the wreath worn by victorious athletes in the Grecian games, and represents in scripture the incorruptible joy of being in heaven (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 4:7-8). Paul would gladly lay the Thessalonians whom he converted before the feet of his king, Jesus Christ at the last day when he recognized them and his other converts in glory.







## CLASS 5: 1 Thessalonians 3 – Timothy’s Visit

### I. Timothy Sent to Thessalonica 3:1-5

**3:1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;** “Wherefore” hearkens back to Paul’s great desire to see them expressed in 2:17. Satan’s hindering of Paul’s personal return to Thessalonica left Paul frustrated and apprehensive. Paul’s anxiety over the Thessalonians, being new in the faith and suffering for it, reached a threshold where he chose to send Timothy their way while he stayed at Athens. This statement adds our understanding of the details of the journeys of Paul and his companions. Acts 17:14-15 shows that Paul arrived at Athens alone, but called for Silas and Timothy to come to him from Berea immediately. Athens was a city wholly given to idolatry (Acts 17:16), and Paul recognized that it would be better to have someone with him to help in this environment (cf. Mark 6:7); however, confirming the faith of the Thessalonians trumped Paul’s need in Athens. Timothy evidently arrived at Athens, a detail not recorded in Acts because it was not pertinent to Luke’s purpose, but was dispatched back to Macedonia and Paul remained alone in Athens, a point that Paul makes here to display his interest in the Thessalonians. Silas and Timothy reunited with Paul at Corinth having come from Macedonia (Acts 18:5). We cannot be certain of whereabouts of Silas. Whether he stayed in Berea, or if he accompanied Timothy in the trip to Athens as Paul called for in Acts 17:14-15 and then returned to Berea or some other place in Macedonia, is not the concern of this letter nor the Acts narrative. The pronoun “we” combined with the term “alone” hints that Paul is using the epistolary plural here rather than necessarily indicating that Silas was with him. As we have mentioned before, when Paul arrived at Corinth he was alone disheartened until Silas and Timothy arrived (1 Corinthians 2:3; Acts 18:5). He had made a sacrifice, forgoing the encouragement of Timothy, choosing to be abandoned (as the original translated “left” indicates, see Mark 12:19) that the Thessalonians would be comforted. The Thessalonians could gauge how genuine Paul’s care was for them by the fact that Timothy was sent back.

**3:2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:** Paul describes Timothy here as “our brother.” Paul addressed Timothy as his own son in his epistles to him (1 Timothy 1:2; 2:2). Philippians 2:19-24 gives us further appreciation of the character of Timothy as a one-of-a-kind character who genuinely cared for others and sought to serve Christ and not himself. Paul in the Philippians passage said that Timothy served with him “as a son with a father” (Philippians 2:22). These paternal references Paul makes regarding Timothy were not pompous titles as Jesus condemned in the religious leaders (Matthew 23:9), but expressed a familial tie. The church is a family and Paul’s reference to Timothy as a brother shows that even though Paul had apostolic authority, he did not lord it over others as if he should be exalted. Paul recognized that in Christ he was not superior to the Thessalonians or Timothy. They were all brothers in the family of God.

Timothy is also God a “minister of God” indicating his work was to serve the Lord and not man. The word *minister* comes from the same Greek word rendered deacon (*diakonos*). This does not mean that Timothy held the office of a deacon, but here it is used as a generic term for servant as it is in Romans 16:1.

He was a “fellowlabourer” (Romans 16:3, 9, 21; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 4:3; 8:23; Philippians 2:25; Colossians 4:11; Philemon 1, 24) in the gospel, working along side God as Paul did. Timothy was highly regarded by Paul and often functioned as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; Philippians 2:19). He was young and did not have the experience of Silas, having joined the missionary team earlier in Paul’s second journey (Acts 16:1-3), but his value was no less for it. His youth may have made able to slip in and out of the city undetected by persecuting authorities, not being marked by them the way Paul and Silas may have been.

He was to come to their side to support the Thessalonians. Timothy would help them in their troubles, encouraging them to remain faithful, reminding them their suffering at the hands of their fellow citizens was not in vain (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). He was also to investigate their faith as 3:5 indicates.

**3:3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.** Timothy’s mission was to strengthen these young Christians and prevent them be moved away from serving the Lord by the emotional agitation that their suffering would provoke. Their “election” of 1:4 obviously did not mean their was not possibility of apostasy; falling from their faith was a very real possibility that Paul and his companions were anxious to avoid.

Paul reminds them of another thing they already know, namely, the teaching that afflictions must be endured; it is the lot of all Christians. The word “we” is general and refers to all Christians, meaning that every Christian is appointed to afflictions (Matthew 13:21; Mark 10:30; John 15:18; 16:33; Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12). We should not think it a strange thing to suffer for Christ (1 Pet. 4:12). God allows His people to suffer (Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 2:20-21; 3:17; 4:19). Speakers today who advance a message of prosperity and outward ease are far from this teaching on suffering that occupied a center place in first-century inspired teaching.

**3:4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.** During their initial visit, they taught the Thessalonians converts that suffering persecution was part of the Christian life, not to mention the example of enduring threats and hardship Paul and his companions had displayed themselves while in the city. The imperfect tense of the verb indicates that they returned to this theme of suffering time and again. Paul had predicted that suffering would happen in the lives of the Thessalonians. When we are going through suffering, it is easy for us to question its purpose; as Christians we must be reminded what we have signed up for. It was good for the Thessalonians to be reminded in the midst of suffering that this was all part of God’s plan.

**3:5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.**

Because suffering persecution was the lot of these new converts, Paul was concerned about their continued faithfulness. While the testing of our faith is part of the program of God, Satan uses it as an occasion to tempt us to give up. This verse is one of the occasions in the Bible where the devil is called simply

“the tempter” (cf. Matthew 4:3). Persecution can lead to discouragement a state Satan uses to his advantage (2 Corinthians 2:11). He had impeded Paul’s return (2:18), the isolation of the Thessalonians being part of his plan of attack against their souls. Paul often referred to Satan seeking to destroy the fruits of missionary labors (1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 2:10ff; 11:13-15; 1 Thessalonians 2:18). The Thessalonians in facing the inevitable temptations that come to all, could fall away making Paul’s work among them in vain or they could resist and make Satan’s activity vain, sending him running (James 4:7; cf. Ephesians 6:16; Romans 6:20). Paul could “no longer forbear” knowing what the spiritual state of these converts was.

## II. Good News from Timothy 3:6-10

**3:6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:** The arrival of Timothy at Corinth (Acts 18:5) with a good report of the Thessalonians’ faith resulted in buoyed Paul’s spirits as he had clearly been agonizing over them. When Paul feared the worst, the news was the best. The word “now” indicates that Timothy had just recently arrived when Paul wrote these words, no doubt Timothy’s report was cause for this letter.

