

# PAUL'S TWO EPISTLES TO THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA ( Both about A.D. 51)



The Roman Forum of Thessalonica was discovered a block to the south of the church of Agios Dimitrios. It dates to the second century A.D. but the remains of an earlier (Hellenistic) Agora are probably located below it and/or in the adjacent built up area. This may have been the area of the "marketplace" where a mob started to riot in the city due to the success of the preaching of Paul and Silas (Acts 17:5).

A STUDY BY  
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## STUDY MATERIALS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

Some of the materials we will use you probably have never heard of. One Internet writer mentioned four of them when he wrote,

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*“As the recovery of truth progressed across the centuries, serious students of the Bible each in turn took up the task of translating the Scriptures, either as personal exercises or as fully executed versions (e.g., **J. N. Darby, Conybeare and Howson, Henry Alford, Kenneth Wuest**). Their devotion to and love for the Bible made possible a broad range of good translations which have rendered immense help to those equally serious students who have not been able to translate the Scriptures on their own.”*

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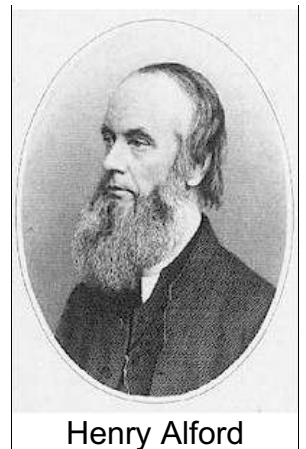
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**Conybeare and Howson, “The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul”** is a classic, being first published in about **1835** and is a well respected commentary. *This work was written to provide a “living picture” of St. Paul and the circumstances by which he was surrounded. W. J. Conybeare translates Paul's epistles and speeches, as J. S. Howson writes of the historical and geographical insights that enhance the text. The 28 chapters of the text together with the 45 illustrations, charts, maps, a complete reference index, and appendices make this volume an valuable text on the Apostle Paul.*<sup>1</sup> (850 pages). The will appear as **C&H** in the references.

Kenneth Wuest wrote both a four volume commentary, a translation of the **Greek New Testament**, (1956-1959), and some word studies. We will be using the translation which is described as *“Drama and action, abrupt exclamation, severe rebuke, stark contrasts—the Greek New Testament is full of these, but standard English versions don't come across this way. This carefully researched translation pays close attention to the original style and force, sentence structure and verb tense meanings, and succeeds in bringing out the richness and clarity of the Greek.”*<sup>1</sup> In addition we will use **“Studies in the Vocabulary of the GNT”** and **“Treasures from the GNT”** (Unfortunately, of his book commentaries, I only have his commentaries on Romans and Ephesians.) This will appear as **WUEST** in the references

We will from time-to-time look at **Darby's translation** of the Bible, published in 1871 (now \$20 in electronic form). This will appear as **DARBY** in the references

Finally, we will be using **“Alford's Greek Testament,”** first published in 1849, the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of 1874 will be used. It was obtained, used, by Reverend James Wickstrom for the price of \$12.50 (used).and consists of nearly 4000 pages! Alford, in addition to this massive work, wrote 20 hymns and, also, **“Come Ye Thankful People Come.”** In 1827, 16 year old Henry Alford wrote in his Bible, *“I do this day, as in the presence of God and my own soul, renew my covenant with God, and solemnly determine henceforth to become His, and to do His work as far as in me lies.”* This will appear as **ALFORD** in the references.



Henry Alford

We will also be using three other classics, but not such old ones. These are:

- **“The Thessalonian Epistles”** by Walvoord, 1954-5 (Price \$3.95 when purchased!),

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<sup>1</sup>Description from ChristianBook.com

- ***“The Pastoral Epistles”*** by Kent, 1958 (\$5.95),
  - ***“The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians”*** by Morris, 1959 (\$4.00)
  - **“Through the Bible”** by J Vernon McGee (**McGEE**) (electronic format)
- These will appear as **WALVOORD**, **KENT**, and **MORRIS** in the references.

Then, to keep up-to-date, we will also be using the ***“John MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary”*** (1 and 2 Thessalonians, \$20.79 in electronic form). ©2002 by John MacArthur, Jr. This will appear as **MACARTHUR** in the references



John MacArthur

In addition, we will be using many of the works available from WordSearch/Epiphany (<http://www.wordsearchbible.com/>) Including both WordSearch and Bible Explorer. These will be cited as appropriate in the references.

The most reliable source, of course, is the guidance given by the Holy Spirit as we embark on this study.

Bible translations used in this study are:

New King James Version (**NKJV**),  
Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All Rights Reserved. NKJV Database Copyright 1990 by WORDworks Software Architects.

New American Standard Bible (**NASB**), Copyright (c) 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved. Database (c) 2000 iExalt, Inc.

New International Version (**NIV**), The Holy Bible, New International Version(R). Copyright (C) 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (**BHS**), Copyright©1967/77,1983 Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgartensia (occasionally, Biblia Hebraica, Redolph Kittel, Copyright ©1937 by Werttembergische Bibelanstalt, Stuttgart)

UBS Greek New Testament, Fourth Revelation (**GNT**) Copyright©1966-1994 United Bible Societies. (Nestle/Aland text).

Note: Because of the age of **C&H** and **ALFORD**, some of the citations will appear to have misspelled words - this is due to the change in the English language over the years, not typographical or OCR errors..

## INTRODUCTION

The Missionary Movement began (as far as we know from the Bible) at Antioch with the church there.

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*Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "**Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.**" Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

Acts 13:1-3 (NKJV)

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Thus it was about 48AD<sup>2</sup>. It would seem that the trip would have been longer except for the desertion of young John Mark.

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*Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.*

Acts 13:13 (NKJV)

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It is not our purpose here to discuss the case for John Mark except to note that reconciliation was made (2 Timothy 4:11). Paul and Baranabas returned from their trip and reported to their "home church" in Antioch.

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*From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.*

Acts 14:26-27 (NKJV)

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They **reported all that God had done** with them and through them on the trip. If you are in a church that is supporting a missionary who does not report back on a regular basis, you need to consider if you are supporting the right person! You are , supposedly, partners with them in the work and, therefore, you need to share with them in the blessings from it (not to mention to make sure they are accountable!) They did not stop there.

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*So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.*

Acts 15:3-4 (NKJV)

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They reported to other churches, including the church at Jerusalem, as well.

With that done, it was time to "return to the field." But, it appeared to be unfortunate that Paul and Barnabas had a "falling out" over John Mark. Barnabas wanted to take him again - after all, John was his nephew. Paul was equally determined not to take him lest he do the same thing again.

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<sup>2</sup>In general, the dates cited will come from the chronological table in C&H

Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

Acts 15:36-40 (NKJV)

While, on the surface, this may appear to be a bad thing, we point out that, as a result, two missionary teams were sent out! It was on this second trip that Paul and Silas (aka Silvanus - *This name is evidently a contracted form of Silvanus*<sup>3</sup>) reached Thessalonika.



As the map shows, they traveled quite a way before reaching there. They began in Asia (Minor) and would have gone all through Asia except for the fact the Holy Spirit had different plans.

Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the

<sup>3</sup>Unger "Silas"

Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:6-10 (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit not only prevented them from going further in Asia, He also prohibited them to go into Bythinia. Instead, "A man of Macedonia " appeared in a dream and begged Paul to go there. (Since Macedonia was (is) part of Europe, this would be the first introduction of the Gospel into Europe. It turned out that this "Man of Mecedonia" was really a woman!

Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now **a certain woman named Lydia** heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. **The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.** And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

Acts 16:11-15 (NKJV)

After Lydia's conversion and another affair that landed them in Jail, Paul and Silas set off again, travelling along the Via Egnatia. Not being either a historian or geographer, I shall leave it to C&B to describe the trip.

*Apollonia is somewhere in the inland part of the journey, where the Via Egnatia crosses from the gulf of the Strymon to that of Thessalonica; but its exact position has not been ascertained. We will, therefore, merely allude to the scenery through which the traveller moves, in going from sea to sea. The pass of Arethusa is beautiful and picturesque. A river flows through it in a sinuous course, and abundant oaks and plane trees are on the rocks around. Presently this stream is seen to emerge from an inland lake, whose promontories and villages, with the high mountains rising to the south-west, have reminded travellers of Switzerland. As we journey towards the west, we come to a second lake. Between the two is the modern post-station of Klisali, which may possibly be Apollonia, though it is generally believed to be on the mountain slope to the south of the easternmost lake. The whole region of these two lakes is a long valley, or rather a succession of plains, where the*

Entering Thessalonica with the sea behind  
(Coutersy of Holylandphotos.com)



*level spaces are richly wooded with forest trees, and the nearer hills are covered to their summits with olives. Beyond the second lake, the road passes over some rising ground, and presently, after emerging from a narrow glen, we obtain a sight of the sea once more the eye ranges freely over the plain of the Axios, and the city of Thessalonica is immediately before us.*

*Once arrived in this city, St. Paul no longer follows the course of the Via Egnatia. He may have done so at a later period, when he says that he had preached the Gospel 'round about unto Illyncum.' But at present he had reached the point most favourable for the glad proclamation. The direction of the Roman road was of course determined by important geographical positions; and along the whole line from Dyrrhachium to the Hebrus, no city was large and influential as Thessalonica.*

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C&H, Page 247

As in about every city Paul entered, he immediately went to work.

