

Dickson
Teacher's Bible

1 THESSALONIANS



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WRITER

The writer of this epistle to the disciples in Thessalonica is the apostle Paul (Compare 2 Th 3:17). This letter, as well as 2 Thessalonians, was also from Silas and Timothy who had been with Paul when the gospel was first preached in Thessalonica (See "Writer" in intro. to Rm and 1 Tm).

DATE

Paul, Silas and Timothy preached the gospel in Thessalonica on Paul's second missionary journey (At 17:1-9). He went to the city of Thessalonica after he had been in Philippi for only a few days (At 16:12). He then left the city and went to Berea (At 17:10,11), and then on to Athens and Corinth (At 18:1). He left Silas and Timothy in Berea. They stayed briefly in Berea, and then went on to Paul in Athens (At 17:14). After leaving the Thessalonians as new converts in a hostile environment, Paul was anxious concerning their spiritual well-being. He had made the decision to be left in Athens alone, and thus, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica and to other new disciples in Macedonia (3:1,2). After Timothy left, Paul eventually left Athens and went on to Corinth. It was during his stay in Corinth when Timothy eventually returned from Thessalonica with good news concerning the faithfulness of the Thessalonians (At 18:5). It was sometime during the first part of his eighteen-month stay in Corinth that he wrote this letter to the disciples in Thessalonica. It was written sometime between A.D. 50 to 52 (3:6,7).

THEME

The Thessalonians had a truly committed conversion to Jesus. Their example of discipleship was noticed throughout the region. The theme of the letter was the Thessalonians' new Christian life. They were an example of disciples going into action after their conversion (See 1:6-8; 2:13,14; 3:6; 4:9,10). Paul was first concerned with their continued faithfulness in the midst of great afflictions (3:1-5). However, after Timothy returned with the report of their faithfulness, Paul stated, "*For now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord*" (3:8). Paul thus wrote this letter because they stood firm in their call to discipleship in Christ. From what he says in the letter, we can better understand the impact the gospel can have on new disciples a short time after they are converted to Jesus. Since the recipients had been Christians for only a few months, what Paul says in this letter indicates what God expects of new converts after their conversion to the Lord.

PURPOSE

Paul did not stay long in Thessalonica on his initial visit. He went on to Berea, and then to Athens and Corinth. The Thessalonians were converted out of a religious culture of idolatry that promoted fornication (1:9). Though the contrast between their culture and previous religious practices was great, they were truly converted, and thus, they manifested a great zeal for the Lord (1:6-8). Therefore, Paul wrote to commend them for their evangelistic zeal (1:2-10). He wrote to remind them of how he had discipled them to Christ while he was in Thessalonica. He wrote to express his prayerful concern for them (2:1 – 3:13). Since they were new converts, he also wrote to deal with some doctrinal problems concerning Christian conduct, and specifically, teachings concerning the saints who had died, and the coming of Jesus at the end of time (4:1 – 5:11). There were some among them who were causing confusion concerning these matters.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The city of Thessalonica was founded in 315 B.C. by the Macedonian King Cassander. After rebuilding the city of Terma, he named it Thessalonica in honor of his wife who was the half-sister of Alexander the Great. The city later became a Roman political capital. In 42 B.C. it became a “free city,” and thus gained the right to have its own magistrates, who were called “politarchs.” (The Greek word for “politarchs” is translated “rulers of the city” in At 17:6.) The city was strategically located on the Egnatian highway that linked the eastern Roman Empire with the western region of the Empire. In Paul’s day, Thessalonica was a thriving commercial center with an active harbor. It was a key center of culture, religion and government.

When Paul, Silas and Timothy left Philippi, they targeted Thessalonica by passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia (At 17:1-10). Paul taught on three sabbaths in the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-11 and Acts 17:1-3 indicate that the evangelists stayed at least three weeks in Thessalonica. As a result of their continued preaching, many religious Greeks and influential women of the city were converted (At 17:4). But the unbelieving Jews of the city accused the evangelists of treason and disloyalty to Roman law, and thus, they stirred up the government officials against the evangelists (At 17:7). The city rulers (the “politarchs”) subsequently made one of the local converts, Jason, post bond for the evangelists because of the turmoil that was caused by those who stirred up the city. This bond possibly included the agreement that Paul, Silas and Timothy leave town. The local brothers, therefore, immediately sent them away. Paul, Silas and Timothy then went over to Berea (At 17:10-13). After a short stay in Berea, Paul went on to Athens where Silas and Timothy were to later join him (At 17:14,15). Because of his concern over the newly converted disciples in Thessalonica, Paul sent Timothy

back to Thessalonica in order to establish and encourage the disciples (3:1,2). Regardless of their former flight by night from the city because of persecution (At 17:10), Timothy returned to exhort and encourage the new Christians. When Timothy returned to Paul, Paul was greatly encouraged concerning their stability, and thus, he wrote the 1 Thessalonian letter from Corinth, and later, the second letter (3:6-8).

CHAPTER 1

Thanksgiving

(1:1 – 3:13)

Outline: (1) Greetings (1:1-10), (2) The integrity of evangelists (2:1-12), (3) Godly living brings persecution (2:13-20), (4) Timothy's mission (3:1-10), (5) Maintaining holy behavior (3:11-13)

GREETINGS

1:1 Paul, Silas and Timothy were the evangelists who initially preached the gospel in Thessalonica. They were in Corinth at the time this letter was written. Though Paul was the source of the information that is in the letter, the epistle comes from all three evangelists because of their unified work in Thessalonica, as well as their continued unity of work to evangelize the lost and edify the saved. **Silas:** Silas was formerly a leading Jewish disciple in Jerusalem (At 15:22; 16:27,32,40; 17:1-4). **Timothy:** See "Writer" in intro. to 1 Timothy. **In God:** Paul's metaphorical use of the word "in" (*en*) emphasizes the fact that Christians are established in a close covenant relationship with the Father and Son through their obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27). **Grace:** This is Paul's common greeting to all the churches (Rm 1:7; 2 Co 1:2; Gl 1:3; Ep 1:2; Ph 1:2; Cl 1:2; 2 Th 1:2). It is grace that precedes peace, for it was the grace

of God that brought reconciliation between God and man.

AN EXAMPLE OF DISCIPLESHIP

1:2 *We give thanks:* Paul was indeed thankful for these new Christians who had been converted out of an idolatrous religious background (See Rm 1:8; Ph 1:3,4; 2 Th 1:3,4; 2:13). As other disciples, he continued to remember them in his prayers because of his anxiety concerning their establishment as new Christians (3:1-8). After Paul, Silas and Timothy left the new disciples, it is certain that they continued to suffer persecution from the Jews in the area (See At 17:13; 2 Th 1:4,5). Nevertheless, the Thessalonian disciples continued in their faithfulness to evangelize the region around them. They did not lose their focus on being the Lord's representatives for the gospel in their local region.