First, Timothy brought a report of the virtues of faith and love that characterized the church at Thessalonica (faith 1:8; 3:2, 5, 7, 10; 2 Thess. 1:4, 11, 2:13; love (3:12; 4:9; 5:13; 2 Thess. 3:5). All Christians ought to possessive these distinctive characteristics (Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4-5; 1 Timothy 1:14; Philemon 5; Revelation 2:19). The character of the Thessalonian church demonstrated that they had not yielded to the temptations of Satan, but held firm to their faith in the gospel. It was Satan, not Paul, who work in Thessalonica was unfruitful.

Second, Timothy conveyed the message that the Thessalonian brethren were not resentful or hostile towards Paul because of his rapid exodus from the city, but rather were filled with warm and kind memories of his stay there. If there were smear tactics employed by ex-friends of the Thessalonians to brand Paul and his company as charlatans, the accusations did not stick. They wanted to see Paul, reciprocating his desire to see them (2:17-18; 3:10-11). Paul often expressed his desire to see fellow Christians (Romans 1:11; Philippians 2:26; 2 Timothy 1:4).

**3:7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:** It is difficult to imagine better news than what Paul received. He and his companions were so comforted (or encouraged as in v. 2) since they had so agonized over the spiritual state of the Thessalonian Christians. “Over” in this verse means that Paul’s strength was based upon the Thessalonians. Paul mentions that he and his companions were also suffering for their faith. He wanted to communicate that he experienced constraints of duty and difficulties of persecution as well. The faith of the Thessalonians was the reason Paul, Silas, and Timothy were encouraged in the midst of all the troubles they were enduring. There is no greater joy for the minister of the gospel than to know that those with whom he has labored are faithful (2 John 4).

**3:8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.** The reference here to living, as it is many times in the Bible, is not to physical existence but of joy in the soul.

Obviously Paul and his companions were surviving physically, but living is more than survival. Manifold persecutions caused Paul to regard himself and all Christians “as sheep for the slaughter” (Romans 8:36). Paul often shared the sentiments of David who lived under death’s shadow (Psalm 23:4 cf. 1 Samuel 20:3) Paul said concerning persecutions, “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). But to hear that the Thessalonian converts were standing fast in the Lord gave Paul and his companions a revival. It renewed their purpose in life and gave their sacrifices meaning. The word *if* connotes that Paul’s sense of wellbeing would continue as long the Thessalonians remained faithful. We also must stand by faith (Romans 11:20; 2 Corinthians 1:24), that is, steadfastly living by faith in face of opposition (2 Thess. 2:15). Instead of being “moved” as Paul feared (v.3), the Thessalonians stood firm.

**3:9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;** Paul asks a rhetorical question to indicate how immeasurably great his joy was for the Thessalonians faithfulness. Paul, the Thessalonians, and really all Christians have the potential to be joyful in spite of persecution (1:6). Paul is so overwhelmingly thankful for the good news about them he is at a loss for words in how to express it to God. Though Paul expresses his joy to the Thessalonians, he recognizes it is God who is to be thanked. He wants pay back (render cf. 2 Thess. 1:6) thanks to God for the great joy he has.

**3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?** Paul’s prayers regarding the Thessalonians were incessant. They were offered night and day. Thus, they were effective (James 5:16) Since Paul had to leave so quickly from Thessalonica there were still gaps in their understanding of the gospel that he was eager to fill in. The Thessalonians were standing firm in their faith, but they still need to be further instructed. What was lacking their was not a lack of faith, but an incomplete understanding of “the faith” (Jude 3). Timothy probably brought back some indications in his report regarding what gaps existed in their understanding. It is clear from the Thessalonian letters that one of the gaps was the doctrine of the second coming of Christ.

### III. Prayers for the Thessalonians 3:11-13

**3:11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.** Since Satan had hindered Paul from returning to Thessalonica, he knew that it was only through God’s intervention that he could have the opportunity to return back there. God the Father and Jesus Christ the Lord are linked together again here showing the deity of Christ. Jesus is just as divine as the Father and has His part in removing obstacles that stand in our way; He opens and shuts doors (Revelation 3:7). Apparently the answer to this prayer was fulfilled not immediately but later in Acts 20:1-3, on the third missionary journey.

**3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:** Paul’s love for the Thessalonians was growing and overflowing. He desired that their love toward each others as members of the same local congregation grow. But not only toward themselves, but grow toward all men. The Bible really challenges us to love all people (1 John 4:7; Galatians 6:10). We may say we love people, but the

word of God really gets into our hearts, summoning us to grow and demonstrate our love. How difficult it is to really live Matthew 5:44-48. The closer we get to God, the more we will have love toward men (John 3:16; Matthew 5:38).

**3:13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.**

Paul prays that the Thessalonians will be saved at the *coming* of the Lord Jesus Christ. He prays that God will strengthen the hearts of the Thessalonians until that time. Those in Christ will stand without blame at His coming because they have been cleansed by His blood before God (1 John 1:7-10). This word *coming* as we mentioned in the previous chapter (2:19), is *parousia*. It is an important word in these epistles. Its basic meaning is presence or arrival. The “saints” here likely are the holy ones, angels, who will come with Jesus (Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; 2 Thessalonians 1:7), but it is true those who have died in Christ will be raised first (1 Thess. 4:16).

## CLASS 6: 1 Thessalonians 4 – Living & Loving in Hope of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming

### I. A GENERAL EXHORTATION TO HOLY LIVING 4:1-2

**4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.** “Furthermore” indicates that Paul is moving to another section, not necessarily indicating that the letter is drawing to a close (Philippians 3:1, cf. Philippians 4:8). However, the word in the original is sometimes used in other epistles when Paul is moving to his last major topic (2 Thessalonians 3:1; Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 4:8). The first part of the letter has been a survey of Paul’s past associations with the Thessalonians. The shift here is that, based on the past, Paul now looks to the future to exhort the Thessalonians to go onward and upward. This last section has to do with instruction in ethics (particularly sexual ethics 4:3-8), a practical end as is typical with Paul’s epistles.

Though Paul appeals to them as brethren in an affectionate way, his beseeching and exhortation are no less serious. When Paul and his companions were at Thessalonica they instructed how the new converts ought to walk, that is the whole of one’s living in Christ, daily journeying in the narrow way (2:12; Matthew 7:14), sometimes simply called “the way”(Acts 9:2; 19:23; 24:22). In walking thus they would please God. Christians do not live to please themselves or others, but to please God (2:4, 15; cf. Galatians 1:10). Of course, for the mature Christian such as Paul, pleasing God was a great delight. Timothy’s report had brought Paul the good news that the Thessalonians were walking thus, having received the teaching Paul had given them during his brief stint in Thessalonica, they kept following it (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6). He here encourages them to abound more and more in this obedience. The Christian life cannot be maintained by coasting; one will either grow or decay in their spiritual stature. The word “walk” implies progress, and Paul encourages them to continue to grow and progress in the Lord. The Christian in one sense can never be satisfied and rest and his laurels so to speak; even if he is doing well, he must have the desire and drive to do even better.