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*Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.*

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Acts 17:1-4 (NKJV)

He preached on one of his favorite topics, the Rapture and the Return of Christ. While many believed, there were a quite a few who did not. The Scriptures are not something you can accept or ignore, you must accept them or reject them! So did those who did not believe in Thessalonica.

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*But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king--Jesus." And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

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Acts 17:5-10 (NKJV)

Thus, Paul's teaching in Thessalonica lasted only three weeks (i.e. three Sabbaths). Have you ever wondered where there is no epistle to the Bereans?

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*These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.*

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Acts 17:11-12 (NKJV)

They not only learned what Paul taught, but, more importantly, they learned to study the Scriptures for themselves. Unfortunately, the rabble rouses from Thessalonica soon came and forced Paul to



leave Berea as well. Paul was forced to flee, but Silas and Timothy remained to do what they could. Paul.

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*So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.*

Acts 17:15 (NKJV)

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What happened in Athens is a Bible study in itself so we shall continue on,

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*After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.*

Acts 18:1 (NKJV)

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There, again, he waited for Timothy and Silas to come. Finally,

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*When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.*

Acts 18:5 (NKJV)

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At this point, we note the words of C&H,

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*When St. Paul's companions rejoined him, he was reinforced with new earnestness and vigour in combating the difficulties which met him. He acknowledges himself that he was at Corinth in weakness, and in fear and much trembling ;' but 'God, who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted him by the arrival " of his friends. It was only one among many instances we shall be called to notice, in which, at a time of weakness, 'he saw the brethren and took courage.'*

*But this was not the only result of the arrival of St. Paul's companions. Timotheus had been sent, while St. Paul was still at Athens, to revisit and establish the Church of Thessalonica. The news he brought on his return to St. Paul caused the latter to write to these beloved converts; and, as we have already observed, the letter which he sent them is the first of his Epistles which has been preserved to us. It seems to have been occasioned partly by his wish to express his earnest affection for the Thessalonian Christians, and to encourage them under their persecutions; but it was also called for by some errors into which they had fallen. Many of the new converts were uneasy about the state of their relatives or friends, who had died since their conversion. They feared that these departed Christians would lose the happiness of witnessing their Lord's second coming, which they expected soon to behold. In this expectation others had given themselves up to a religious excitement, under the influence of which they persuaded themselves that they need not continue to work at the business of their callings, but might claim support from the richer members of the Church. Others, again, had yielded to the same temptations which afterwards influenced the Corinthian Church, and despised the gift of prophesying in comparison with those other gifts which afforded more opportunity for display. These reasons, and others which will appear in the letter itself, led St. Paul to write to the Thessalonians.*

C&H, pages 303-4

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McGee gives the following reasons for these two epistles.

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*The epistle has a threefold purpose: (1) To confirm young converts in the elementary truth of the*

*gospel; (2) to condition them to go on unto holy living; and (3) to comfort them regarding the return of Christ. Paul's message offered a marked contrast to the paganism and heathenism which were present in Thessalonica. A heathen inscription in Thessalonica read: "After death no reviving, after the grave no meeting again."*

*In 1 Thessalonians the emphasis is upon the rapture of believers, the coming of Christ to take His church out of the world. The fact that the coming of Christ is a purifying hope should lead to sanctification in our lives. There are a lot of people today who want to argue prophecy, and there is a great deal of curiosity about it. But John tells us, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" ( 1John 3:3 ). This hope should have a purifying effect in our lives. I am not interested in how enthusiastic and excited you get over the truth of the rapture of the church; I want to know how you are living. Does this hope get right down to where you are living, and does it change your life?*

*In 2 Thessalonians the emphasis shifts to the coming of Christ to the earth to establish His Kingdom. There is a great deal of difference in our being caught up to meet the Lord in the air and His coming down to the earth to establish His Kingdom. I think there is a lot of upside down theology today. We need to make a distinction between our being caught up and His coming down.*

McGEE, Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

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A. T. Robertson says (in part),

*Timothy and Silas brought news of serious trouble in the church in Thessalonica. Some of the disciples there had misunderstood Paul's preaching about the second coming of Christ and had quit work and were making a decided disturbance on the subject. Undoubtedly Paul had touched upon eschatological matters while in Thessalonica. The Jewish leaders at Thessalonica charged it against Paul and Silas to the politarchs that they had preached another king, Jesus, in place of Caesar. Paul had preached Jesus as King of the spiritual kingdom which the Jews misrepresented to the politarchs as treason against Caesar as the Sanhedrin had done to Pilate about Jesus. Clearly Paul had said also that Jesus was going to come again according to his own promise before his ascension. Some asserted that Paul said Jesus was going to come right away and drew their own inferences for idleness and fanaticism as some do today. Strange as it may seem, there are scholars today who say that Paul did believe and say that Jesus was going to come back right away. They say this in spite of 2 Thes. 2:1-2 where Paul denies having ever said it. Undoubtedly Paul hoped for the early return of Jesus as most of the early Christians did, but that is a very different thing from setting a time for his coming. It is open to us all to hope for the speedy return of Christ, but times and seasons are with God and not with us. It is not open to us to excuse our negligence and idleness as Christians because of such a hope. That hope should serve as a spur to increased activity for Christ in order to hasten his coming. So Paul writes this group of Epistles to correct gross misapprehension and misrepresentation of his preaching about last things (eschatology). It is a rare preacher who has never been misunderstood or misrepresented*

ATR, Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

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This should provide you with a broad enough background for the study of this book. One thing you ought to look for. In the eight chapters making up these two books, the word "Brethren" is used thirty-six times, over four times per chapter. This is a greater use of this word than in any other New Testament book, regardless of size! (See Word Count at the end of this study).

WORD COUNTS FOR 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS  
Words appearing only once not shown

Both	1Th	2Th	Words	Both	1Th	2Th	Words
57	38	19	GOD	3	2	1	HEAVEN
46	25	21	LORD	3	2	1	MEANS
29	17	12	JESUS	3	1	2	OURSELVES
27	14	13	CHRIST	3	1	2	PATIENCE
24	17	7	BRETHREN	3	2	1	PRESENCE
15	12	3	KNOW	3	2	1	REASON
12	8	4	FAITH	3	2	1	SALVATION
12	7	5	WORD	3	2	1	SANCTIFICATION
10	6	4	ALWAYS	3	2	1	TOGETHER
10	6	4	DAY	3	1	2	WAY
10	7	3	LOVE	3	1	2	WORTHY
9	6	3	FATHER	3	2	1	WRITE
9	5	4	GOOD	2	1	1	ADMONISH
9	7	2	THEREFORE	2	1	1	AMEN
8	3	5	BECAUSE	2	1	1	AWAY
8	6	2	COME	2	1	1	BELOVED
8	5	3	COMING	2	1	1	BURDEN
8	6	2	CONCERNING	2	1	1	CHARGE
8	6	2	GOSPEL	2	1	1	CHURCH
7	4	3	BELIEVE	2	1	1	CHURCHES
7	3	4	HIMSELF	2	1	1	COMMANDED
7	6	1	JUST	2	1	1	DESTRUCTION
7	6	1	NIGHT	2	1	1	DIRECT
7	4	3	PEACE	2	1	1	DOING
7	5	2	SPIRIT	2	1	1	EITHER
7	2	5	WORK	2	1	1	EXCEEDINGLY
7	6	1	YOURSELVES	2	1	1	FAITHFUL
6	2	4	GRACE	2	1	1	FINALLY
6	5	1	LABOR	2	1	1	FIRST
6	5	1	MEN	2	1	1	GIVEN
5	2	3	GIVE	2	1	1	HOLD
5	3	2	GLORY	2	1	1	KINGDOM
5	4	1	HOPE	2	1	1	MAKE
5	3	2	MIGHT	2	1	1	MAN
4	2	2	BROTHER	2	1	1	MANNER
4	2	2	COMES	2	1	1	MIND
4	3	1	COMFORT	2	1	1	NEITHER
4	1	3	EPISTLE	2	1	1	REMEMBER
4	2	2	ESTABLISH	2	1	1	SAINTS
4	3	1	EVIL	2	1	1	SATAN
4	2	2	HEARTS	2	1	1	SAVED
4	2	2	PAUL	2	1	1	SHAKEN
4	1	3	POWER	2	1	1	SILVANUS
4	2	2	PRAY	2	1	1	SON
4	3	1	RECEIVED	2	1	1	STAND
4	3	1	THANKS	2	1	1	SUFFER
4	2	2	THROUGH	2	1	1	TAKEN
4	3	1	TIME	2	1	1	TAUGHT
4	3	1	TIMOTHY	2	1	1	THANK
4	3	1	TOWARD	2	1	1	THESSALONIANS
4	1	3	TRUTH	2	1	1	TOIL
4	3	1	WALK	2	1	1	TOLD
3	2	1	BOTH	2	1	1	TRIBULATION
3	2	1	ENDURE	2	1	1	UNTIL
3	2	1	EXHORT	2	1	1	WHETHER
3	2	1	FAST				