1:3 The Thessalonians excelled in three areas of discipleship that exemplified them as a truly converted group of people. (1) **Work of faith:** They were not disciples who simply believed in God and Jesus. Their faith was carried into action with an obedient response to the grace of God (2 Co 4:15). Their faith moved them into action (Jn 6:29; see comments Js 2:14-26). (2) **Labor of love:**

In their relationship with one another, they were moved into action to care for one another (Rm 16:6; 2 Th 1:3; see comments Gl 5:6; 1 Jn 4:19). (3) **Patience of hope:** Hope of eternal heaven moves one to remain committed to that which is necessary to arrive at one's eternal dwelling in heaven (Rm 8:24,25; 15:4; Hb 6:18,19). Because of their hope of heaven, they remained committed to Christ. Once one gives up hope, he loses his incentive to maintain a life that is governed by the principles of Christ. **In our Lord:** Their work, labor and patience were all in Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27). Therefore, all labors were the result of their coming into a covenant relationship with God through their obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 6:3-6). In this relationship with Christ, their labors were not in vain (See comments 1 Co 15:58).

1:4 Your election: Before the creation of the world, God planned and predestined that the church would go into eternal dwelling (Rm 8:29,30). Therefore, those who free-morally choose to become members of the church through obedience to the gospel become a part of the group of saved that God will elect out of the world at the end of time. Christians are thus the elect in this time, though the actual election will occur at the end of time (See comments Ep 1:7-14; 3:8-13; see Cl 3:12; 2 Th 2:13,14; 1 Pt 2:9,10). The Thessalonians were now elect in God because they had personally elected to become members of the predestined church of Christ. Their election, therefore, was conditioned on their choice to obey the gospel.

1:5 For: This preposition links the election of verse 4 with the gospel of this verse. **Our gospel:** The Thessalonians' election in Christ was made possible through their voluntary obedience to the gospel that Paul, Silas and Timothy had personally preached to them. The gospel ("good news") was Paul, Silas and Timothy's in the sense that they were the instruments through whom God preached the gospel (Rm 16:25; see 2 Co 5:18,19; see comments 1 Co 15:1-4; compare Gl 1:6-9,11,12). **Not... in word only:** Words were used to communicate the event of the death of Jesus for our sins, His burial and His resurrection for our hope. The words used in preaching and teaching were not the gospel. They were only the medium through which the gospel was communicated (1 Co 15:1,2). Paul wanted to remind the Thessalonians that the medium of words to communicate the gospel was backed by the miraculous work of God in their lives. **In power:** The miraculous power of the supernatural was manifested in order to confirm the word of God (Mk 16:17-20; Rm 15:19; 2 Co 12:12; Hb 2:3,4). **In the Holy Spirit:** The word that they preached was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was not the invention of man (Gl 1:11,12; 2 Tm 3:16,17; see comments 1 Co 2:1-13; 4:20). **Much conviction:** The evangelists delivered the message of the gospel with much confidence. It was the confidence of those who had actually experienced the miraculous work of God in their lives (Hb 2:3). **Manner of men we were:** In order to edify the new converts in Thessalonica, Paul, Silas and Timo-

thy set an example of boldness, courage, unselfishness and work (2:2; At 17:1-10). Their lives became the example for the new converts to follow (1 Co 11:1; Ph 4:9). After following the example of the evangelists, the Thessalonians set an example for the rest of the members of the body throughout Macedonia (vs 7; see 2:14). The effective work of Paul, Silas and Timothy is manifested here in the method of their work. They not only preached the gospel, they also lived the effect of the gospel in their own lives. They thus gave the new converts an example by which they should be obedient in response to the gospel (See Ph 1:27). The influence of the evangelists was extended to others beyond the Thessalonians by the Thessalonians' following of Paul, Silas and Timothy in their manner of behavior.

1:6 Imitators of us: The natural response of those who had been taught the gospel would be to follow the example of those who taught them the gospel. Thus, the Thessalonians became followers of the evangelists who had suffered for the name of Jesus in their preaching of the gospel (See 1 Co 4:16; 11:1; Ph 3:17; 2 Th 3:7,9). In conjunction with the willingness to suffer for Jesus, the Christ-like conduct of a disciple is handed down from one generation of converts to another. It is important, therefore, for those who preach the gospel to carry out in their lives the behavior of that which they preach and teach (See comments Ph 1:27; 1 Tm 4:12). This is important because new converts will follow the example of the initial evangelists.

The sons and daughters of the first converts will follow the example of their mothers and fathers who were the first converts. And thus, the behavior of the initial evangelists will be passed down from one generation to another. How the first evangelist behaves in his ministry will determine the behavior of those he converts for many years. **Much affliction:** The persecution came from the community in which they lived. Their acceptance of the gospel brought upon them the ridicule of those idolaters in the community who mocked the change in their lives from their previous idolatrous behavior (2:14; see At 5:41; 14:22; Rm 4:1-5). **With joy:** Those who follow the Lord with a spirit of joy in persecutions, have captured the spirit of the gospel that brings peace of mind (At 13:52; 2 Co 6:10; 8:1,2; Gl 5:22).

1:7 Examples to all: They had followed the example of the Lord as manifested in the lives of the evangelists. In turn, they became examples to all the Christians in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. Such is the influence of those disciples who carry out in their lives the behavior of evangelists who are truly committed to the work of evangelism. By example, the evangelists encouraged others to carry on in the same manner of evangelistic fervor as they manifested in evangelistic outreach. Disciples in any region need evangelistic individuals who will be an example of evangelism.

1:8 The word of the Lord has sounded forth: This was the example of the Thessalonian disciples. They were setting an example of evangelism, not

only in their own region of Macedonia, but in their mission efforts to Achaia (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15; Rm 10:18). Members personally evangelized the local province of Macedonia. However, they extended their work beyond their local area to the province of Achaia from where Paul was writing this letter. In fact, their efforts went to "every place." Paul's exaltation of the example of these disciples, therefore, was because of their evangelistic efforts to preach the gospel to the world. **Do not need to speak anything:** They were not disciples who sought for an evangelist to come and do their evangelism for them. They needed no imported evangelist to do what was their responsibility to do. Local disciples have the responsibility of evangelizing their local areas. They also have the responsibility to send out evangelists to evangelize other areas. Paul here affirmed that the reputation of the conversion of the Thessalonians, and their evangelistic efforts, had extended even to Achaia before Paul's arrival in the region.

1:9 They ... report: Paul was writing from Achaia. Before he could proclaim the great receptivity of the Thessalonians to those in and around Corinth, others, possibly the Greeks of Achaia, had already heard of and told Paul of the great reception of the gospel by the Thes-

salonians. The entire Greek society had been told how the Thessalonians had turned from idols to serve the one true and living God (compare At 14:15; 15:19; 26:18). They had turned from the idolatrous worship that was so common in the region (Rm 6:15-23; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; Cl 3:24). Therefore, the Thessalonians' zeal for the truth sent a message throughout all the idolatrous Greek culture of Macedonia and Achaia (See At 17:6; 19:23-41). We would assume, therefore, that the true conversion of anyone should be an example about which others would talk.

1:10 Wait for His Son: The proclamation of the gospel included the teaching that Jesus was coming again (4:13-18). He will come from a heavenly realm wherein He now dwells (At 1:11). Christians, therefore, must look forward to the coming of Jesus (2 Pt 3:11-13). We are looking for Jesus, for it is He who will reward us for our labors (1 Co 15:58).