**4:2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.** Similarly to how orders are passed down from the commander of an army, Paul, Silas, and Timothy had passed the commandments of Christ the commander along to the Thessalonians converts. Again the recognition is made by Paul that these are commands not originating from him, but given by the authority of Christ (cf. 2:13).

### II. HOLY LIVING & SEXUAL ETHICS 4:3-8

**4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:** God’s will is that His people be sanctified, set apart to live holy lives (1 Peter 1:15-16; Leviticus 19:2). The Levites in the Old Testament were set apart for special service to God (Numbers 3:11-13). God’s people are saints (3:13), that is their state, but coupled with their sanctified state must be the process of living holily. God cleanses us at the commencement of our Christian lives (Acts 22:16), and He continues to cleanse us as we walk in the light

throughout our Christian lives (1 John 1:7-10). There are of course more dimensions to God's will than sanctification (cf. 5:18), but one key aspect is His moral plan for mankind. God wants us to not only know but also put into practice His moral instructions. Notice God's emphasis on doing His will: Matthew 7:21; 12:50; 21:31; Mark 3:35; Luke 12:47; John 7:17; 9:31; Acts 13:22; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 6:6; Hebrews 10:36; 13:21; 1 John 2:17.

God helps the Christian as he strives to live a sanctified life (5:23).

One particular way in which sanctification is manifest, in all ages, is the avoidance of fornication. Fornication is any illicit sexual activity, any overt sexual act that is not between a person and their God-approved mate. It is a general term, embracing all sexually illicit activity.

**4:4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;** The verb translated "to possess" here in classical Greek meant to have mastery over something. It was used of being proficient at an art, but also of exercising lordship over slaves. Given this meaning, the instruction is to control one's body. Another way in which the word is used in some texts (Ruth 4:10) conveys the concept of procuring or acquiring something, ("to get control"). This meaning is stressed by some to indicate that Paul is saying to the unmarried men in the church at Thessalonica that they should acquire wives to fulfill their desires instead of pursuing sexual pleasures outside of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:9; Hebrews 13:4). However, a man's wife is never referred to as his "vessel" (*skeuos*) in the Bible, whereas his own physical body is (1 Samuel 21:5; Acts 9:15; Romans 9:21-23; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Timothy 2:21). Thus, we opt for the former meaning here, that Paul is instructing them to control their own bodies in a way that is sanctified (holy) and honorable (cf. Romans 6:19). Of course, the best way in for many unmarried men to do that is to get married.

**4:5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:** The heathen citizens of Thessalonica that surround the members of the church did not know God. They could have known Him, but one of the reasons people refuse to retain God in their knowledge is because He makes sin uncomfortable (Romans 1:26-28). This is the reason many do not want any public mention of God in our nation today. Far from abstaining from fornication, the cults of Dionysus, Aphrodite, Osiris and Isis, the Cabirus, and Priapus promoted sexual activity outside of marriage. Corinth was located only 175 miles to the south of Thessalonica and boasted 1,000 prostitutes at its temple of Aphrodite. The fact that these forms of idolatry existed in Thessalonica posed a danger to the purity of the church there. The Gentile members of the Thessalonians congregation direly needed to know how their conversion to the true, living God, meant restricting the fulfillment of sexual pleasure to marriage. The avoidance of fornication was a major teaching to the Gentiles who had not lived their entire lives under the Jewish ethics of the Old Testament. The decree from the Jerusalem council included avoidance of fornication (Acts 15:20, 29). It would follow that Paul, having delivered letters from the council to the Gentiles (Acts 15:22; 16:4; 21:25), would have given this instruction to the Thessalonian Gentiles while among them as the opening two verses of this chapter generally indicate.

**4:6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and**

**testified.** The word “defraud” has the idea of overreaching in covetousness. While it is true Paul mentions that a Christian should not do this “in any matter,” there seems to be a more specific instruction in regard to covetousness here. Considering the context, the particular way in which Paul warns a man not to defraud his brother would be in committing adultery with his wife (Exodus 20:17), or by committing fornication with an unmarried person and thus defrauding, or taking advantage of their future marriage partner.

This type of behavior occasions the Lord’s vengeance. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Adultery and fornication are commonplace in our society. Many religious people do not even openly oppose them. There is widespread denial that God would punish individuals for such activities.

**4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.** The moral end that God has in view for his people is holiness. The call of the gospel to which we respond beckons us to abandon uncleanness (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Some teach such a twisted form of God’s grace that they have Him sanctioning sin. God teaching in the gospel is to direct us toward holy living, not sexual license.

**4:8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.** The person who disregards this moral instruction is not rejecting man, but is despising God. The Holy Spirit was given to the apostles in a special measure that meant that their instructions were inspired. To disobey what Paul had to say was to reject the Spirit who gave him these commands. The Holy Spirit also indwelt the Christians at Thessalonica, just as He does all who become children of God (Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6). There is a connection between the indwelling of the Spirit and holy living. To participate in moral uncleanness is against our bodies being the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

### III. CONCERNING BROTHERLY LOVE 4:9-12

**4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.** The word for “brotherly love” is *philadelphia* connoting that the kind affection one has for those of his own family. Paul says that the Thessalonians do not need him to write about this kind of affection, because they had learned to have this affection for one another from God. The word “love” in the latter part of the verse is *agapao* which is a self-giving love that we learn from God (1 John 4:9). The Thessalonians displayed this sort of love (1:3; 3:6). The Christian virtues of love and kindness are a product of living according to the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). When one is among Christians the kindred spirit of love prevails (1 John 3:14). In this way, by God’s word being lived out in their lives, the Thessalonians were able to teach each other by their examples how to have love one for another.

**4:10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;** This love extended beyond the borders of their own congregation to other congregations in Macedonia, (Philippi and Berea and maybe more of which we are unaware). Paul encourages them to increase this love more and more. In 2 Corinthians 8:1, Paul mentions the practical expression of love from the churches in Macedonia,

which included Thessalonica, in giving of their means to help the poor saints in Judea. This points out how the Thessalonians heeded Paul's remarks here and continued to grow in love for the brethren.

**4:11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;** With reference to the practical nature of love for the Lord and others including the idea of giving money, Paul goes on to talk about how a Christian should conduct his affairs in these practical matters. Paul encourages them to make it their ambition to lead a quiet life. Love will produce a quiet life, not one loaded down with the strive that exists where love is lacking. Love takes away fears and anxieties (1 John 4:18; cf. Matthew 6:25; John 14:1; Philippians 4:6). The propensity to meddle in the affairs of others has the opposite effect on one's life. They were not to be involved in others' business, but mind their own. Those who are meddlesome tend to neglect their own duties (1 Timothy 5:13). Those who impose on the generosity of others when they could support themselves are not living in love, thus, Paul tells them to work with their own hands.