## WORDS ONLY IN 1 THESSALONIANS

5	HOLY
5	MORE
5	SEE
5	SLEEP
4	ANOTHER
4	JOY
3	CEASING
3	MACEDONIA
3	MUCH
3	NEED
3	SAKE
3	SPEAK
3	UPON
3	URGE
3	WITHOUT
3	WRATH
2	ABOUND
2	ABSTAIN
2	ACHAIA
2	AFFLICTION
2	AGAIN
2	ALIVE
2	ASLEEP
2	BLAMELESS
2	CALLS
2	CHILDREN
2	COMFORTED
2	DARKNESS
2	DEAD
2	DIED
2	DRUNK
2	FACE
2	GENTILES
2	HAVING
2	HOLINESS
2	INCREASE
2	LEST
2	LIVE
2	LONGER
2	PLEASE
2	REJOICE
2	REMAIN
2	SENT
2	SOBER
2	SONS
2	SUFFERED
2	THIEF
2	UNCLEANNES
2	VAIN
2	WORDS

## WORDS ONLY IN 2 THESSALONIANS

4	REVEALED
3	ACCORDING
3	COMMAND
3	DISORDERLY
3	EAT
3	GLORIFIED
2	BOUND
2	BREAD
2	CALLED
2	COUNT
2	EVERLASTING
2	FOLLOW
2	LAWLESS
2	NAME
2	OBEY
2	PLEASURE
2	RIGHTEOUS
2	TROUBLED
2	WORKING

Words which appear only once are not listed - there would be far too many and would not be of much value

Note that when a word appears a number of times in one epistle, such as "sleep" in 1 Thessalonians, 5 times, and not at all in the other, one may determine a topic addressed in one epistle and not the other. In this case, Paul put to rest their concern about those who were asleep (dead) and, apparently, Paul put their minds at ease about this since it is not mentioned in 2 Thessalonians.

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For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who **sleep** in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:14

Therefore let us not **sleep**, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who **sleep, sleep** at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

1 Thessalonians 5:6-7

. . . who died for us, that whether we wake or **sleep**, we should live together with Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:10

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## 1 THESSALONIANS 1

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*Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 1:1 (NKJV)

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Paul, and others of his time were smarter than we are. When we get a letter, we immediately turn to the last page to see who wrote it. They put their “signature” at the beginning to save us the trouble.

We have three names here - did three people write this letter? ATR says no!

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*Silas is the elder and is mentioned first, but neither is in any sense the author of the Epistle any more than Sosthenes is co-author of 1 Corinthians or Timothy of 2 Corinthians, though Paul may sometimes have them in mind when he uses “we” in the Epistle. Paul does not here call himself “apostle” as in the later Epistles, perhaps because his position has not been so vigorously attacked as it was later. Ellicott sees in the absence of the word here a mark of the affectionate relations existing between Paul and the Thessalonians.*

ATR, 1 Thessalonians 1:1

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MacArthur says,

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*Though Paul was the most influential apostle of the early church, in his greeting to the Thessalonians, he did not identify himself as an apostle. Apparently in the Macedonian churches, his apostleship was never in question, because in neither of his letters to the church at Thessalonica, nor in his letter to Philippi, did he begin by identifying himself as an apostle. Those churches had not questioned his apostolic status, although he would later defend his integrity and sincerity ( 1 Thess. 2:1–6 ). Here he simply and humbly identified himself as **Paul**. And in the same attitude of humility he linked his co-laborers **Silvanus** (Silas) **and Timothy** to himself as if they were all equals—*

MacArthur 1 Thessalonians 1:1

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Was it correct for him to include Silas’ (Silvanus’) and Timothy’s names here? Well, when my wife write a letter to good friends, she often signs my name to it, and vice versa. After nearly 50 years, we each know the other’s thoughts pretty well. Paul may have consulted with them on parts of the letter. But, most importantly, it was from them that he knew what the Thessalonians needed to hear.

In every one of his epistles, as noted above, he is either an “Apostle” or a “Bondslave,” except in these two to Thessalonica. Perhaps a third reason, not mentioned by other commentators, is the short time between his visit there and this letter. They certainly would not have forgotten this man in such a short time.

The letter is addressed to the *church of the Thessalonians*. ἐκκλησία (ekklesia) = “church” is from ἐκ (ek), the preposition for “out of” and the verb καλέω (kaleo) “to call.” In other words, “to call out (for a purpose), “to meet.” Some think it is a New Testament word but it is found many times in the LXX.

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*Then the Lord delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day*

of the **assembly**.

Deuteronomy 9:10 (NKJV)

Kenneth Wuest enlarges upon the term with the following.

*In classical Greek ekklesiá referred to an assembly of the citizens summoned by the town crier. It is used in Acts 19:32-41 in its purely classical meaning-. The town clerk dismissed the citizens who had been gathered together by the craftsmen in Ephesus. In its every other instance, it is translated "church," the church being looked upon as a called-out body of people, called out of the world of unsaved 'humanity to become the people of God. The term refers either to the Mystical Body of Christ made up of saved individuals only (Ephesians), or to the local churches. as for instance Rom. 16:5: Gal. 1:2. The word "assembly" is a good one-word translation of ekklesiá. The genius of the word points to the fact that in the mind of God, the Church of Jesus Christ is a called-out group of people, separated out from the world to be a people that should maintain their separation from the world out of which they have been called.*

WUEST, "Church"

Of course, in this case, we are speaking of a local church rather than the Universal Church (sometimes referred to as the Holy Catholic Church<sup>41</sup>) In no case is the "church" ever a building. When the last person leaves the church building, turns out the lights, and locks the doors, the church is gone, all that remains is a structure. The early churches often met at homes, outside, or in any suitable place. Where the church at Thessaloica meet is not known.

Paul refers to them as being "*in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" No mention is made of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this is because the church was not in the Spirit - the Spirit was in them!

*. . .who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit **in our hearts** as a guarantee.*

2 Corinthians 1:22 (NKJV)

*. . .that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through **His Spirit in the inner man**,*

Ephesians 3:16 (NKJV)

His greeting continues with two of three things.

- *Grace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*
- *Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*

Two for three things? What about

- ***Hope** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*

<sup>41</sup>. The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

That is one thing they had plenty of and, in fact, was part of their problem! We shall see this later. These three things do go together as Paul stated.

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*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV)

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We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4 (NKJV)

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With the formal salutation given in verse one, he now gets more personal. Paul prayed! Paul prayed for the Thessalonians! He prayed “always” as he commanded us to do.

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Pray without ceasing,

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV)

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Paul does not say “we give thanks to God **sometimes** for **some** of you . . .” Think about our church! There are a lot of people we can and should give thanks for. But, I am sure, you can think of some that we need not thank God for. Not so with Paul, he thanked God for **all** of them! I am sure you pray for our church, I do, but do you pray for it **always** (i.e. every day)?

*We make mention of you in our prayers.* Paul and company did so for other churches and people as well.

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*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,*

Romans 1:9 (NKJV)

*. . .do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:*

Ephesians 1:16 (NKJV)

*I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers,*

Philemon 1:4 (NKJV)

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Robertson asks, “*Did Paul have a prayer list of the Thessalonian disciples which he read over with Silas and Timothy?*”<sup>5</sup> Sounds like a good idea. It sounded like such a good idea for a lot of people in a lot of churches which is why you read in our Bulletin the following.<sup>6</sup>

FAMILY PRAYER CALENDAR	Lillian and Tina Bucton; Jason, Julie, Chris, and Kacie Burger
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<sup>5</sup>ATR, 1 Thessalonians 1:2

<sup>6</sup>Berean Bible Church Bulletin, October 3, 2004

PRAY FOR OUR MEN IN THE SERVICE	Jess Griepsma
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Paul, Silas, and Timothy thanked God continually **for all of** them because all the Thessalonian believers were the elect of God. The Thessalonians, because they were elect, were living for the honor of Christ. The apostle underscored his thankfulness for that reality by listing the first three qualities that proved God's sovereign choice of them, which were manifest in their sanctification.

MacARTHUR 1 Thessalonians 1:3

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McGee said,

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*In this verse Paul actually gives three graces of the Christian life. The past is the work of faith. The present is a labor of love. The future is the patience of hope. That is the biography of the Christian and the abiding, permanent, and eternal features of the Christian life.*

*Faith, hope, and love are abstract nouns. They seem to be way up yonder, but we are way down here. How can we get them out of space and theory into the reality of life down here? How can we make them concrete instead of abstract qualities?*

*This is like the story of the contractor who loved children. He put down a sidewalk one day -- finished it in the afternoon. He came back the next morning to find that some children had walked on the concrete and had left their footmarks in it. He was very angry and was talking very loudly. A man who was standing by said, "I thought you loved children." The contractor said, "I love them in the abstract but not in the concrete!"*

*So the question here is how we are going to get these words down into something concrete. Paul takes these three words from the "beautiful isle of somewhere" and puts them into shoe leather. He gets them down to where the shoe leather meets the sidewalks of our hometown. He fleshes up these abstract qualities by taking them out of the morgue of never-never land*

McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 1:3

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- *remembering without ceasing your **work of faith***
- *remembering without ceasing your **labor of love***
- *remembering without ceasing your **patience of hope***

As noted by McGee above, Paul consider three attributes of a Christian as the most important

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*And now abide **faith, hope, love**, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV)

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Here in this epistle, he has the order different, placing hope last instead of love. The order is probably as McGee noted, in order of "tense"

Paul must have gotten together with James at some point before this because James says it like this.