Wrath to come: The great day of wrath that is coming will be the time of the coming of Jesus. It will be a day of wrath for those who have not obeyed the gospel (Rm 2:8; 2 Th 1:7-9; 2 Pt 3:12). Jesus will come with judgment of condemnation on those who have turned away from God (At 17:31; Rm 5:9; Rv 19:15; compare comments Mt 25:26,30,46).

CHAPTER 2

THE INTEGRITY OF EVANGELISTS

2:1,2 The coming of Paul, Silas and Timothy to Thessalonica was not unproductive. The preaching of the gospel pro-

duced fruit (At 17:5-9). They had been spitefully treated in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica. Paul and Silas had been unjustly thrown into prison (At 16:22-24). Nevertheless, they continued

in their work of evangelism. **We were bold:** The sincerity of their preaching was manifested in their boldness to continue preaching regardless of persecution.

2:3,4 The integrity of the evangelists' lives gave witness to the truth of their message (2 Co 7:2). They did not speak with hidden agendas of deceit. Neither did they speak with impure motives. **Entrusted with the gospel:** God had given to them the ministry of reconciliation, which ministry was accomplished through the preaching of the gospel (1 Co 7:25; see comments 1 Co 2:1-13; compare At 20:24; Rm 1:1,5; Ti 1:3). Therefore, neither the subject of their preaching, nor their preaching, was influenced by what pleased men (Gl 1:10).

2:5 Flattering words: When one uses flattering words in his preaching, his intentions are often different from what he says. He seeks to manipulate men by the use of words rather than the message he speaks (Rm 16:17,18). Paul did not use flattering speech in order to win the Thessalonians to himself (2 Co 2:17). He preached the truth of the gospel. **Cloak of covetousness:** Paul did not preach the gospel as a means of financial support. He supported himself while he preached to the Thessalonians, though he did receive some support from the Philippians (Ph 4:15,16; 2 Th 3:6-9; see At 20:34,35).

2:6 Though the evangelists had a right to place themselves in a position to accept financial support from the Thessalonians (1 Co 9:4-9), they did not do such. They humbly worked in Thessalonica with their own hands while they preached the gospel (2 Th 3:8). They did

so in order to set an example that every Christian must work to support himself and help the poor (2 Th 3:6-12).

Apostles: This is from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means "one sent." The evangelists were sent out by the church to preach the gospel on behalf of Christ (At 14:14; 2 Co 8:23; 9:1).

2:7 Gentle among you: The spirit by which the evangelists cared for the new converts of Thessalonica is here portrayed by Paul. He was to them as a nursing mother. He dealt tenderly with the new babes in Christ by not making any financial demands on them for support (1 Co 2:3; 2 Tm 2:24).

2:8 Impart ... our own souls: The first thing Paul preached in Thessalonica was the gospel (See 1 Co 15:3). After the Thessalonians' obedience to the gospel, they invested their own lives in the lives of the new converts. Paul, Silas and Timothy earnestly manifested their love by unselfishly giving themselves to minister unto the spiritual needs of the new converts (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16; compare At 20:19,20,24,31; 2 Co 12:15).

2:9 Laboring night and day: Paul refers here to their tentmaking work in order not to be a financial burden to the new converts. He, Silas and Timothy worked with their own hands in order to support themselves. They did not want to take support from new converts unless they be accused of preaching for hire (See comments At 18:3; 20:33-35; 2 Th 3:8,9; 2 Co 12:13). However, at the same time they worked with their own hands, the Philippian jailor and Lydia of Philippi, were sending regular support over to them

while they worked in Thessalonica (See 2 Co 11:8,9; Ph 4:16,17). One of Paul's principles was not to take financial support from newly established disciples with whom he worked. In the case of the establishment of the Thessalonian church, several influential people of the community were converted, and thus, Paul did not want to be seen as a hireling who preached in order to receive their money (See At 17:4).

2:10 *Devoutly and justly and blamelessly:* The godly behavior of the evangelists complemented the nature of the gospel that they preached (1:5; 2 Co 1:2; Ph 1:27). Their preaching and teaching were not only in words, but also in a behavioral example.

2:11 As a father genuinely cares for his children, the evangelists exhorted the Thessalonians through teaching (2 Co 5:20). They comforted and encouraged them (3:1-8). They charged each disciple to live after the principles of Jesus' teachings (1 Tm 6:17; 2 Tm 4:1,2; see Ph 1:27; Cl 1:10).

2:12 Paul gives the reason here why they lived a godly example before the Thessalonians while they exhorted, comforted and charged them. The reason was that they might maintain a behavior of life that was worthy of God (Ep 4:1; Cl 1:10). ***Who has called:*** They were called through the preaching of the gospel (5:24; Rm 8:28; 1 Co 1:9; 2 Th 2:14). They were called out of the world unto the kingdom reign of God, the Son (Cl 1:13). Since Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords with authority over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Tm

6:15), then we assume that the word "God" is here used in reference to Jesus who reigns over all. The Thessalonians were called by the preaching of the gospel unto Jesus' own kingdom reign over all things.

GODLY LIVING BRINGS PERSECUTION

2:13 *It is in truth, the word of God:* What the evangelists had spoken to them made sense. However, the Thessalonians did not accept the word that was preached as a good message of man, but as the message of God. They accepted it as the word of God because it was confirmed by the miracles that were worked by the hands of the evangelists (1:5; Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). ***Effectively works in you:*** The word of God works in the hearts of those who believe (Rm 1:16; Hb 4:12). It works because men and women accept it as the word of God. Therefore, the work of the word of God in the hearts of individuals must be combined with belief. A knowledge of the Bible without belief will produce no spiritual growth. However, if one truly believes that the Bible is the word of God, then it will mold his life after the godly principles that are taught in the Bible (At 20:32).

2:14 *Imitators of the churches of God:* The disciples in Thessalonica were an example to all Christians throughout Macedonia (1:6,7; see Gl 1:22). However, the Thessalonians had imitated the example of those in Judea. They obeyed the gospel under the same severe persecution at the hands of their neighbors as the Jewish Christians did in Judea (3:4;

At 17:5; 2 Th 1:4). They were willing to sacrifice their relationships with an idolatrous community in order to obey the word that was preached to them.

2:15 Killed ... persecuted: In this statement, Paul severely denounces the Jews for their behavior that was contrary to the work of God through national Israel (See Mt 23:37; At 2:23; 7:51,52; 17:5-14). Because Jesus did not fit into their preconceived ideas of a national messiah who would deliver them from Roman oppression, they had Him crucified (Lk 24:20; At 2:23). They did such after the same manner by which they killed the Old Testament prophets of God who sought to call the people to repentance (Jr 2:30; Mt 4:12; 23:34,35; At 7:52). They persecuted with the same wicked motives, the evangelists of God who had gone forth with the message of the gospel. Paul here states two indictments against national Israel because of their behavior: (1) They do not please God. (2) They behave contrary to all men. They were a nation of people, therefore, who had not only separated themselves from God, but also from all men. They were a people who destined themselves for destruction because they worked against the will of God to bring the Messiah unto all the world. For this reason, God would bring down judgment on them in A.D. 70 with the destruction of national Israel (See comments Mt 24). In the coming of the Messiah, God had fulfilled His promises to the fathers (Gn 12:1-3). When national Israel (the descendants of the fathers) had fulfilled her purpose for bringing the Savior into the

world, then it was time for her to be terminated from history. A nation of Israel continues to exist today, but it is not the Israel of God who was given the responsibility of bringing the Messiah into the world. The Israel today is simply another nation of the world.