Here we have our first indications from Paul that there were some in the Thessalonian congregation that were not earning their own living. The system of patronage that existed in Thessalonica as explored in our introduction seems to be a contributing factor to these instructions in these letters regarding work (2 Thess. 3:6, 10). Although Paul encouraged monetary support of those in need (4:10; 2 Thess. 3:13), he had commanded them to not choose dependence on others over providing for themselves. He gave this command when he was among them and by his own life provided an example of laboring for his own bread (2:9; 2 Thess. 3:7-9; Acts 20:34; 1 Corinthians 4:12). The Greek aristocracy thought manual labor was only fit for slaves, and Paul was criticized by the Greek-thinking Corinthian brethren for doing such instead of charging for the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:7), but that ideology is against the Christian work ethic. Paul commands the Thessalonians again to "work with your own hands." It seems that the practice of not working, but instead being supported by others was so embedded into the lives of some of the members of this congregation that they refused to make these changes. In the second letter, Paul gives a more severe admonition regarding this subject because some had not changed their behavior along this line (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

**4:12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.** As idleness leads to meddling in the affairs of others, meddling in the affairs of other leads to reproach (1 Peter 4:15). The phrase "them that are without" means those outside the church (Mark 4:11; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; Colossians 4:5). By choosing to work with their own hands the Thessalonians could be productive members of society that would win the respect of those outside the church. Christians are to have a certain decorum, conducting themselves in such a way that will bring honor to the church rather than reproach (1 Peter 2:11-17; Titus 2:4-10; 3:1-2).

There is some ambiguity regarding the phrase "that ye may have lack of nothing." The word translated "nothing" could be translated "no man." Some versions render this phrase "be dependent on no one." The former rendering means that they should work that they will be in need of nothing, the latter that they will be in need of no man to help them. Given the backdrop of patronage,

the latter seems more likely, but either way the message is the same: Christians cannot live as leaches on other people. They must, as much as they are able, provide for their own necessities.

#### IV. CONCERNING THE DEAD AT CHRIST'S COMING 4:13-18

**4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.** The subject now moves to a concern the Thessalonians had for the dead in Christ. The phrase in the original that is translated "But...concerning" is a typical way of Paul to address a new topic or respond to questions (1 Corinthians 7:1, 25; 12:1; 16:1). The coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead in Christ are fundamental teachings of the gospel in regard to the end of time. Paul and his companions had not neglected to teach the Thessalonians regarding these fundamental truths; the coming of Christ was part of their initial instruction for the church (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 5:23). It is likely that Paul some gave instruction regarding the resurrection in relation to the final coming, especially since in verse 16 of this chapter he says "the dead in Christ shall rise first" without an explanation of what these words mean. Thus he takes for granted that the Thessalonians knew by these words he meant the resurrection of the body. However, the confusion seems to exist between the destiny of the faithful dead and Christ and what relationship, if any, there would be with the living saints at Christ's coming. The coming of Christ, while a fundamental teaching, has many some aspects that new converts may not grasp immediately. The ramifications of the Lord's coming to those who had already died is what the Thessalonians did not understand.

Paul does not want them to be ignorant, as he wrote in other places (Romans 1:13; 11:25; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 12:1; 2 Corinthians 1:8). He does not want them to be uninformed about those who "are asleep," a common allusion to death in the Bible. The Old Testament marks the death of an individual by saying he "slept with his fathers." For the Christian, death is not some grim, horrific experience, but is a peaceful transition, much like this metaphor of falling to sleep.

With the truth about the dead in Christ, the Thessalonians will not have to sorrow as those who have no hope. Those in the church still do sorrow because of the separation that death brings between them and their deceased loved ones, but there is hope of reunion. The Thessalonian misunderstanding questioned whether any such reunion with the deceased would take place, and thus robbed their hope. Paul's explanation here would give them comfort (v. 18), just as it does to us today.

It is important to remember that the subject is those in Christ here in this section. Those outside of Christ are not considered; thus, the idea of a premillennial rapture, where the saved are taken up to heaven while the lost are left on earth, is not taught in this passage, or in any Bible passage for that matter.

**4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.** Unlike other religions and philosophies that are based on human speculation, Christianity has the historical foundation of Christ's resurrection. Since we believe the historical fact of Christ's resurrection from the grave, there are some deductions that follow (1 Corinthians

15:17ff). The deduction in this present verse is God will bring the dead in Christ with Him. Some premillennialists aver that the coming with Him is back to earth after an earlier "rapture," but the subject in this verse is the dead, those who sleep in Jesus. The premillennial teaching on the pre-tribulation rapture is those living when Christ comes will be caught up while those outside of Christ stay on earth for the great tribulation. How then would they be referred to here? The point of this verse is parallel to 2 Corinthians 4:14, that we know that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and present us with you (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:14). God will raise the dead in Christ and Christ will bring them back to heaven with Him.

**4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.** Now evidently what worried the Thessalonians was not whether the dead in Christ would rise, but whether they would have any share in the events of the coming of Christ. To this Paul gives instruction, "by the word of the Lord." Christ gave the comforting promise that those who are alive when He returns will not "prevent" (precede into the glories of the Lord) those who have died in Christ. In other words, both groups, living and dead, will be joined and go into glory at the same time and therefore the living will have reunion and fellowship with the dead when Christ returns.

There is some confusion that exists on the term "we" in this verse. Some use it to teach that Paul believed he would still be alive on earth when Christ appeared. But the teaching of 2 Thessalonians 2 shows that the Spirit clearly taught that the day of return was not nearby at the time the Thessalonian letters were written, but that a great apostasy would first take place. Paul used "we" in general to say, we Christians who are alive at Christ's return. Remember this is a passage on those in Christ; reunion is not a hope for with those outside of Christ. It is likely that the Thessalonians read too much into this word "we" as well and thus in the second letter Paul corrects their misinterpretation, "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

**4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:** This is the noisiest verse in the Bible: a shout, a voice, the trump. Nowhere else in the New Testament is there a description of Christ's coming that is as full as this section here. But even in this description, there are not many details, but rather practical truths that will really help Christians rather than attempt to satisfy their curiosity. Whatever the particulars of that day, the important thing is for Christians to be prepared. We should be ready whenever the Lord comes.

The Lord himself is the one who will come at the end. It won't be an angel working behind the scenes. It won't be the Lord coming in the sense of punishment wrought by another nation. Christ himself will return in the clouds as He ascended to the Father (Acts 1:11).

The Lord's return will be a majestic event. A shout, that is a cry of command, will accompany His return. This shout is evidently to awake those out of sleep, like a battle cry, and will be given by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God (cf. John 5:28-29). When this great call is given, the dead will rise first. Thus, unlike the Thessalonians' worries about the dead not having part

in the coming of Christ, the truth is they will have a prominent place.