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*Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*



James 2:17 (NKJV)

*But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

James 2:20 (NKJV)

*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

James 2:26 (NKJV)

In prophesying concerning the church at Thyatira, John notes the results of these three attributes.

*I know your **works**, love, **service**, faith, and your **patience**; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.*

Revelation 2:19 (NKJV)

So, then, what is Faith? You can easily find the answer to that - Hebrews 11!

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV)

Be careful you do not put the cart before the horse. You do not work until you receive faith. You receive faith and, if it is true fait, that faith will drive you do going good works. Many have misunderstood James. Many thin it is a contradiction to what Paul wrote below.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast.*

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

So, consider this! *“We give thanks to God.”* Paul is not thanking the Thessalonians for either their faith or their works. He is thanking God. Thanking God for what? Paul himself said (above) that their faith was *the “gift of God.”* He is thanking God for this gift to the Thessalonians. How did he know for sure that God had given them this saving faith? He could tell from their works which were the outworking of this faith.

Next comes “Labor of Love.” What is the difference between ἔργον (ergon) “work” and κόπος (kopos) “labor?” Wuest says, *“your toil motivated and characterized by your divine and self-sacrificial love”*<sup>7</sup> Κόπος (kopos) is derived from κόπτω (kopto) which means “to stike” or “to smite.” According to Trench, the noun thus refers to “toil” or “weariness.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, he enlarges upon it thus.

*Κόπος is of much more frequent recurrence. It is found some twenty times in the N. T., being not so much the actual exertion which a man makes, as the lassitude or ,veariness (see Pott, Etym. Forsch. vol. v. p.80) which follows on this straining of all his powers to the utmost. It is well worth our while*

<sup>7</sup>WUEST, Thessalonians 1:3

<sup>8</sup>TRENCH, Snyonyms of the New Testament, page 378

to note the frequent use which is made of *ICO'ITOf* and of the verb, for the designating what are or ought to be the labours of the Christian ministry, containing as they do a word of warning for all that are in it engaged (John iv. 38; Acts xx. 35; Co1 i. 29; 2 Cor. vi. 5; 1 Thess. iii. 5, and often).

TRENCH, Κόπος

I think the best way to describe the sense of this word is in a sense we use it today. We speak of a pregnant women “going into labor.” When we speak this way, we are not thinking of the various “work” that she is about to do, but the pain and travail she must go through. Fortunately, God gave women a special love for their children (born and unborn) then enables them to overcome and deliver the baby.

In the same way, as Christians, we are to have a special love which allows us to put up with the trails and stains related to serving Him.

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

1 Corinthians 13:1 (NKJV)

Paul take the whole chapter to describe love. John and Jude did pretty well too.

*In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.*

1 John 4:9 (NKJV)

*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

1 John 5:3 (NKJV)

*Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

Jude 1:21 (NKJV)

As we noted in the introduction, the Thessalonians had a rather tough time with the rabble rousers there. But they rose above that and demonstrated their love in what they suffered with. Thus Paul thanks God for giving this kind of love.

Last, we come to “patience of hope.”

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory **in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character;** and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5:1-5 (NKJV)

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And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of **hope** until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and **patience** inherit the promises.

Hebrews 6:11-12 (NKJV)

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For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Romans 15:4 (NKJV)

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Wuest translates this as “*your patient endurance under trials which finds its source in your hope which rests in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God, even the Father.*”<sup>9</sup> Paul had heard from Timothy and Silas how they demonstrated this hope. He had this hope so strongly that they were alarmed about those of their number who had died without Christ returning.

The three terms may be summed in the manner of Vincent,

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*Work—labor—patience (ἔργου—κόπου—ὑπομονῆς)*

*Ἔργον* work, may mean either the act, the simple transaction, or the process of dealing with anything, or the result of the dealing,—as a book or a picture is called a work.

*Κόπος* labor, from *κόπτειν* to strike or hew; hence, laborious, painful exertion.

*ὑπομονή* patience, patient endurance and faithful persistence in toil and suffering. See on 2 Peter 1:6; see on James 5:7. The genitives, of faith, love, hope, mark the generating principles of the work and labor and patience, which set their stamp upon each; thus, work which springs from faith, and is characteristic of faith.

The phrase *patience of hope* is found only here; but see Romans 5:4; 8:25; 15:4; 1 Corinthians 8:7; Hebrews 7:11, 12 *ὑπομονή* in LXX, see 1 Chronicles 29:15; Job 14:19; Psalm 9:18; 38:7; Jeremiah 14:8. We have here the great triad of Christian graces, corresponding to 1 Corinthians 8. Hope is prominent throughout the two Epistles. The triad appears, 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Galatians 5:5, 6; 1 Corinthians 8:13; Ephesians 4:2-5; Colossians 1:4, 5; Hebrews 10:22-24; 1 Peter 1:21-22. Comp. 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:5, 8; 1 Corinthians 15:10, 58; 2 Corinthians 11:27; Revelation 2:2.

VINCENT, 1 Thessalonians 1:3

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“. . . knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” Now we get to a “sticky” word, “election.” From Paul’s day on there has always been an argument concerning election and free will. We will begin with the word itself.

ἐκλογή (ekloge) is used seven times in the New Testament. One of these demonstrates its non-theological use.

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Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has

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<sup>9</sup>WUEST 1 Thessalonians 1:3

done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:13-16 (NKJV)

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The word has come into English as "eckletic"

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*eclectic* >adj. 1 deriving ideas or style from a broad and diverse range of sources. 2 (Eclectic) denoting or belonging to a class of ancient philosophers who selected doctrines from various schools of thought. >n. an eclectic person. DERIVATIVES *eclectically* >adv. *eclecticism* >n. ORIGIN from Gk *eklektikos*, from *eklegein* '**pick out**'.

OXFORD DICTIONARY, "ecklectic"

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

### Election and Vocation

In treating election and calling as the application of Christ's redemption, we imply that they are, in God's decree, logically subsequent to the decree of redemption. But even so, several views of the order of the decrees are possible. Sublapsarianism holds that the decrees of God are in this order:

1. the decree to create,
2. the decree to permit the fall,
3. the decree to provide salvation sufficient for all,
4. the decree to secure the acceptance of this salvation by some, or the decree of election.

This view holds to an unlimited atonement and to irresistible grace. The Infralapsarian view agrees in the first two points, but makes 3 the decree to provide salvation for the elect. It is evident that this view holds both to a limited atonement and to irresistible grace. Hyper-Calvinism holds what is known as Supralapsarianism. According to this view the order of the decrees is as follows:

1. the decree to save some, and to reprobate the rest,
2. the decree to create both those who are to be saved and those who are to be reprobated,
3. the decree to permit (some would say, effectually to secure) the fall of both groups, and
4. the decree to provide salvation only for the former, that is, the elect. It may be said that Calvin gives some ground for this view. John Calvin, Op. cit.

THEISEN, page 343

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The infralapsarian view is referred to today as "TULIP"

**T** - total depravity. This doesn't mean people are as bad as they can be. It means that sin is in every part of one's being, including the mind and will, so that a man cannot save himself.

**U** - unconditional election. God chooses to save people unconditionally; that is, they are not chosen on the basis of their own merit.

**L** - limited atonement. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was for the purpose of saving the elect.

**I** - irresistible grace. When God has chosen to save someone, He will.

**P** - perseverance of the saints. Those people God chooses cannot lose their salvation; they will continue to believe. If they fall away, it will be only for a time.

I shall not comment on the Supralapsarianism view as it not being worth our while. The other two views, as far as I can see, and many others as well, are essentially the same. The difference being

in whether Christ's death on the cross was sufficient just for the elect or for all. It is a moot point since a non elect person can not be saved anyway so it makes no difference regarding Christ's work on the cross. There are some more sophisticated explanations for this but I believe this should be sufficient for anyone who is not a theologian.

For the sake of completeness, here are a few other passages which further define election.

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For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even **the elect**.

Matthew 24:24 (NKJV)

And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 24:31 (NKJV)

And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, **that the purpose of God according to election might stand**, not of works but of Him who calls),

Romans 9:10-11 (NKJV)

What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but **the elect** have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

Romans 11:7 (NKJV)

Therefore I endure all things for the sake of **the elect**, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

2 Timothy 2:10 (NKJV)

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I believe that, more than any other passage, the passage in Romans 9 settles the point that God does this election before we are even born and, therefore, is not related in any way to what we do.