2:16 Forbidding us to speak: It was a custom of the Jews that they not speak to the Gentiles unless it was necessary. This sentiment was brought into the church by some Jewish disciples who had not yet understood the universality of the body of Christ. In the early beginnings of the church in Judea, some brethren questioned even Peter who went into the house of a Gentile (At 11:1-3). The feeling of these brethren was that the preaching and teaching of the apostles should remain among their own countrymen instead of going to all nations (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). They thus hindered the work of God to have the gospel preached to all the world. **Wrath has come upon them:** Paul wrote these words before A.D. 70, the date when Jerusalem was destroyed. However, he wrote them in the sense that the judgment had already been made by God to destroy national Israel. It was only a matter of time until God carried out His judgment on national Israel (Mt 24:6). Since the judgment had been made, we would assume that God was giving the evangelists time to preach the gospel to as many Jews as possible in order to spare them from the inevitable calamity of the fall of national Israel (See comments Mt 24:30). The true Israel by faith was being called out of national Israel by the

preaching of the gospel.

2:17 It was surely difficult for Paul to leave the newly converted Thessalonians in order to go on to Corinth and Athens. His statements in this verse seem to indicate that he had developed a strong emotional tie with the Thessalonians. He thus wrote these words only a few months after his departure in order to express his feelings that he was eager to see them again (See 3:1,2). Such sentiments should be characteristic between brethren as evangelists go about preaching the gospel to the lost. **Not in heart:** Though separated from one another's presence, Paul reassured the disciples in Thessalonica that he was with them in spirit.

2:18 Satan hindered us: We are not told exactly what hindered Paul from returning to visit the Thessalonian disciples. However, he gives credit to Satan for the hindrance (Rm 1:18; 15:22).

We must keep in mind that Satan is going about doing his work to hinder the preaching of the gospel and the work of edifying the church. We do not know how he does such, but we must not be lured into indifference concerning his ever present work to deceive the hearts of the innocent (1 Pt 5:8).

2:19,20 Is it not you: The hope, joy and crown of the evangelist is the presentation of his converts before the Lord (See Jd 24). This is his greatest joy and the victory of his work (See 2 Co 1:14; Ph 2:16; 4:1; 3 Jn 3,4). Evangelists are motivated by their desire to present the fruit of their labors before the Lord at the end of time. We would conclude that those who have no fruit to present before the Lord, because they failed to reach out to others, have no hope, joy and crown.

CHAPTER 3

TIMOTHY'S MISSION

3:1 At Athens alone: Many evangelists have worked alone in areas where there were no brothers. Their only strength was the presence of the Lord (See At 17:10-34). And so it was with Paul while he was in Athens. However, while waiting in Athens, it may have been loneliness in the midst of another idolatrous culture that moved him to know the situation of the Thessalonians. The idolatrous environment in which he was increased his concern for their faithfulness.

3:2 Paul was alone in Athens when he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica in order to encourage the disciples in their

early months of development (vs 5; 2:14; Rm 16:21). Also, we must not forget that Timothy willingly returned to a hostile environment from which he, Paul and Silas had to leave by night (At 17:10). **Strengthen ... comfort:** One of the works of an evangelist is not only to preach the gospel to the lost, but also to edify new disciples in the faith. Therefore, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica in order to strengthen the Thessalonian disciples. However, we must keep in mind that Timothy did not stay indefinitely in Thessalonica. We assume that after the disciples had been established and encouraged, he returned to Paul in order to carry

on his evangelistic work (vs 6). Once Christians are established in the faith, it is the responsibility of the elders to feed the flock (At 20:28). The emphasis in the New Testament was that when disciples were established in any particular area, they were commended to God and the word of His grace. The evangelist then moved on to other areas (At 20:32). As in the case of the Philippian, Thessalonican and Berean disciples, the evangelists only made brief visits in order to encourage and edify the disciples. While the evangelists carried on with their primary work to preach the gospel to the lost, shepherd/teachers continued to minister to the spiritual needs of the local disciples (See comments Ep 4:11-16). The example is that in only a few weeks after baptism, the disciples must assume their responsibility to remain faithful to the Lord.

3:3 *By these afflictions:* It seems that the reason why Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica was because of the unusual circumstances that prevailed in Thessalonica. The disciples were suffering from the persecution of the community. Though the new converts understood that they must go through many tribulations as disciples of Jesus (At 14:22), Paul felt that they needed the extra encouragement of Timothy. However, we must keep in mind that one of the reasons why Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica was for his own peace of mind. Because he, Silas and Timothy had to leave Thessalonica hurriedly, he was concerned for the well-being of the new Christians in the midst of a hostile environment. **We**

are appointed for this: Paul affirmed to the Thessalonians that he and the other apostles were destined to suffer persecution for preaching the gospel (Jn 16:2). In his use of the pronoun "we," we could assume that he included the Thessalonians since they were also undergoing great persecution. The apostles and early Christians suffered great persecution from the unbelieving world because they maintained their faith in the midst of a hostile society that had given itself over to hedonistic idolatrous practices (Mt 5:10-12; At 9:16; 14:22; 1 Co 4:9; 2 Tm 2:12; 1 Pt 2:21). The early Christians also suffered greatly at the hands of those who had been deceived by religious superstitions and traditions. We should not, therefore, think that it is a strange thing that the disciples in any community of the world would suffer persecution from those who are deceived by Satan through immoral living and religious traditions (See 1 Pt 4:12). Those Christians who live in such social conditions, but do not suffer persecution, have lost the light of their influence on the community (See comments Rv 3:15,16). Those who truly shine forth the light of the gospel in their lives will suffer persecution from those who have given themselves over to the powers of darkness.

3:4 *We told you:* One of the principles that Paul taught in Thessalonica was the same he taught in Asia Minor. He strengthened the souls of the new converts by teaching that through many tribulations we would enter into the kingdom of God (At 14:21,22). New disciples must be taught that living their faith will

lead them to be persecuted by friends and community members. As with the early church in the seat of Judaism in Judea, the persecution will often come from the religious leaders of the community. The zeal of the Thessalonian disciples (1:6-9) led them to be persecuted for preaching the gospel. Their lives testified to the truth of what Paul taught. In almost all cases, the persecution does not come from governments, but from those who are religiously zealous for their own beliefs. In the Thessalonians' situation, it was the zeal of misguided idolaters who caused the great persecution.