**4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** The faithful in Christ who are still living when the Lord comes will be caught up as the dead who have been resurrection will be caught up. These will happen together, and the living and dead in Christ will then be together with the Lord. What a precious hope to those the bereaved Thessalonians.

This “caught up” is used to teach the rapture doctrine we have been addressing, but notice that this passage is not teaching a secret rapture of some believers in an invisible coming of Jesus years before his final coming so they can return with Him, it is teaching a very visible action of all believing being caught up at the end of time as they go with Him as He goes back to heaven. Verse 16 shows clearly that this is an open and public event, noticeable to all.

**4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**

These words were useful to the Thessalonians in giving hope they would see the dead in Christ again. They are still useful to us as we are yet living and do not know if the Lord may return before our deaths. We can be comforted that we will be with the Lord and reunited with faithful loved ones even if the Lord returns before death comes to us.

## CLASS 7: 1 Thessalonians 5 – Being Prepared for the Day of the Lord

### I. CONCERNING THE TIME OF THE SECOND COMING 5:1-11

**5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.** This section of the letter seems to be a response to a third question the Thessalonians had (cf. 4:9, 13). This question surrounds when the coming of Christ would be. The word “times” is from the Greek word *chronos*, from which we get “chronological.” The chronological order of events regarding the coming of the Lord is what is being referred to. The word “seasons” is from the Greek word *kairos*, which can mean a definite period or “opportunity.” These words are used in Acts 1:7 to show God has reserved knowledge of them for Himself. Paul had already instructed them about this matter, and thus says there is no need for him to write additional instruction. They knew full well (v.2), that the time of the Lord’s coming was undisclosed to man. However, their persecution may have motivated their concern about the timing of the Lord’s return; they may have wished it to be very soon. When they received this letter, their erroneous interpretation of Paul’s use of “we” in the previous chapter may have continued their false conclusion that Paul knew that coming of Christ would be in his life time, in spite of the teaching here. We often find what we are looking for, and if they were looking for swift judgment on their persecutors they may have looked for a soon return of the Lord. But as Jesus plainly declared, no man knows the day and hour (Matthew 24:36). The Thessalonians did not need to have in their minds that the Lord’s return was definitely soon. Thus, Paul will write 2 Thessalonians 2 to show there is a great apostasy before this event. They have been taught correctly about the undisclosed timing of the day of the Lord, but they need to put this teaching into practice, by patiently waiting and being prepared for whenever the Lord will return.

Men have often been preoccupied with the timing of the Lord’s coming whether it is judgment on a particular nation in time or the great judgment on all at the end of time. Daniel asked in how long before the visions he received would be fulfilled (Daniel 12:6). On more than one occasion the disciples asked the Lord about the timing of the end in regard to the kingdom of Israel (Matthew 24:3; Luke 17:20; Acts 1:6). Jesus time and again points out how man does not know God’s timetable regarding the day of the Lord (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7).

**5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.** The reason Paul does not need to give additional instruction regarding the time of the Lord’s return is that they Thessalonians already knew that it would come unexpectedly as a thief in the night. Paul often reminds them of things they already knew in this epistle (1:4, 5; 2:1, 2, 11; 3:3, 4; 4:2; 5:12) and in the next (2 Thess. 2:6; 3:7).

Here Paul uses the phrase “day of the Lord.” The phrase is used to refer to a time of destruction on the disobedient in time (Isaiah 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Zechariah 1:14; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20). It also can be the final day at the end of time (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10). The “day of the Lord” was a day of deliverance for the faithful in the Old Testament (Joel 2:21-32; 3:18; Obadiah 15-21; Zechariah 14:1-21). In Paul’s letters the “day of the Lord Jesus”

seems to indicate the day of when Christ will return to bring the faithful to final salvation at the end of time (1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16), when He also comes to execute divine judgment (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). The final day will be a day of “wrath” for the disobedient (Romans 2:5) and a day of redemption for the obedient (Ephesians 4:30). Though Paul mentions some things would happen before the day of the Lord came (2 Thessalonians 2), he does not teach that there were signs showing exactly when Jesus would return; thus, the church needed to always be ready (v. 4). Christ would come in a time when no one expected, like a thief comes.

**5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.** Opposite of the widespread teaching that doom and gloom will characterize the days leading up to the coming of Christ, this passage clearly shows that people will say “peace” and “safety.” How often do we hear people talk about how we must be in the last few years before Christ’s coming because everything seems to be getting worse and worse. This is not in accordance with Bible teaching on the matter. The coming of Christ is compared to labor pains upon a woman with child. We have all heard stories about contractions coming upon a woman so suddenly that there is hardly time to get her to the hospital. The day of the Lord will be similar in that it will come without warning.

Now the Thessalonians were being persecuted and did not have outward peace and safety (2:14). Those outside of the church who persecuted the Thessalonians may have had peace and safety, but Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the persecutors will suffer the wrath of God when Christ comes (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). For the beginning of Paul’s preaching to the Thessalonians, the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord Jesus, the King, was a belief that put them at odds with the unbelieving persecutors (Acts 17:6-7). The suddenness of Christ’s coming means that those practicing evil will not have time to make correction and escape His wrath. Premillennial teaching that gives signs of the final coming, and provides a second chance to the disobedient is against what the Lord has clearly designed in the unexpected coming of Christ.

**5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.** In Luke 16:8, Jesus called His followers “sons of light.” The term *sons* indicates those who were in a close association with something (Matthew 8:12; 13:38; Mark 3:17; Luke 16:8; 20:34, 36; John 17:12; Ephesians 2:2; 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). Jesus described Himself as light (John 8:12), those who are of the light are willing to have their lives exposed and examined by the light (John 3:19-21). The wicked are not so; they choose to remain in darkness thinking that it will hide them from the Lord, but the darkness does hide their sins from an all-knowing God (Psalm 139:12). Little do they know that the darkness that they think causes God and others to be blind to their deeds actually blinds them to the saving truth (1 John 2:11). The “children of light” embraces all members of the church, both men and women. Paul says you all are children of light, as he refers often to all members in these epistles (1:2; 4:10; 5:14, 26-27; 2 Thess. 1:3, 10; 3:18). Members of the church are those who have been saved from darkness and are now in the realm of light (Acts 26:18; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Peter 2:9). When light enters a room, darkness flees. The two are incompatible. Christians are to behave as light have be separate from the world (Ephesians 5:11; Romans 13:12; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

**5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.** Since the Christians are children of the light, they should behave as people do during the day. They should be awake and alert to the spiritual realities that are around them. Some people live their lives seemingly in a dream, not awake to the spiritual dangers that are around them, but mindlessly floating down the river of life going wherever outside influences take them. Christians are not to be so, but must be awake and proactive in following Christ. In some verses in this letter “sleep” has the meaning of death (4:13, 15; 5:10), but here it means spiritual indifference that characterizes those outside of Christ and should not characterize those in Christ (v. 7; Ephesians 5:14). Jesus told his disciples to not be in a spiritual stupor if they were to resist temptation (Matthew 26:40-41; Mark 14:37-38; Luke 22:45-46). Jesus even gave the connection similar to these verses of being awake so that they would be ready for His coming (Mark 13:32-37).