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*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.*

1 Thessalonians 1:5-7 (NKJV)

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*For our gospel . . . Gospel, used six times in 1 Thessalonians is εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) is the source of our English word evangel, (evangel >n. 1 archaic the Christian gospel. ->any of the four Gospels<sup>10</sup>) and its various forms (evangelism, evangelist, etc.). It was created from is εὐ (eu) = good, and αγγέλιον (angelion) = "message". Hence the term "good news." It is used in this general sense several times in the Old Testament.*

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*. . . when one told me, saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was **bringing good news**, I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news.*

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<sup>10</sup>OXFORD Disctionary

2 Samuel 4:10 (NASB-U)

*"But whatever happens," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and passed up the Cushite.*

*Now David was sitting between the two gates; and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man running by himself. The watchman called and told the king. And the king said, "If he is by himself **there is good news** in his mouth." And he came nearer and nearer.*

2 Samuel 18:23-25 (NASB-U)

Paul refers to it as "our gospel," was it really his?

*The first past indicator (and the fourth one overall) from the Thessalonians' conversion that attested to the genuineness of their election was the divine power revealed in the preaching of the gospel to them. When Paul said the **gospel came in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction**, he was not just describing the Thessalonians' experience but his, Silas's, and Timothy's, when they first declared the saving news in Thessalonica. Paul and the others were so deeply identified with the message of salvation and its power that he called it **our gospel** (cf. 2 Thess. 2:14), though it was from God (Rom. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:2, 9) and concerned the atoning work of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).*

MacARTHUR 1 Thessalonians 1:4

As a result of their receiving the gospel, as God's elect, they "became followers of" Paul and Silas.

*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV)

There is a serious message here. We, too, should walk so that other, following our example can be followers of Christ. Paul was very concerned about this, especially with respect to the Corinthians.

*But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become **a stumbling block** to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother **perish**, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, **lest I make my brother stumble**.*

1 Corinthians 8:9-13 (NKJV)

We must walk in the Lord in such a manner that others see Christ in us and are not led in the wrong direction. (This is often referred to as the "Doctrine of the Weaker Brother").

*These Thessalonians turned to God from idols. Paul didn't go into Thessalonica and say, "I don't think it is proper for you people to worship idols. That's a terrible thing to do." He never said anything like that. When he went there he preached Christ! Idolatry wasn't repulsive to these people, but when they heard Paul present Christ, they believed God and they turned to God. When they turned to God, they automatically turned from idols.*

McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 1:4

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They had received the Gospel, but Paul says it was “*received the word in much affliction.*” “Affliction is from θλίψις (thlipsyis), the verbal form being θλίβω (thlibo). The verb is found, fittingly enough as below (both the verbal form and the noun are in this one verse).

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*. . . since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with **tribulation** those who **trouble** you,*  
2 Thessalonians 1:6 (NKJV)

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Today, if Paul were writing in English, he would probably use “in much pressure and stress.” We noted the trouble in the introduction to this epistle. We repeat it below.

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*But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, **set all the city in an uproar** and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, **they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city**, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.”*

Acts 17:5-7 (NKJV)

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Who this Jason was we do not know other than what Paul wrote to Rome much later.

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*Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.*  
Romans 16:21 (NKJV)

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He recalls their “*much affliction, with joy.*” How do you reconcile these two feelings? Do you have joy when you are afflicted? James did and advised us to do the same.

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*My brethren, count it all **joy when you fall into various trials**, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

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Right now I have mixed feelings. We have enjoyed great religious freedom in the United States - up until recently. It seems the situation is bound to get worse - much worse. I hate to look forward to this, not so much for myself as I will not be on the scene for that many years, but for our children and grandchildren. On the other hand, if you want the Gospel to spread and churches to grow, the surest way to accomplish this is to persecute the Christians. Look at past History! Don't take my word for it.

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*The First Persecution, Under Nero, A.D. 67*

*The first persecution of the Church took place in the year 67, under Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome. This monarch reigned for the space of five years, with tolerable credit to himself, but then gave way to the greatest extravagancy of temper, and to the most atrocious barbarities. Among other diabolical whims, he ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards, and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up to the tower of Macaenas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy, and openly declared that ‘he*

wished the ruin of all things before his death.’ Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousands perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins. This dreadful conflagration continued nine days; when Nero, finding that his conduct was greatly blamed, and a severe odium cast upon him, determined to lay the whole upon the Christians, at once to excuse himself, and have an opportunity of glutting his sight with new cruelties. This was the occasion of the first persecution; and the barbarities exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves. Nero even refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them. This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity. In the course of it, St. Paul and St. Peter were martyred. To their names may be added, Erastus, chamberlain of Corinth; Aristarchus, the Macedonian, and Trophimus, an Ephesians, converted by St. Paul, and fellow-laborer with him, Joseph, commonly called Barsabas, and Ananias, bishop of Damascus; each of the Seventy.

FOXES BOOK OF MARTYRS, Chapter II

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You don't have to stop there, there are 21 more chapters to read!

Then Paul gives us some insight to having joy in spite of tribulations.

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*. . . but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts **by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.***

Romans 5:3-5 (NKJV)

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The key is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We can not pump up love in the midst of trials on our own - that is against human nature. The nature of the Holy Spirit is different and can enable us to do this.

We didn't repeat Paul's whole phrase above, let us do so now. . . . *word in much affliction, with joy **of the Holy Spirit.*** There it is again!

Doing this is not only important to ourselves. Paul wrote that the joy amidst affliction of the Thessalonians "became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe." They became witnesses of how the Christian is to act under pressure.

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*For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 (NKJV)

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Paul finished this first chapter with a detailed explanation of how their joy amid afflictions was a witness "in every place." "The word of the Lord has sounded forth." In Phillip's expanded translation this is expressed as below.



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*You have become a sort of sounding-board from which the Word of the Lord has rung out, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but everywhere where the story of your faith in God has become known. We find we don't have to tell people about it. They tell us the story of our coming to you!*

PHILLIPS, 1 Thessalonians 1:8-9a

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Wouldn't that be a great testimony to have as a church. People passing through here from all parts of the state or country and saying, "We just had to come here and see what we have heard so much about!" If we all lived our Christian testimony as the Thessalonians did, we could!

"Sounded out" is from a Greek word found only here. ἐξηχέω (ekscheo) is a compound of εκ (ek) and ἤχῃω (echeo). This later word is found twice.

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*"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves **roaring**;*

Luke 21:25 (NKJV)

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become **sounding** brass or a clanging cymbal.*

1 Corinthians 13:1 (NKJV)

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The compound brings us our word "Echo." Thus is it "to resound" or "to sound abroad." It is a strong word for the testimony of the Thessalonians. "For they themselves," i.e. all those who heard their testimony as it sounded out. They all heard how Paul proclaimed the Gospel to them, As a result they "*declare concerning us what manner of entry*" Paul and Silas had. "Declare" is a "Linear present active indicative, **keep on reporting**"<sup>11</sup> From everywhere Paul was hearing this. He gets a bit more specific, noting how "*turned to God.*" No, wait, that is not the complete statement. He heard not they "*turned to God **from idols.***" Take this test sometime. Stand somewhere and note what you see. Then turn around 180 degrees and note what you see - something completely different! You can not turn to God and keep your idols. Neither can you turn from your idols unless there is something to take their place. It is one or the other!

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*No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*

Luke 16:13 (NKJV)

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Paul does not say they turned to God for their salvation. He says they turned to God to do two things.

- *to serve the living and true God*
- *to wait for His Son from heaven*

The fact they received Christ as their Savior is implied here. How were you saved? By Faith in Jesus Christ. We have already noted that "fail without works is dead." Theirs was not dead. They served as we have noted previously - they worked and they labored. We previously noted that Paul praised the "Patience of Hope." As such the word Paul received from all over was they were waiting for the Rapture! They believed in it, so much so, they had a problem which Paul needed to straighten out.

He concludes this chapter with "*whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the*

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<sup>11</sup>ATR 1 Thessalonians 1:10

*wrath to come.*” Do you notice anything in this verse that is terribly important? It tells us that God “raised (Jesus) from the dead. “Raised” is in the Aorist tense. God did this one and for all. It was a one time event. On the other hand “delivers” is a Present Participle in the Greek.

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170. There are really two fundamental ways of viewing action. It may be contemplated in single perspective, as a point, which we may call punctiliar action (R. 823); or it may be regarded as in progress, as a line, and this we may call linear action (M. 109). The perfect tense is a combination of these two ideas: it looks in perspective at the action, and regards the results of the action as continuing to exist; that is, in progress at a given point. Hence the perfect has both elements, linear and punctiliar. The aorist may be represented by a dot (●), the present by a line ( —), and the perfect by the combination of the two (●—).

D&M, PAGE 189

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When he raised Christ, he delivered us from the wrath to come and he continues to keep us in deliverance. He doesn't say, here, what the wrath to come is, he preached that to them when he was there.