3:5 *The tempter:* Paul here mentions another reason why he sent Timothy to Thessalonica. It was because of his own concern. He wanted a report from them that they remained faithful in the face of Satan who followed in the footsteps of Paul to destroy the fruit of his labors (1 Pt 5:8; see Mt 4:3; 1 Co 7:5; 2 Co 2:11; 11:3). The "tempter" was Satan, and thus through misguided and evil men Satan works to discourage the disciples.

3:6 *Timothy has come:* Timothy and Silas finally arrived from Macedonia while Paul was in Corinth (At 18:5). Not only was Paul encouraged by the good report concerning the condition of the faith of the Thessalonians, but Timothy's report also encouraged him to preach in Corinth. The faithfulness of brethren always encourages evangelists in their work (2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 4).

3:7 The Thessalonians' faith was reaching out to evangelize their region (1:6-9). Their love for one another was

continuing the fellowship of the saints (2 Th 1:3; see Gl 5:6; 1 Jn 3:23). ***Comforted:*** The Thessalonians' desire to see Paul gave him comfort (2 Co 1:3-7; see Ph 1:8). It gave him comfort because he was concerned about their faithfulness in the midst of persecutions they were enduring. Their continued faithfulness and love were a special comfort for him because of the affliction and distress he was enduring to preach the gospel in Corinth (At 18:5-11).

3:8 *We live:* The Thessalonians' evangelistic faith and mutual love greatly encouraged Paul, Silas and Timothy, and thus, they were spiritually encouraged to carry on with their own evangelistic work. Paul was so overjoyed with their work and love that he stated that he was enjoying the fulfilled life of the evangelist because of their faithfulness (Compare Ep 6:13,14; Ph 4:1).

3:9,10 *What thanks can we render to God for you:* It seems that the joy that Paul had in his heart could not be fully expressed to God in the words of man. He experienced a joy that was beyond the description of the ordinary joy that is expressed for human accomplishments. Herein is revealed the motivation that drives the evangelist. He is driven to do his work because of the joy that comes from teaching and immersing the alien sinner into Christ (See comments 3 Jn 4). He is also greatly motivated by the joy that comes from his work of edifying the disciples to continue in the faith, evangelistic work, and loving fellowship of the Christian community. It brings great joy to his heart to be with

the disciples in order to equip them through biblical education and personal example to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18; see 2 Co 13:9; Cl 4:12). Since one of the works of the evangelist is to train faithful men to teach others also (2 Tm 2:2), then those who would give themselves to the work of an evangelist find joy in teaching others. The joy of an evangelist is in the changed lives of those who obey the gospel.

MAINTAINING HOLY BEHAVIOR

3:11 *Direct our way to you:* We do not presume to understand how God would answer this prayer. What is comforting is the fact that an inspired apostle prayed that God work in his life in order to make it possible for him to go to Thessalonica. The fact that Paul made this request reaffirms the fact that God does work in a non-miraculous manner in order to bring about good for those who go forth for His name. We may not understand how He accomplishes the fulfillment of such requests, but we have faith that He does. Paul did not make this prayer without believing that God could make it happen.

3:12 *May the Lord cause you to increase and abound:* Paul continued here the possibilities that lie within the power of prayer. He used the word "may" to reaffirm that the answer to our prayer lies within the will of God. In this request, he believed that it was within the work

of God to present the occasions by which the Thessalonians would increase in their loving fellowship of one another and to those outside the fellowship of the church. This would certainly be one request that should be on the lips of every member of the family of God, for it is by loving one another that the disciples witness to the community that they are the disciples of Jesus (See comments Jn 13:34,35; see Ph 1:9; 1 Th 4:1,10; 2 Th 1:3).

3:13 *Strengthen your hearts to be blameless:* When disciples grow in love of one another, personal insecurity is dispelled. One is established in the faith by the growth of love in the Christian community wherein every member feels accepted (Compare 1 Jn 4:16-18). ***In holiness:*** Paul's point is that one cannot maintain holiness without a heart of love. An unloving heart is to be blamed for all sorts of discord and division among disciples. But the fellowship of loving hearts produces a bond within a group of people that is a great fortress against the wiles of the devil (See comments Cl 3:12-17). ***With all His saints:*** When Jesus comes again, He will bring with Him all the disembodied spirits of those saints who have died and are presently with Him (See comments 4:13-18). The Christian must understand that when he dies he is with Jesus (2 Co 5:8; Ph 1:23). His final judgment has already occurred.

CHAPTER 4

The Christian Walk

(4:1 – 5:28)

Outline: (1) The holy life (4:1-12), (2) Final coming of Jesus (4:13-18), (3) Preparation for His coming (5:1-11), (4) Instructions on holy living (5:12-22), (5) Prayer for the Thessalonians (5:23-28)

THE HOLY LIFE

4:1 *Abound more and more:* The Christian life is a process of continual spiritual growth (2 Pt 3:18). One should continue to grow in his work for the Lord because of his continued spiritual growth within (1 Co 15:58). ***Ought to walk:*** When Paul, Silas and Timothy were in Thessalonica, they gave an example of behavior that manifested the Christian walk of life (1:5,6; see Ph 1:27; Cl 1:10). When one lives a life after the principles of God's will, he will please God in his life. As a disciple of Jesus, one must continue to grow. There is no spiritual level to which one can claim that he has accomplished his final goal of spiritual growth. As Christians walk by faith, they continue to mature toward the image of Christ.

4:2 *Commandments:* Though one is not saved by a meritorious keeping of commandments in order to justify himself before God (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16), one cannot walk contrary to God's will and be saved. Our love of God is manifested by our obedience to His will (Jn 15:14; 1 Jn 5:3). Our appreciation for the grace of God is magnified in our lives by our willingness to follow the directions of the

One who saved us (See comments Rm 3:31; 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). The true definition of spiritual growth, therefore, is walking according to the will of God. If one walks according to his own religious inventions, he is walking in the wrong direction. Therefore, no man can claim to be growing spiritually who is walking according to the religious commandments of men (Compare comments Mk 7:1-9).

4:3 It is the will of God, who sanctified us through the sacrificial blood of His Son Jesus, that we not be involved in illicit sexual acts. The Greek word *porneia* is used here which refers to all illicit sexual activity (1 Co 6:15-20; Cl 3:5). ***Sanctification:*** In sanctification one is set apart from the world through his obedient response to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross through Jesus (Ep 5:27). One is cleansed by the blood of Jesus in order to be separated from the world of sin (5:23; Hb 10:10; 1 Pt 1:15-25).

4:4,5 *Control his own body:* Every Christian must learn to control his own sexual desires. Sexual desires are to be fulfilled only in a marriage relationship (See comments 1 Co 7; see Rm 6:19). Someone is always hurt if such desires are fulfilled outside the bond of marriage. ***Not in lustful passion:*** No unmarried Christian should allow himself or herself to be placed in a situation where sexual desires are freely satisfied (Cl 3:5; compare Ep 4:17,18). Those who know God know that they will give an account of

their behavior before God. Therefore, the fact that one realizes that he will give account of his actions should strike fear in the hearts of those who would commit sexual immorality.

4:6 *The Lord is the avenger:* In this context, Paul speaks of Christians' sexual behavior in relation to one another. If sexual immorality occurs within the fellowship of the family of God, God will avenge those who commit such (2 Th 1:8). He will avenge those who defraud their brothers. Therefore, if one behaves in a manner that harms the flock of God, God will deal with such a one according to his sin.