As Christians we should be in the spiritual state of having all systems “on.” Being awake is linked to standing fast (1 Corinthians 16:13), prayer (Colossians 4:2), being self-controlled and serious (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:2), and having clear thinking in the face of danger (2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 5:8).

**5:7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.** The metaphors of the previous verse are elaborated here. Two activities people engage in at night are sleeping and drinking. The normal time to sleep is at night, and being drunk during the day has often been considered scandalous by the public (Isaiah 5:11; Ecclesiastes 10:16-17; Acts 2:15; 2 Peter 2:13). As Christians we are to be the opposite: awake and sober. Night is sometimes used in scripture to describe moral darkness (Matthew 26:34; John 13:30). Nighttime is when evil people do their deeds. We are surprised today when people commit crimes in broad daylight. These evil deeds of the darkness are on their way out, because an eternal day is coming (Romans 13:12 cf. Revelation 21:23; 22:5). The gospel age has let some of this light in, but the final coming of Christ is when it will fully break forth.

**5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.** There is a stark contrast between the behavior of those of the night and the children of light. In verses 5 and 6, Paul has already made it clear that the Thessalonians are of the day, but he goes on further here to show how they are to be good soldiers of the day. Paul often makes military metaphors in his letters to describe the Christian’s conduct (Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:7; 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:11-17; Philippians 2:25; 2 Timothy 2:3-4). A good soldier is one who is disciplined and has a clear head. These are the characteristics of those who are prepared for the coming of the Lord. Two pieces of armor worn by those of the day are described. The breastplate and the helmet, both defensive pieces that describe the preparedness of the soldier of Christ; Christians defend themselves against surprise. In Isaiah 59:17, God is described as a warrior who is putting on these pieces of armor in order to carry out vengeance on the evil, “For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance *for* clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.” Here Christians are to put on the breastplate. Whereas Ephesians 6:14 and Isaiah 59:17 have the breastplate of righteousness, here it is the breastplate of faith and love. These two are part of the triad Paul mentioned in 1:3. The third piece of the triad is hope, mentioned here as the helmet: “the hope of salvation.”

The general idea of putting on Christian armor is the significant point; sometimes Paul mentions armor without any details (Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:7; 10:4). Depending on what Christian virtues best suited the occasion, different particulars would be assigned to each part as in this passage, but the point we must get to put on Christian virtues so we can win the battle.

**5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,** Paul shifts no from the discussion of the differences of behavior of Christians and non-Christians in this life to the difference in the eternal destinies of these two groups. Those people of the night, that refuse to come to Jesus, the light of the world, will suffer wrath. But for children of light, that wrathful end is not what awaits them. Salvation is only through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 8:24; 14:6; et al.). It is through what Christ has done that we have this salvation. However, this done not mean that a Christian does nothing to make salvation his own. The word "obtain" here indicates the idea of acquiring salvation (cf. the use of this original word in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "obtaining," and Hebrews 10:39, "saving"). This does not mean that a Christian earns his salvation, but he must obey Christ if he is to acquire the free gift of eternal life.

**5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.** The basis for our salvation is the death of Jesus Christ, the ultimate atonement for the souls of men. The cross of Christ is a central element to the preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3). Paul wrote these words while at Corinth where he preached Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1). His message was no different in Thessalonica (1 Corinthians 4:17), as Acts 17:3 shows that Paul in his synagogue preaching drew arguments from the scriptures that "Christ must needs have suffered."

The purpose of Christ's death is for man to live with Him. Paul says we Christians should live together with Him "whether we wake or sleep." While sleep has been used as a metaphor for moral and spiritual darkness in verses 6 and 7, here it must mean death, as it is used in 4:13, 14, and 15. Moral darkness may very well prevent one from living eternally with Christ, but physical death for the Christian does not. Death has not victory over the Christian. When one is in Christ, physical death cannot destroy the relationship with Christ that has been established when one was baptized; in life or death one is in Christ.

**5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.** In concluding this section, Paul encourages them to strengthen each other. This is similar to the way in which he capped off the last section (4:18). Christians are to make it a habit to build one another up. Paul admits that they were presently doing this, but he encourages them to continue this good habit and continue to grow. This section has provided several incentives for growth: the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night, Christians are sons of the day and are perpetually ready for His coming, salvation is the end God has planned for the children of light, but the cost of that salvation was the death of His Son. These truths should not cause us to simply want to stay where we are, but rather to continue to grow spiritually until the final day comes.

## II. PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS 5:12-22

**5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you,**

**and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;** Involved in the exhortation to build one another up, Paul particularly mentions the attitude the Thessalonians should maintain toward their leaders. God intends the leaders in a local congregation to be elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4). A group, (plurality), of elders were appointed in every congregation (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1). Though there were some congregations that existed without elders (Titus 1:5-8), those congregations were lacking and we cannot think that they continued for very long without elders. Since elders exercise authority in making sure God's will is followed and making decisions in the realm of judgment, it is likely that they will come under criticism. The instruction here is for members to consider how they regard the elders. Perhaps there was a problem in the Thessalonian congregation (such as some not working, but meddling) where the elders attempted to admonish those under their care and opposition was aroused against them. Whatever the problem, it does not seem that it was serious enough to warrant a large discussion on the matter, but a few inspired words of reminder would go a long way in helping the situation. Paul reminds the brethren at Thessalonica that the elders are over them in the Lord; a reminder that Christians need today as well (Hebrews 13:7). Elders not only lead by their example, but have the work of admonishing, (reproving), those who are out of step. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6ff, Paul will address the subject of the treatment of disorderly members. The wisdom of the eldership should be followed in carrying out these commands disciplining the unfaithful.

**5:13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.** Paul calls the elder's job "work" here, he said it was "labour" in the previous verse (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1). There is no doubt that being an elder is not simply a title given to a man, but rather a work of sacrifice and a labor of love. The cares that consume one watching over the flock are taxing. Paul was aware of these pressures (2 Corinthians 11:28). Members must remember that it is for their benefit that the elders are working among them. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." While members may not always agree with every decision an eldership makes or the manner of implementation that the elders employ, as long as the eldership is not violating the word of God, members are to submit, recognizing that it is for their good that the eldership does what it does. Members are told to esteem them very highly in love. The eldership is not to be dismissed as if they are of no account, but must be highly esteemed. Without effective following, elderships cannot accomplish effective leading in accomplishing the high goals we often set for them. Elders many times only hear complaints instead of hearing of our high esteem and love for them. They maintain a relationship with the congregation that is not a cold, external authority seen in the world, but is like the warm image of a shepherd and his sheep (1 Peter 5:1-4). Let us know our elders place over us and appreciate their true worth in view of eternity. If we do this it will make them more effective in their work, and cause peace among the congregation.