## 1 THESSALONIANS 2

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*For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.*

1 Thessalonians 2:1-4 (NKJV)

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Fifteen times the word “know” is found in these two epistles, twelve of them in this one (actually, 12 times if you include “knowing.”). In all cases it is from the Greek οἶδα (oida) [or εἶδω.(eido)]

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*In classic usage (cf. Schmidt ch. 13), γινώσκειν (ginoskein), distinguished from the rest by its original inchoative force, denotes a discriminating apprehension of external impressions, a knowledge grounded in personal experience. εἶδω.(eido) literally. 'to have seen with the mind's eye,' signifies a clear and purely mental perception, in contrast both to conjecture and to knowledge derived from others.*

TRENCH, γινώσκειν

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To put it in words that are a little plainer, the word we are considering is knowledge one gains from being taught it, while the other word γινώσκειν (ginoskein) refers to things one learns from experience, “learn by doing.” Since it has only been a few months since the Thessalonians received the Gospel, their experiential knowledge would be limited. But, because of his excellent teaching, their “learned” knowledge would be very good.

It seems a bit strange, however, to use οἶδα (oida) here as they experienced Paul’s “coming to them.” On the other hand he knew it was not in vain because of what they knew (sort of bit of double talk?) Wuest translates it “know positively.” Paul says he had suffered before and had been spitefully used there in Thessalica. “Suffered” is προπάσχω (propascho), a word found only here. The first part of the word, προ (pro), simply means “before” or “beforehand.” Then πάσχω (pascho) is an interesting word in that it is a “vox media.” This means it can refer to “good” things or to “bad” things, depending on how it is used. In the New Testament it is almost always translated “suffer.”

Indeed, Paul did suffer. Let me list the ways:

1. He had a dispute with Barnabas, 2: he was thrown in jail and beaten in Phillipi,
3. Etc. ( there are many more but many came after this letter.

Paul, himself said,

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*But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

2 Corinthians 6:4-10 (NKJV)

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As far as when they were in Thessalica, he says they were “*spitefully treated.*” Well, at least Paul could take comfort in knowing he was not the only one so treated.

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*For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and **insulted** and spit upon.*

Luke 18:32 (NKJV)

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It would not be the last time Paul was mistreated.

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*And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to **abuse** and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. And they were preaching the gospel there. . . . Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*

Acts 14:5-7 & 19-20 (NKJV)

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In spite of all this, they “were bold in our God to speak to [them] the gospel of God.” We have already looked at the “Gospel of God” (and of Paul) He then explains his preaching.

- *For our exhortation did not come from error*
- *For our exhortation did not come from uncleanness*
- *It was not in deceit.*
- *We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel*
- *We speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts*

Error? Uncleanness? Deceit? Where would ideas like that come from? Well, if you have been an adult in the United States for, at least, the last four years, you know what kind of trash people can dig up and accuse others (i.e political candidates) of! There was no impureness in Paul’s message nor in his motives. Some, however did preach with wrong motives.

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*Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even **from envy and strife**, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of **selfish ambition** rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.*

Philippians 1:15-17 (NKJV)

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Some things come with the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval” and others with a seal from Underwriters Laboratories (which, incidently, does not mean the product is any good, only that it is not likely to burn your house down). Paul’s preaching had a seal on it. They were approved by God. In fact, Paul was not only approved by God, Paul was “ordered” by God to carry the Gospel on the road to Damascus.

He says they did not preach to please men. That is not the case with some! Paul explains it to Timothy.

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*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears**, they will heap up for themselves*

*teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*

2 Timothy 4:2-4 (NKJV)

There are far too many churches today who will call a pastor on the basis of his saying the “nice comfortable things” he preaches. He doesn’t mention “sin,” “blood,” “Hell,” “insaved,” etc. Just nice little sermonettes that make you feel good.

MacArthur tells what type of preacher the church needs.

*Those called to be elders in the church, who preach, teach, and lead God's flock, are entrusted with the unequalled duty of proclaiming the gospel to unbelieving sinners, and bringing those who believe and are baptized into the fellowship of the local church. There the Holy Spirit will sanctify them as they worship God in spirit and truth, submitting to the exposition and application of Scripture. Pastors also must intercede for their people through public and private prayer, oversee the administration of the Lord's Table so their people will regularly confess their sins and renew their covenant of obedience, equip other teachers and workers within the church, superintend and enforce church discipline, and provide biblical counseling to the congregation. All of this spiritual work is to build up the saints to maturity—"to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13)*

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-10

*For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness--God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*

1 Thessalonians 2:5-12 (NKJV)

McGee sums this up quite well,

If I were to pick the greatest sermon of Paul, I would actually pick none of these. I would choose instead his life in Thessalonica. His greatest sermon was not in writing or speaking, but in walking. It was not in exposition, but in experience; not in his profession, but in his practice. He took his text from James 2:26, ". . . faith without works is dead. . . ." and he made his points on the pavement of the streets of Thessalonica

McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 2:2

He did not use “flattering words.” - *κολακεία* (*kolakeia*), a word used only here in the New Testament. As such, it is difficult to find a good definition for it. M&M say this.

*The word carries with it the idea of the **tortuous methods** by which one man seeks to gain influence*

*over another, generally for his own ends, and when we keep in view the selfish conduct of too many of the heathen rhetoricians of the day (see e.g. Dion Casso Hist. Rom. lxxi. 35, Dion Chrys. Orat. xxxii. p. 403) we can easily understand how such a charge might come to be laid against the Apostles.*

M&M, κολακεία

Note that, according to them, there were other less noble men who suffered hardships in order to get their point of view across. It was important for the Thessalonians to realize he was not one of them, and for us as well.

Neither did they use “a cloak for covetousness.” The NASB has “a pretext for greed.” Robertson says,

*Πλεονεξία (pleonechia) is merely “having more”, one eager for more, and πλεονεξεόω (pleonekteoō), to have more, then to over-reach, all old words, all with bad meaning as the result of the desire for more. In a preacher this sin is especially fatal. Paul feels so strongly his innocence of this charge that he calls God as witness as in 2 Corinthians 1:23; Romans 9:1; Phil. 1:8, a solemn oath for his own veracity.*

ATR, 1 Thessalonians 2:5

I wonder what Robertson would say if he had been around during the last ten or fifteen years when a number of TV evangelists have gotten into big trouble over the finances of their ministries! I suppose this is why Paul called God as his witness.

He continues with this theme as he writes, “Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others.” When I think of this I can not but help think of Pastor Jim (Wickstrom) who has ministered the Word for most of his 77 years. If you look on the Internet you can find a Jim Wickstrom, quite a few references, such as the one below.

Identity, as a distinct theological and political movement, can be traced back to Wesley Swift, a former California Ku Klux Klan organizer, who founded the Church of Jesus Christ-Christian in 1946. Swift argued vehemently from his pulpit for the genocide of all Jews. Another early Identity preacher, William Potter Gale was an associate of Wesley Swift. Gale introduced Richard Butler, head of today's notorious Aryan Nations, to Swift in 1963. Throughout the 1970s, Butler developed the Aryan Nations, and Gale helped create the Posse Comitatus. In the 1980s, **James Wickstrom became the major Identity preacher for the Posse.**

<http://bethuneinstitute.org/documents/cift.html>

Fortunately, this is not our James Wickstrom. No one with any influence really knows about Pastor Jim as he has quietly preached his heart out with the Gospel message. He may receive a little glory from us, his parishioners, but certainly not from the rest of the world. I can not think of a better example of Paul's practice than this!

Then, “We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.” Some might criticise Pastor Jim for doing the same thing, he is so much like a nursing mother that he works with people I wouldn't want to deal with and I surely would not want to be a part of this church - BUT, **some** of these people **are** (or have been) a part of this church because of him - you just do not recognize them because these people are “new creations in Christ.”

Not to dwell on this subject overly long, but I can not help but say that the word that follow might just as well been spoken about Pastor Jim, *“So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. That’s pastor Jim!*

*For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. Paul was, do doubt, laboring night and day as he wrote this letter because know from Acts,*

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*After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, **he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.** And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.*

Acts 18:1-4 (NKJV)

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He may well have done the same for the short time he was in Thessalonica. This may seem like a good thing, so that others would not have to help with his ministry, but it is not (and was not, other than it was necessary).

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*Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may **appoint over this business;** but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

Acts 6:2-4 (NKJV)

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Really, even Paul recognized the need for support. To the Church at Corinth he wrote,

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Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:14 (NKJV)

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He goes on in the next verse, though, saying that he didn’t do this! ATR says regarding the above verse,

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*Just as God gave orders about the priests in the temple, so did the Lord Jesus give orders for those who preach the gospel to live out of the gospel. Evidently Paul was familiar with the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7-8 either in oral or written form. He has made his argument for the minister’s salary complete for all time.*

ATR, 1 Corinthians 9:14

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It is almost always better to be able to devoted onself to evangelism than to do it part time. With the time he had available, he concentrated on six things.

- *how devoutly*
- *how justly*
- *how blamelessly we behaved ourselves*
- *how we exhorted,*

- *how we comforted,*
- *how we charged every one of you, as a father does his own children*

The first three have to do with what they were (i.e. how they conducted themselves) and the other three with what they did for the Thessalonians. “Devoutly” is *ὁσίως* (*hosios*) which is used only here in the New Testament. The related words refer to “being undefiled by sin, religiously observing every moral obligation<sup>12</sup>.” “Justly” is from *δικαίως* (*dikaios*) is “observing human and divine laws.” Finally blamelessly is *ἀμέμπτως* (*amemptos*), used only twice, both in this epistle and is “no cause for censure.” (The “no” is from the *α* at the beginning).