4:7 We were not called out of the world by obedience to the gospel in order to continue our lives after the immoral behavior of the world (See Hb 12:14; 1 Pt 1:14-16). When one obeys the gospel, he comes into a community of believers who do not behave as the world (See Lv 11:44; 2 Pt 2:5,9).

4:8 Those who reject God's commandments in reference to living the holy life have actually rejected God. The commandments were given through Paul. However, one must keep in mind that his rejection of the commandments is not a rejection of Paul, but of God who inspired Paul to deliver the commandments (Lk 10:16). ***Given His Holy Spirit to you:*** This is Paul's affirmation of the inspired message from himself, Silas and Timothy. The commandments that these prophets gave to the church came through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (See comments 1 Co 2:10-13; 2 Tm 3:16,17). Therefore, when one rejects the com-

mandments of God that were given through the inspiration of the New Testament prophets, he rejects the God who gave the commandments through the Spirit (See comments Jn 12:48). ***To you:*** The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in the early church was not for personal benefit. The Spirit was given to individuals for the benefit of the whole church (See comments 1 Co 12 – 14). Through the gifts, therefore, the entire body was edified (See comments Ep 4:11-16).

4:9 *Brotherly love:* The Thessalonian disciples excelled in their love of one another (Jn 13:34,35; see Rm 12:10; Hb 13:1; 1 Pt 1:22). ***Taught by God:*** The inspired prophets of God in their midst had fully explained their responsibilities toward one another as the community of God (1 Jn 2:20,27; see Mt 22:39; Jn 6:45; 15:12,17; 2 Th 1:3).

4:10 *Toward all:* The Thessalonian disciples not only manifested their love of one another locally, but also to other disciples throughout Macedonia. ***Increase more and more:*** No matter how much one would extend his love toward another, there is still room for growth (3:12). There is no end to the amount of love one can extend toward others.

4:11,12 *Lead a quiet life:* Christians are not those who join in riots, social disturbances, or anything that would cause turmoil in society. They lead a quiet life of inner tranquility and calmness (Compare Jn 14:1; Ph 4:7). They are the leaven of society that preserves the moral atmosphere and relationships among the people of society. If Christians would take violent measures in or-

der to promote their cause, then they have left the fellowship of the community of God (See comments Rm 13:1-7). It is the work of the leaven of the kingdom of God to work among men in order to bring about the desired end of preserving societies in peace. **Do your own business:** A Christian should not be one who becomes involved in the lives of others in order to cause disturbance or hostility among men (2 Th 3:11; 1 Pt 4:15). **Work:** Paul had commanded the Thessalonians to work with their hands in order to support themselves (Ep 4:28; 2 Th 3:6-12; 1 Tm 5:8). They were also to work in order to have the ability to give to the poor (At 20:35). Their work with their own hands would cause the community in which they lived to respect them for their diligence. When one becomes a Christian, therefore, he accepts the responsibility to work in order to support himself, his family and others who need help to get started. It is thus the responsibility of the Christian to live responsibly before the unbelievers (Rm 13:13; Cl 4:5; see 1 Pt 2:12). Living a responsible life includes working in order to supply one's physical needs.

FINAL COMING OF JESUS

There were some among the disciples in Thessalonica who were concerned about brothers and sisters who had died. They incorrectly believed that the Lord would come in His final coming in their lifetime. They also believed that the righteous who were alive at the time of Jesus' coming would have an advantage over the righteous dead at the resurrection. In

the following discussion, Paul corrected their misconceptions concerning the final coming of Jesus. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous at the end of time (Jn 5:28,29). However, there is no promise in the Scriptures concerning the unrighteous receiving a resurrected body as the righteous in which to dwell throughout eternity. In this context, as well as the contexts of 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, only the righteous are under consideration.

4:13 Who are asleep: One easily goes to sleep at night because he realizes that he will awake in the morning. So it is with physical death for the saints. From the perspective of God, death is as one who falls asleep, but will awake into eternal dwelling (Mt 9:24; 1 Co 15:51). From the context of Hebrews 9:27, we could assume that there is no consciousness of earthly time when one dies. When the righteous die, they immediately awake in the presence of the Lord, though they are in a disembodied state of existence. **Do not grieve as others:** Christians should view death from a different perspective than those who do not have hope of life after death. Unbelievers do not have the hope of an eternal heaven (Ep 2:12). Therefore, Christians who attend the funeral of the righteous should have a different spirit about them than those who have no hope.

4:14 If we believe: The attitudes of the believers who bury their dead are different than the attitudes of the unbelievers because of the believers' faith in the resurrection of Jesus. The fact that Jesus

arose from the dead never again to die is evidence that those who believe in Him will also be resurrected never to die again (Rm 4:24; 10:9; 14:9; 1 Co 15:13). We could reverse the argument of Paul. If we believe that the righteous will be resurrected, then we must believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. The denial of either resurrection is a denial of the other. **Bring with Him:** When Jesus comes again, He will bring the spirits of those saints who have died and are now disembodied in His presence (3:13; Zc 14:5; see 2 Co 5:8). They will be coming with Him in order to receive their resurrected and changed bodies (See comments 1 Co 15:35-57; 2 Co 5:1-8). They will thus be coming in order to be embodied for eternity in glory (Cl 3:4; see Jd 24).

4:15 Word of the Lord: Paul assures them that what he now reveals comes personally from the Lord (See 2 Co 12:1; Gl 1:11,12). **We who are alive:** Reference here is to those saints who will be alive at the time of the final coming of Jesus. Though some of the Thessalonians will misunderstand what he says here, Paul is not inferring that the Lord would definitely come in his lifetime or the lifetime of the Thessalonians. The pronoun "we" should be understood to refer to any saints after the writing of this letter who would be alive at the time of the final coming of the Lord. The New Testament writers were not deceived by the Holy Spirit to be led to believe that Jesus was coming in His final coming in their lifetime. Emphasis is on being prepared at all times for His coming. Since Jesus has not come in His final coming

for over two thousand years, then we know that Paul did not mean that the Lord would come in his lifetime. **Will not go before:** During the event of the final coming of Jesus, the righteous living will not ascend before the embodied saints who have died.

4:16 Descend from heaven: Jesus will come from His present heavenly realm of dwelling (At 1:11). We do not assume that Jesus dwells in a location that is like a physical location of dwelling as in this world. Bible students must understand that there are no words of this world that can fully explain the realm of existence of God. Nor are there any words that can adequately explain the events about which Paul here speaks. Therefore, we caution ourselves in this and similar contexts concerning placing our strict earthly definitions on these words that explain a future event that has never before happened. **With a shout ... voice ... trumpet:** We do not pretend to understand what the shout will be. Emphasis is surely on the fact that the coming of Jesus will not be some secret event that will transpire unnoticed by the world. There will be an announcement that will sound throughout the world (1 Co 15:52). Since the descending from heaven and the angelic announcement will be universal, then we assume that something different from anything that has ever happened will end this present world. **Dead in Christ will rise first:** See comments Jn 5:28,29. Paul's comfort to the Thessalonian Christians expands the thoughts of Jesus in John 5:28,29. Since there will be an order in the resurrection of the

saints, his message to the Thessalonians is that the dead saints will be the first to be resurrected. They will be resurrected before unbelievers who will come forth from the tomb to face continued punishment (Mt 25:41). In reference to the resurrected saints, their bodies that were buried will be the seed that will give birth to a changed and transformed spiritual body (See comments 1 Co 15:35-57; Ph 3:20,21; 1 Jn 3:2).