The concluding admonition to be at peace is related to the respect for the elders. Disrespectful attitudes cause divisions among congregations. Each member of the Lord's church is to strive to maintain peace based upon the teachings of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3; cf. Mark 9:50; Romans 12:18; 2 Corinthians

13:11). When disagreements arise, Christians should be able to handle them in a peaceful manner.

**5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.** These instructions in regard to following the elders lead naturally into how all Christians are to behave in helping the souls of others.

Not just elders, but all Christians are to “warn them that are unruly.” The term “unruly” harkens back to the imagery of a soldier in verse 8. The *unruly* are those who are out of rank; they do not keep step with the other soldiers of Christ when they march. This Greek word is used to describe the way in which some at Thessalonica were behaving in not working (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11). All of the members of the Thessalonian church needed to do their part in instructing those members who were not doing what they ought; the same is true today. Whether misunderstandings of an imminent return of Christ contributed to the cessation of work among certain members of the Thessalonian church we cannot know for sure, but the suggestion is certainly tenable. Regardless of the cause, idleness is not to be tolerated among Christians.

While Christians must be frank with unruly members, they also must tenderly comfort the feebleminded. Some among their number were evidently fainthearted. Perhaps they were discouraged by the persecution they were enduring; maybe some of them had been martyred for the cause of Christ. It is interesting to notice the similarity here between this injunction and that of 4:18. Those who had loved ones in Christ that had died evidently had become discouraged thinking the dead would not participate in the glories of Christ’s return. The true doctrine of their prominent place of the dead in Christ in the bliss of the final day brought hope. The eldership is responsible for seeing to it that the flock is properly fed with true doctrine in order that such discouragement can be avoided (Acts 20:28). Christians must teach and remind one another to focus on the blessings that await so that discouragement does not rob us of the “joy of the Holy Ghost” (1:6) causing us to miss the bliss of heaven.

A separate, but similar category of people that the Thessalonians, and all Christians, should be mindful of is the weak. These could certainly include those physically weak, but the context of spiritual progress that pervades these verses suggests that these are the spiritually weak. No man is immune to sin (1 Corinthians 10:12), and some are more easily tempted to lapse into certain sins than others. Christians need each other to remain strong against the temptations of the devil. Though each man must fight his own fight, making a personal decision to avoid sin, accountability and support offered by other Christians is invaluable in fighting spiritual weakness (Galatians 6:1-5). The spiritually minded, such as elders, will have their eyes open to such weaknesses among the members and will help facilitate a loving response among the Christian community to those who need to be strengthened.

Just as elders are not to be given to retaliation (1 Timothy 3:3), but patiently help those under their care, all members of the body of Christ are to follow their example in their behavior toward those within and without the body of Christ. Thus, Paul says we are to be patient toward all. Christians are even to help those who are hostile toward them. It is easy to be helpful to those who help us, but we are called to a higher road of behavior, loving those who are (Matthew 5:46-47).

**5:15 See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.** A member of the body of Christ is to make sure not only that he avoids retaliation, but is responsible for seeing that his brothers and sisters in Christ do not retaliate either. While many misuse the discussion of legal vengeance carried out under the law of Moses, taking and “eye for eye, tooth for tooth...” to seek individual vengeance, we must understand the purpose of this civil law of God in the Old Testament was to curb evil. The book of Proverbs questions the act of seeking personal revenge (Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; 25:21). Regardless, we are called to live under a better law: the law of Christ (Hebrews 8:6; Galatians 6:2). In Matthew 5, Jesus shows the higher road of those who would follow Him; they were not to try to find loopholes in the Old Testament, as many of his day did, to justify doing what they desired, but were to be like God. The church is to police itself in this virtue of being like Christ and turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39).

**5:16 Rejoice evermore.** This brief verse, the shortest in the Greek New Testament, is the beginning of a group of general exhortations by which Paul caps off his letter. The apostle has already noted the joy of the Thessalonians even in persecution (1:6), evidence of the Spirit working in their lives. It is the Spirit that provides us the way to joy by the instruction of His word, but we must cultivate it and make it *always* a part of our lives. Even wicked people rejoice on the occasions when they can participate in sin (Proverbs 2:14), but Christians are to rejoice always, regardless of outward circumstances (Philippians 4:4-13). Inspired men never denied that outward adversity brings grief (4:13; Romans 12:15; 1 Peter 1:6), but taught that in the midst of trials there is joy that one’s soul is right with God. The gospel is literally good news that produces joy (Luke 2:10-11). We can rejoice when we really take in God’s wonderful message of salvation.

**5:17 Pray without ceasing.** While God does not expect the Christian to spend each waking moment in prayer, that prayer ought to be a regular, continual practice throughout our waking moments is substance of this exhortation. The Lord commanded his disciples that they should always pray (Luke 18:1), and Paul wrote in Romans 12:12 that Christians should “continue instant in prayer.” Each epistle of the New Testament is bathed in prayers; the Thessalonian letters are no exception (1:2-3; 2:13; 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:11). The Thessalonians, who had been converted out of idolatry (1:9), now how the privilege of praying to the only true and living God. Whereas before they may have made many supplications to endless deities seeking curry favor with them, they now had the wonderful confidence that their prayers were heard by a genuine heavenly Father, who desired to do good to them as His children (Matthew 6:9-13; 7:7; 1 John 5:14).

**5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.** The third brief exhortation is giving of thanks. The subject of prayer is closely connected to giving thanks to God. Paul gave thanks regularly for the churches (Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:3). He is encouraging the Thessalonians to follow his example of thanksgiving. Part of every aspect of our worship to God is giving thanks to Him (Matthew 26:27; 1 Corinthians 14:16; 2 Corinthians 9:6-12; Ephesians 5:19-20; Hebrews 13:15). Christians are to give thanks “in every thing,” that is, in all circumstances, not just when every goes our way. Even when we experience the pain of situations that entirely against

our desires, we can thank God that He can turn any situation into our ultimate good (Romans 8:28) and make us triumphant in the end (Romans 8:31-39).

The conclusion of this exhortation is acknowledgement that it is God's will for us to give thanks as well as to have joy (v. 17) and pray (v. 18). These practices are what God wants those in Christ to implement. God's will is really a blessing to us. Those in the church are in Christ, and are in the sphere of doing God's will and partaking of the great blessings of it.

**5:19 Quench not the Spirit.**

**5:20 Despise not prophesyings.**

**5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.**

These three exhortations are considered together to notice their connection with one another. Just as prayer and thanksgiving were connected in verse 17 and 18. The Spirit's working and "prophesyings" are connected here in verses 19 and 20. Thus, the activity of the Spirit in verse 19 deals with the miraculous gifts extant in the first-century church, one of which is prophecy of verse 20 another of which is discerning of spirits involved in verse 21 (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10).