ATR says of the three

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*He employs three common adverbs that show how holily toward God and how righteously toward men so that they did not blame him and his associates in either respect. So there is a reason for each adverb. All this argues that Paul spent a considerable time in Thessalonica, more than the three sabbaths mentioned by Luke. The pastor ought to live so that his life will bear close inspection*

ATR, 1 Thessalonians 2:10

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JFB puts it this way,

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holily—towards God. justly—towards men. unblamably—in relation to ourselves.

JFB, 1 Thessalonians 2:10

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Now, what they did for others. They “exhorted.” *παρακαλέω* (*parakaleo*). This is a verb, you would like recognize the noun, *παραράκτητος* (*parakletos*), “parakete.,” a term use for the “Comforter,” the Holy Spirit. I suppose it ought to have been translated as “comforted” except that is how the next word is translated. *παραμυθέομαι* (*paramutheomai*) is used in John 11 when Lazarus died.

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*And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, **to comfort them** concerning their brother. . . . Then the Jews who were with her in the house, **and comforting her**, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."*

John 11:19 & 31 (NKJV)

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They “charged” them as a “father does his own children.” First they were a “mother” to them, now a “father” who is “charging” them. MacArthur refers to this section of the text as, “Parental Pictures of Spiritual Leadership” He then explains it this way

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*The apostle views the outward functions of the divinely approved spiritual leader. He could have presented these functions by discussing preaching, discipling, protecting, and overseeing. But as the New Testament writers often did for the sake of vividness and richness, the apostle used a metaphor. He could have chosen any one of several metaphors: a steward or household manager (1 Corinthians 4:1–2); a bond-slave or servant (Colossians 4:12); a herald or proclaimer of the message (1 Timothy 2:7 niv); a teacher, soldier, athlete, farmer (2 Timothy 2:2-6); or the common image of a*

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<sup>12</sup>THAYER, *ὁσίως* , *δικαίως*, *ἀμέμπτως*, *παρακαλέω*, *παραράκτητος*, and *παραμυθέομαι*



shepherd (1 Peter 5:1–4; cf. Ps. 23). All those metaphors are replete with significance and paint helpful pictures. However, Paul chose to use the most intimate, compelling metaphors of a mother and father, which illustrate the primary kinds of spiritual care a leader must provide his people.

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 2:7

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McGee picks up the same thought - MacArthur enlarged upon it. McGee noted, “the Mother Side Of The Apostle’s Ministry (comfort)” and “The Father Side Of The Apostle’s Ministry (charge).” What did he “charge,” ματύρμαι (marturomai) them with? The first part of this verb is the source of our word “martyr. (Witness)” The NKJF footnote has “imported” and the NASB footnote has a more literal meaning “testified to.” The charge was “walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” Perhaps “conduct yourselves” would be a better term than “walk.” “Worthy” would be a better translation of this adverb, ἄξιος (axios) “suitably, in a manner worthy of”<sup>13</sup>. This is not a unique exhortation, look at the following.

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*I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord **in a manner worthy of the saints**, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.*

Romans 16:1-2 (NKJV)

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called**, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Ephesians 4:1-3 (NKJV)

*Only let your conduct be **worthy of the gospel of Christ**, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,*

Philippians 1:27 (NKJV)

*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may **walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

Colossians 1:9-12 (NKJV)

*Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey **in a manner worthy of God, you will do well,***

3 John 1:5-6 (NKJV)

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The effective evangelism of a number of faithful Christians can be destroyed by one who professes to be a Christian and who does not so walk! This may be a bit away from the point, but one example is the Christian(?) Who has a Christian bumper sticker (usually more than one) on his car and cuts in and out of lanes exceeding the speed limit!

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<sup>13</sup>THAYER, ἄξιος

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*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.*

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 (NKJV)

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Because they did walk worthily, Paul could “*thank God without ceasing.*” We discussed this thoroughly in Chapter 1, verses 2-3. They understood that Paul had not dreamed up some nice “gospel” but was giving it to them direct from the Holy Spirit. The following is a bit out of context,

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*But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. **For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;***

Matthew 10:19 (NKJV)

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Then we should not leave out the following

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*And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. . . . But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”*

Acts 9:9 & 15-16 (NKJV)

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Have you ever wondered what Paul did during the three days he was sightless? His eyes did not work but the “eyes of his mind did!” He had time to reflect and receive new insight into the Scriptures so that, when Ananias laid his hands on him and opened his eyes and spent some more days at Damascus, he immediately went forth with the Gospel. It was truly “the word of God.”

The question you ought to consider is whether or not that word of God “effectively works” in you as it did with those in Thessalonica. “Works” is from a very interesting Greek word, ἐνεργέω (energeo) which sounds a bit like “energize.” That is because this is where the word comes from. Recall the “Energizer Bunny” on TV who is always “going and going?” The true reception on the Gospel message has that effect on one. It consists and Paul indicates, they became “imitators” of the Christians in the Judean churches. It matters not what country you live in, what ethnic group you are from, the result should be the same.

Let’s get one thing straight. We are not supposed to be “imitation Christians,” we are to live our lives as if they were imitations of other Christians. μιμητής (minetes) is the source of our word “mimic.” Unfortunately, “mimic” does not have a good connotation for use here. We will stick with “imitate” in the sense of following another’s example.

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*Therefore I urge you, imitate me.*

1 Corinthians 4:16 (NKJV)

*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV)

*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.*

Ephesians 5:1 (NKJV)

*. . .that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

Hebrews 6:12 (NKJV)

We go on. MacArthur has entitled this section, “A People to Be Glad for and a People to Be Sad For” We have noted how glad Paul is for those in Thessalonica. He now speaks of how they, “also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us.”

MacArthur enlarges upon this.

*After the stoning of Stephen, the Judean Christians suffered a period of persecution that was mainly led by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 7:54–8:4). When the risen Christ saved Saul on the Damascus road (9:1–19), the persecution waned somewhat. But it was not long before the persecution—which this time included the first murder of an apostle, James, by the sword—flared up again under Herod. At that time also, the Jewish leaders imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1–4). Thus the Judean churches had a history of dealing with severe harassment, and had persevered in suffering—an experience the Thessalonian church was imitating.*

*Even as the believers in Judea suffered persecution from their own people, the Jews, the Thessalonians, immediately after receiving the gospel (Acts 17:1–4), endured persecution at the hands of their own countrymen.*

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 2:14

Let’s have a little history lesson.

*So he [Elijah] said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and **killed Your prophets with the sword**. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."*

1 Kings 19:10 (NKJV)

The Old Testament prophets suffered much and many were killed, thus Jesus said,

*Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and **your fathers killed them**.*

Luke 11:47 (NKJV)

Now Paul points out that they killed Jesus as well. They persecuted Paul too.

*Now after many days were past, **the Jews plotted to kill him**. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates [of Damascus] day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.*

Acts 9:23-25 (NKJV)

And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, **but they attempted to kill him**. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

Acts 9:29-30 (NKJV)

When Paul says, “they have persecuted us,” he uses ἐκδιώκω (ekdioko), used only here in the New Testament but is found in the LXX.

**Many are my persecutors and my enemies, Yet I do not turn from Your testimonies.**

Psalms 119:157 (NKJV)

It is a very strong term, “to persecute, to oppress with calamities”<sup>14</sup> Paul knew persecution from both sides! I imagine he was very good at both taking it and providing it - but his providing days were long behind him.

Beside making life miserable for Christians, these same people, “do not please God and are contrary to all men.” Back in verse 4, page 26, 34, Paul said they did not preach to please men. Implied is he preached to please God. Those who were doing the persecuting were not pleasing God (you don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out). He also says they are “contrary.” As children we found that “Mary was contrary” but let’s look to the Biblical use of ἐναντίος (enantios).

Then He saw them straining at rowing, for **the wind was against them**. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.

Mark 6:48 (NKJV)

Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things **contrary** to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 26:9 (NKJV)

When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because **the winds were contrary**.

Acts 27:4 (NKJV)

The picture of a ship battling the wind is a dramatic way of representing what those opposed to the Gospel were doing to the saints. Paul says “all men.” They oppose the saints but they make it difficult for the unsaved to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is what Paul said, “forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved.”



He finishes this section with a somewhat strange statement. “. . . so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.” “Fill up” here is really “to fill to completion” or “to fill to the rim.”

God allows all men a certain period of time to repent and turn to him. We can see this in several places in the Scriptures.

<sup>14</sup>THAYER, ἐκδιώκω

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*But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites **is not yet complete.***"

Genesis 15:16 (NKJV)

*Do not fear, O Jacob My servant," says the Lord, "For I am with you; For **I will make a complete end** of all the nations To which I have driven you, But I will not make a complete end of you. I will rightly correct you, For I will not leave you wholly unpunished."*

Jeremiah 46:28 (NKJV)

*Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for **in them the wrath of God is complete.***

Revelation 15:1 (NKJV)

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These three verses start with the judgement of the old nation of the Amorites and ends with the nations and peoples now in the world. We may suffer persecution now, but we can be sure that we will be vindicated in the end.