4:17 *Caught up together:* As the resurrected saints are caught away from the earth, then the living saints will join them in their departure from this world. ***In the air:*** Jesus will not come again in order to set foot on this earth. We will ascend to meet Him. He will not descend to this earth in order that we meet Him at some location on earth. ***Always be with the Lord:*** Once Christians are embodied again with a spiritual body, then they will go into endless dwelling with the Lord. To die and be with the Lord in a disembodied state is not the final desire

of the Christian. It is the final desire and destination of the Christian to be embodied and with the Lord forever in the new heavens and earth that are yet to come (Jn 14:3; 17:24; 2 Pt 3:10-13; see comments 2 Co 5:1-8).

4:18 *Comfort one another:* The hope of the Christian is to dwell in eternal bliss with loved ones in the presence of the Lord (5:11; Hb 3:13; 6:18,19; 10:25). In order to comfort one another with these thoughts, Christians must talk about them. Though we do not fully understand that which will be, we must discuss our living hope in order to bring comfort to ourselves in a world of sin and suffering. We now walk by faith, trusting in the witness of the Scriptures that reports to us concerning the resurrection of Jesus (Rm 10:17). All those who have been resurrected with Jesus from the grave of baptism, will be resurrected to walk with Him in the new life that is yet to come (Rm 6:3-6).

CHAPTER 5

PREPARATION FOR HIS COMING

5:1 *Times and the seasons:* It is probable that Paul continues here the discussion concerning the final coming of Jesus. He, Silas and Timothy had already talked with the Thessalonians concerning these things while they were in Thessalonica. It is evident, therefore, that when one presents the gospel, and nurtures new converts in teaching, there must be teaching concerning the coming of Jesus. The gospel emphasizes the death

of Jesus for our sins (See comments 1 Co 15:3). However, the gospel also includes the resurrection of Jesus for our hope (See comments 1 Co 15:4,5,20-22). Without the resurrection, the remission of sins on the cross is not effective (See 1 Co 15:17).

5:2 *Day of the Lord:* This is judgment language that is taken from the Old Testament. The day of the Lord was a time in which judgment came upon nations in time (Lk 21:34; compare Rv 3:3; 16:15). There was another judgment day

to come on national Israel because the majority of the Jews rejected the Messiah. This judgment would come in A.D. 70 with the destruction of national Israel (See comments Mt 24). All that is stated here by Paul could be applied to this consummation. However, reference here is probably to end-of-time judgment (vs 4; 2 Pt 3:10). **Thief:** The judgment of the Lord comes as a thief upon those who are not prepared for His coming (2 Pt 3:3,7; see comments Mt 25:1-13). The judgment comes as a thief because those upon whom it comes have rejected the warnings of God. Christians, however, are prepared. The coming of the Lord is not unexpected to them (See 2 Pt 3:11-13). The destruction of Jerusalem came unexpectedly upon the Jews in A.D. 70 because they could not believe that God would terminate national Israel.

5:3 Sudden destruction: This destruction is upon the unbeliever who is not expecting the coming doom of this world (Is 13:6-9; see comments Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9; 2 Pt 3:10-13). **Will not escape:** Since Jesus is the Lord of all, He will bring all into accountability and judgment (2 Co 5:10; Ep 1:20-22). The wicked will not escape accountability for their sins. At no time in history when God brought judgment upon those who had rejected Him, did any escape His judgment.

5:4 Not in darkness: Christians are not uninformed concerning that which is coming. Paul, Silas and Timothy had revealed to the new converts in Thessalonica the fact that Jesus is coming again in order to reward the saints, but condemn

the unbelieving (See At 26:18; Rm 13:12; Ep 5:8; 1 Jn 2:8). We must also understand that when the early evangelists went forth to preach, they taught the early Jewish Christians the context of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 24. They taught the early Jewish converts that Jesus was the Messiah, and thus according to the prophecy of Daniel, the coming of the Messiah meant the termination of national Israel. The coming of the Messiah and Redeemer meant that national Israel had fulfilled her purpose, and thus all Israel was assimilated into the spiritual Israel of God when the fullness of the Gentiles had come (See comments Rm 9 – 11; Gl 3:26-29).

5:5,6 Children of light: God is the eternal light that brings truth to all. Those who have obeyed the gospel, therefore, are sons of the eternal life of God. Therefore, those who are walking in the will of God are walking in the light (2 Co 6:15; Ep 5:8; 1 Pt 2:9; 1 Jn 1:7-9). **Watch:** Since Christians are sons of God who are walking in the light of His will, then they must not allow themselves to become indifferent to the coming of the Lord. Since they were delivered out of the darkness of sin, they must not stray back into the ignorance of unrighteousness (Rm 6:17,23; 1 Tm 5:6). Their soberness about that which is coming encourages them to live in a manner that is pleasing to God. Those who are not sensitive to the coming of the Lord, will become lazy and indifferent concerning their Christian responsibilities. Therefore, in reference to the coming of the Lord, Christians must watch with responsibility (See Mt

25:13; Mk 13:35; 1 Pt 5:8).

5:7,8 Sleep in the night: Those who do wickedness, do their evil under the cover of darkness. They do such because they think that their evil is concealed. However, their evil behavior is known by God (See Lk 21:34). **Of the day:** Paul's metaphors here are given in order to explain that which guards the Christian from becoming unfaithful. **Breast-plate of faith and love:** Faith and love are active in the Christian's life because of his hope of heaven (See comments Ep 6:10-20). **Helmet:** In contrast to the behavior of unbelievers, the righteous are to protect themselves by being drawn by the hope that is before them. Their sensitivity to their hope of heaven motivates them to continue in the will of God (Hb 6:18,19).

5:9 Appointed ... to obtain salvation: The purpose for the creation of the world was to bring free-moral individuals into eternal dwelling with God. God did not create the world, therefore, for the purpose of predestining the wicked to destruction. He desired to bring those into eternal dwelling who would free-morally choose to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Th 2:13; see comments Jn 3:16,17). However, those who reject the opportunity to obey the gospel will suffer the consequences of their rejection (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9). One is appointed to obtain salvation when he free-morally responds to the gospel.