Paul gives an imperative for the Thessalonians to not continue to quench the Spirit. "Quench" indicates the idea of extinguishing a fire (Matthew 12:20; 25:8; Mark 9:48; Hebrews 11:34), and it is a metaphor in the Bible for causing something to disappear (2 Samuel 14:7; Job 18:5; Proverbs 10:7; 13:9). The Holy Spirit is often linked with fire in the Scriptures (Jeremiah 20:9; Acts 2:3; 18:25; Romans 12:11; 2 Timothy 1:6; Revelation 4:5). To quench the spirit would be to disregard or repress the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit in the church. Thus, the Thessalonians instead of quenching this miraculous gifts, were to encourage those who possessed them to do as Paul told Timothy to do in 2 Timothy 1:6 by rekindling his miraculous gift. The Thessalonians may not have been guilty of discouraging these gifts, but the infant church was in dire need of continued instruction from God, and with the apostle and his companions absent from them they needed to utilize those miraculous gifts that were operating among them to be spiritually trained. There was at least a temptation to discourage the exercise of these gifts, and if some at Thessalonica were despising prophesyings, then it would follow that they would discourage miraculous gifts being exercised to confirm the message of those prophecies.

Paul turns from the general admonition in regard to miraculous gifts to a particular gift, the gift of prophecy. "Prophesyings" refer this miraculous gift that was so vital to the church. Notice the importance placed on the gift of prophecy by its place in Paul's lists. "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets" (1 Corinthians 12:28); "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets" (Ephesians 4:11). Notice also these groupings with the apostles in the book of Ephesians: "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (2:20); "as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (3:5). Prophecy is a gift more general than divine prediction of future events. It includes those predictions, but encompasses the broad activity of providing inspired messages of God. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul shows how important this gift was to edifying the church above the gift of tongues that was misused by some to be showy. The prophecy delivered to the young Thessalonian congregation would provide the instruction they desperately needed to remain faithful; thus, they should not disregard it.

As there have been true prophets of God, there have also been false

prophets. In the first century, just as some lied and claimed they were apostles (Revelation 2:2), some lied and claimed to have a prophecy from God (2 Corinthians 11:3; 2 Peter 2:1). John wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). One of the miraculous gifts of the first-century church was the discerning of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). The church at Thessalonica was to "prove" or test what was taught, the same verb used in 2:4 to describe God's trying the hearts. Jesus warned us to watch out for false prophets (Matthew 7:15-20). Satan has throughout history deceived man, not by appearing as an overtly false teacher declaring his real intentions, but by pretending to be a messenger of truth (2 Corinthians 11:4). Though we do not have the miraculous gift of discerning the spirits today, we do have the full system of faith (Jude 3), and we can cross-examine teaching we come across with the infallible word of God and reject it if it differs from the genuine revelation that has miraculous divine attestation behind it (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 John 10).

**5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.** The final brief exhortation is to reject evil. Just as they should reject evil doctrine, they must also reject evil practices. Job is described as a man who shunned evil (Job 1:1, 8). We must separate ourselves from evil practices if we will please God. The verb "abstain" is the same used in 4:3 of avoiding fornication. The word "appearance" has various opinions surrounding it. The basic meaning is what we think of in the word *appearance*, that which meets the eye, and it is use in other contexts in this way. There is a secondary meaning to this word that reflects the concept of *form* or *kind*. It seems that the second meaning is the primary idea of this verse. However, the meaning of form or kind should not be used to justify one participating in something that is innocent but appears to others as sinful. We are provide things honest in the sight of men and God (2 Corinthians 8:21). We cannot neglect taking heed to our influence, lest our good be evil spoken of (Romans 14:6).

### III. CONCLUDING MATTERS 5:23-28

**5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** With the exhortations concluded, the apostle transitions to a final prayer for his Thessalonian converts. While Paul encourages them to do these things, he also pleads for God's help in the Thessalonians keeping these injunctions. The prayer is that God will sanctify the Thessalonians. Thus, we pray as if it all depended on God, and we work to keep God's commands as if it all depends upon ourselves.

Paul appeals to the Father as the "very God of peace." Just as he opened the letter with greetings of peace, so he closes with similar sentiments. What peace, prosperity of the soul, it is to know that God Himself is supporting us as we try to live our His will.

**5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.** This prayer is not a empty wish to a non-existent deity, but a powerful plea to a faithful Father who always does His part. Prayers of faith are effective (James 5:15-16; 1 Timothy 2:8).

**5:25 Brethren, pray for us.** With the prayer expressed, Paul and his companions, knowing the effectiveness of such petitions, desire the Thessalonians prayers. This request of reciprocity in prayer is a common in Paul's letters (Romans 15:30-32; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:19-20; Philippians 1:19; Colossians 4:3-4, 18; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2; Philemon 22).

**5:26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.** The request to greet all the brethren shows that this letter was not read individually by each member of the church, but rather was read by the literate leaders of the church and aloud to the congregation as they gathered together (v. 27). A mutual greeting was common among the first-century church to express their affection for each other. The holy kiss was the custom of greeting of the time (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12) and is equivalent to the "kiss of charity" (1 Peter 5:14). In the ancient world the kiss could express a number of things: familial love, honor or respect for a teacher, or friendship (Mark 14:44-45; Luke 7:36-47; 15:20; Acts 20:37). Kissing on the mouth was usually reserved for romantic love, as it is in our culture. A kiss on the forehead or cheek was the common greeting of respect, and thus is designated here as Paul calls it a "holy kiss," rather than an erotic kiss.

**5:27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.** Paul uses the first-person singular here to indicate that he steps out from Silas and Timothy and authoritatively gives an apostolic injunction. This solemn charge before the Lord is for those in Thessalonica who read this letter to make sure it is read to all members of the church. There was the temptation to not read the entire letter because of some particular teaching in it. It may offend those who were disorderly among the brethren there (5:14), it touches on the particulars of avoiding fornication (4:3-8), and there were some who may have been rejecting/despising messages of inspiration (5:19-20); however, none of these elements should cause the leaders of the church to fear and avoid reading it before the congregation (2 Timothy 1:7). The word of God is serious business, and those who would avoid giving all of God's teaching for fear of offending their audience will answer to God for their sins (Acts 20:26-27).

**5:28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.** As with all the letters of Paul, 1 Thessalonians ends with a blessing of grace (Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25; cf. Hebrews 13:25). Though this is a customary closing, it is much more than a formality. The blessing of God's grace provided through Jesus Christ embraces all of salvation and the whole gospel. Paul was ever grateful for God's grace, and it was the summation of the gospel that he preached. He wanted nothing more than to see others be partakers of it.