5:10,11 Wake or sleep: When a saint lives, he lives with the Lord (Rm 5:17). When a saint dies, he is still living with the Lord (2 Co 5:8). Therefore, whether

living or in death, we live with the Lord. **Comfort ... edify:** It is the responsibility of Christians to comfort one another with discussions concerning the end of all things and our hope of life. Discussions concerning the end of all things should not be for the purpose of terrifying Christians. Revelations concerning the end of all things of this world were revealed for the purpose of bringing comfort to Christians. One's teaching on these matters, therefore, should be of a nature that brings comfort to the hearts of those who hear (4:18; Rm 15:2; Hb 10:25). If one is terrified concerning the end of things, then he is not right with God. The extent of one's terror, therefore, should measure the zeal by which one should prepare to meet the Lord when He comes.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOLY LIVING

5:12 Know those: Emphasis here would be similar to the exhortation that Paul gave to the Corinthians that the saints submit to the service of those who minister to the needs of the saints (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16). The disciples must submit to the service of those who have dedicated themselves to the ministry of the word. In other words, the church must submit to the service and instruction of those who teach. The church must submit by listening. Emphasis here is not to dictatorial authority or control of any one individual. The emphasis is on "those." The word "those" indicates a plurality of servants, not a single figure who supposedly has authority over the flock of God (See com-

ments 1 Pt 5:1-6). Since Jesus has all authority among His disciples, then there is no authority with any person among the disciples who can dictate rules for the disciples (See comments Mt 28:18; Mk 10:35-45).

5:13 Esteem them: In order that those who minister the word of God might carry out their responsibilities of admonition through teaching of the word of God, the disciples must consider their work as a great work for the Lord (See comments Hb 13:17). Christian leaders who are laboring for the Lord deserve the respect and admiration of the church. **Live in peace:** There should be no competition between those who are servants of the church. Therefore, the church should not place servants of the church in competitive roles of leadership. No work of the leaders of the church must be viewed in a manner by which workers are placed in competitive roles with one another. There is no competition between slaves. Only lords seek to compete for power among those over whom they would rule. **Peace:** Peace must always prevail (Mk 9:50; Rm 12:18; 2 Co 13:11). If leadership roles are developed among the disciples that lead to turmoil among the leaders, then we can be assured that an erroneous style of leadership has been established among the disciples.

5:14 Warn ... unruly: Those members who are idle, and thus go about generating discord among the flock, must be admonished and warned that their actions will cause division (Compare Rm 16:17,18; 2 Th 3:10,11; 1 Tm 5:13). **Fainthearted:** These are those who still

lack boldness, and thus still lack the confidence that comes with growth in faith (Hb 12:12). **Weak:** These are new converts who are still struggling with past religious practices out of which they are growing (See comments Rm 14; 1 Co 8:7). **Be patient:** Regardless of the spiritual state of growth at which any group of disciples is, the attitude that keeps the disciples of Jesus together is patience with one another (Gl 5:22). Christians must be patient with one another in all things in order to preserve the unity of the faith (See comments Cl 3:12-16). In order to be patient with one another, Christians must guard one another's freedom in Christ (Gl 5:1). The greater freedom Christians give one another in matters of opinion and ministry, the closer they come together in love. Christians must guard one another's freedom in Christ (Gl 5:1).

5:15 Evil for evil: The spirit of retaliation should never exist in the community of God (Lv 19:18; Rm 12:17). If there is a spirit of retaliation among disciples, division will occur in the absence of patient forgiveness (See comments Mt 18:21-35). **Follow what is good:** Disciples must take every opportunity to do good (See comments Rm 12:9; Gl 6:10). They must not only do good, they must follow that which is right.

5:16-18 The disciple has reason to rejoice because of the hope that is set before him. Paul encourages the Christians of Thessalonica to maintain an attitude of rejoicing as a behavioral principle of their lives (2 Co 6:10; Ph 4:4). **Pray:** Emphasis here is not on a continued ac-

tion of prayer, but on a continued attitude of prayer. In other words, the Christian should be in a state of mind that he can at all times take part in the action of praying to the Father (Lk 18:1; Rm 12:12; Ep 6:18; Cl 4:2). **Give thanks:** Since all that the Christian has is the result of God's blessing, then it is reasonable to conclude that Christians should give thanks to God for all they are and have (Ep 5:20; Ph 4:6; Cl 4:2,3).

5:19,20 Do not quench ... do not despise: The Holy Spirit was instructing them through His inspiration of the teachers (prophets) among them on whom Paul had laid hands (See At 8:18). If they rejected the teaching of the prophets, they would be quenching the work of the Spirit to edify the church through the teaching of the word of God. They would be despising His work. Paul's admonition here is in reference to the work of those in verses 12,13 who had given themselves to the teaching of the word of God. If the disciples refused to listen to the teaching of the word of God through their teachers, then they would be refusing to listen to the instructions of the Spirit (Ep 4:30; see comments 1 Co 12,14; 2 Tm 1:6).

5:21 Prove: Through the testimony of the word of God, every teacher must be proved (See comments 1 Jn 4:1; see Rv 2:2). Since the prophets spoke by the inspiration of the Spirit in the 1st century, then through the gift of discerning spirits the disciples were to determine if the prophet was true or false (1 Co 12:10; 14:29). Once tested, then the church must hold to that which is true (2 Co 13:5; Ph 4:8).

5:22 In this statement, Paul taught that false teachings are evil. Therefore, the church must reject any false teachings as evil.

PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS

5:23 Sanctify: Sanctification is a continuing process by which the Christian is mentally and behaviorally separated from the world of sin (3:13). Through the help of God, one must continually separate his thinking and behavior from that which is of this world (See comments Cl 3:1,2). **Spirit, soul, and body:** The physical body is the dwelling place of the God-created spirit (Ec 12:7; Zc 12:1). It is the spirit of man that illuminates the soul of man which is the emotional and intellectual part of man. Man is thus spiritual in the sense of possessing both spirit and soul. He is physical in that the real person is a resident in a physical body that is of the dust of the earth. **Preserved blameless:** One can be preserved blameless only by being in contact with the continual cleansing of the blood of Jesus (1 Co 1:8,9; Cl 1:28; 1 Jn 1:7-9).

5:24 Faithful: Christians have been called out of the world by Jesus who is faithful to fulfill His promises (1 Co 1:9; see 1 Co 10:13; 2 Th 3:3).

5:25-28 Since Paul was enduring persecution in Corinth at the time he wrote this letter, he asked the Thessalonians to pray for him and his fellow workers. **Holy kiss:** Any one group of disciples must accept into their fellowship all who have obeyed the gospel. The holy

kiss was an affectionate cultural signal that portrayed a warm acceptance of those whom one would accept into his home (Rm 16:16). Any person who obeys the gospel, has been added to the universal family of believers by God (At 2:47). If one moves from one assembly of disciples to another, he must be accepted as a Christian. The baptized believer does not become a member of any local assembly of the disciples by either vote or placing of membership. Upon his obedience to the gospel, He has been added to God's worldwide community of believers, and thus is to be accepted by

all believers throughout the world. ***This letter be read:*** This charge of Paul is the foundation upon which brethren made copies of the Scriptures. Once the epistle was read among the Thessalonian disciples, copies would then be made for it to be distributed among other disciples (See Cl 4:16). As a result of this charge, therefore, we have the New Testament today because the 1st century disciples made copies of the inspired letters for distribution throughout the global body of Christ. ***Grace:*** God's grace continues with every member of the body as he or she walks in the light of the gospel.