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*But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you--even I, Paul, time and again--but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.*

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 (NKJV)

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But we, brethren . . . Brethren, we have already passed over the many times this term is used in both epistles. ἀδελφός (adelphos), literally, means "from the same womb."<sup>15</sup> but, in the Bible, is used of those who had the same Father (i.e. God, in heaven). Here Paul turns rather sentimental. It had been several months since he had been with them, but he was still with them in his heart.

He had a real love for these people, the kind of love a Christian must have to be effective in reaching lost souls. MacArthur says,

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*The apostle Paul set the standard for pastors in all his ministry and here confirmed the genuineness of his love and concern for the Thessalonians as he answered another accusation from his critics. In addition to their earlier criticisms that he lacked integrity, was greedy, was a deceitful flatterer, and was power hungry, Paul's foes apparently told the Thessalonians that he really had no affection for them and had willfully and callously deserted them. Thus he concludes 1 Thessalonians 2 by telling his people why he had not been back and how he truly cared for them.*

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 2:17

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Paul was not like some evangelists of late who will go to a city, preach for a week, and never return, at least not for many years, Paul was always desirous of revisiting the brethren to whom he preached.

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*Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city*

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<sup>15</sup>THAYER, ἀδελφός

*where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing."*

Acts 15:36 (NKJV)

*. . . but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.*

Acts 18:21 (NKJV)

Continuing in his somewhat sentimental mood, he says he, "*endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.*" He uses περισοτέρως (perissoteros) with σπουδάζω (spoudazo). The first is a strong word expressing a "more exceeding desire," not just a simple desire. If one assumes Paul wrote Hebrews, then he is the only one to use the first word. He uses it twice in the following verse.

*Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors **more abundant**, in stripes above measure, in prisons **more frequently**, in deaths often.*

2 Corinthians 11:23 (NKJV)

These second word is a bit more common, but two good examples are found below.

***Make every effort** to come to me soon;*

2 Timothy 4:9 (NASB-U)

*When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, **make every effort to come to me** at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.*

Titus 3:12 (NASB-U)

I cited the above two verses as they express the same desire in the opposite direction. Just as Paul endeavored to go back to those he had evangelized, he also hoped for them to be as earnest in coming to him. Putting these two words together makes for a very strong desire on his part to come to them.

*We wanted to come to you--even I, Paul."* Paul had sent Timothy to see how they were doing. He often sent one of his coworkers to do this.

*For this reason I have sent **Timothy** to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*

1 Corinthians 4:17 (NKJV)

*But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of **Titus**. For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord. And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches,*

2 Corinthians 8:16-18 (NKJV)

*Yet I have sent the **brethren**, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready;*

2 Corinthians 9:3 (NKJV)

*But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, **Tychicus**, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose,*

*that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.*

Ephesians 6:21-22 (NKJV)

*But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send **Timothy** to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.*

Philippians 2:19 (NKJV)

*Yet I considered it necessary to send to you **Epaphroditus**, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;*

Philippians 2:25 (NKJV)

***Tychicus**, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts,*

Colossians 4:7-8 (NKJV)

*And **Tychicus** I have sent to Ephesus.*

2 Timothy 4:12 (NKJV)

*When I send **Artemas** to you, or **Tychicus**, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.*

Titus 3:12 (NKJV)

Unlike God, Paul was not omnipresent. He could not be in all places at the same time, he had the same limitations as do you and I. But this case was different with Paul. It was extremely important to him that he go himself rather than send one of his helpers.

*But Satan hindered.* Have you ever felt the need to do something and had Satan hinder you? If not, you have never felt the need to do something important to God! Sometimes God hinders us in doing something He doesn't want us to do. But, sometimes it is something God does want and then Satan steps in.

*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?* James and Peter speak of crowns as does Paul.

Finally, there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2 Timothy 4:8 (NKJV)

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the **crown of life** which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:12 (NKJV)

. . .and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the **crown of glory** that does not fade away.

1 Peter 5:4 (NKJV)

If you are truly a born again Christian, you are in line for all three of these crowns. But Paul here speaks of another. This is sometimes referred to as the "Soul Winner's Crown." While all born again

Christians will receive the others, not all will receive this one. McGee says,

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Paul says that one of the great things he anticipates when Christ comes to take His church will be the opportunity to see these people whom he has led to the Lord. The Thessalonian believers whom he had won to Christ were a joy for him here and would be hereafter.

By the way, is anyone going to be in heaven who will come up to you and thank you for having a part in giving out the Word of God? Have you given your support to missions? If you have, someone you have never known, someone from the other side of the earth, may come up to you and thank you for your support of missions. He will thank you for being interested in getting out the Word of God because the Word reached him and enabled him to be saved. That, my friend, is going to be part of the reward that we will get in heaven. We need to recognize that. It is a wonderful hope to look forward to the time when Christ Jesus takes the church out of this world. It is even more joyous to know that someone who trusted Christ because of your witness will go along with you to meet the Lord!

McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

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## 1 THESSALONIANS 3

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*Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.*

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5 (NKJV)

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Sometimes we can not do all we wish to do. As we get older, the problem gets worse. The problem gets even worse when Satan is hindering you. We need to be especially aware of that for, as Paul well knew and so stated,

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*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

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In spite of the immense desire he had to go to Thessalonica to visit them, he had to change his plans. Someone had to go and, if it could not be him, then send someone who knew Paul's heart. There was one such man described in the Scriptures. When he had the same type of problem in going to Phillipi, he wrote,

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*But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For **I have no one like-minded**, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that **as a son with his father he served with me** in the gospel.*

Philippians 2:19-22 (NKJV)

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So, remaining at Athens (as noted in the Introduction) he sent Timothy in his place. We often talk about the "Great Apostle Paul." He really did do a great work for the Lord. But, do you ever feel like you are a second rate Christian. You are no apostle. In fact, the only function you have in the church is being a "gofer"<sup>16</sup> one of the pastors. Well, that was Timothy's job - he was a gofer for Paul. He had to "gofer" Paul to Macedonia (Acts 18:5, Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17, Phillipi (Philippians 2:19) and probably other places not recorded in the Scriptures.

They say "behind every great man is a great woman," which may be true, but it is certainly true that behind every great preacher there is at least one trusted "gofer" who aides him in his work. Paul certainly had a good one. So, if you feel bad because you are "only" a "gofer," stop berating yourself!

Paul calls Timothy,

- *our brother*
  - *our minister of God*
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<sup>16</sup>n. informal, chiefly N. Amer. a person who runs errands, especially on a film set or in an office

- *our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ.*

The translation of this verse (verse 2) differs from translation to translation. The one above is sufficient. Barnes notes regarding these three descriptions,

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*Our brother. Colossians 1:1. The mention of his being a "**brother**" is designed to show his interest in the church there. He did not send one whose absence would be no inconvenience to him, or for whom he had no regard. He sent one who was as dear to him as a brother. And **minister of God**. Another circumstance showing his affection for them. He did not send a layman, or one who could not be useful with him or to them, but he sent one fully qualified to preach to them, and to break to them the Bread of life One of the richest tokens of affection which can be shown to any people, is to send to them a faithful minister of God. And our **fellow-labourer** in the gospel of Christ. A third token of affectionate interest in their welfare. The meaning is, "I did not send one whom I did not want, or who could be of no use here, but one who was a fellow-labourer with me, and whose aid would have been of essential service to me. In parting with him, therefore, for your welfare, I showed a strong attachment for you. I was willing to endure personal inconvenience, and additional toil, in order to promote your welfare,"*

BARNES, 1 Thessalonians 3:2

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Timothy was to accomplish three things. Paul writes,

- *to establish you*
- *to encourage you concerning your faith*
- *that no one should be shaken by these afflictions;*

To Establish - στερίζω (sterizo) is used thirteen times in the New Testament, four of them in these two letters (check page 9). The noun form is found once in 2 Peter.

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*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own **steadfastness**, being led away with the error of the wicked;*

2 Peter 3:17 (NKJV)

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To "establish" is to make one "steadfast."<sup>17</sup> The Psalmist defines it better.

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*Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

Psalm 51:10 (NKJV)

*My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise.*

Psalm 57:7 (NKJV)

*O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.*

Psalm 108:1 (NKJV)

*He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.*

Psalm 112:7 (NKJV)

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One becomes steadfast when he or she is well versed in that which they are steadfast. They will be steadfast in Christ when they know His teachings and what He did for them. "Encourage" is from the

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<sup>17</sup>OXFORD, steadfast >adj. resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering.

word which gives is “paraklete” or “Comforter.” Once one has become steadfast, the next step is to be encouraged. Why is this so important to Paul?

Well, the opposite of encourage is discourage. The author of Hebrews (Paul?) says

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NKJV)

Paul is concerned that the Thessalonians might become discouraged because of the afflictions Paul suffered and they themselves suffered. As the author of Hebrews noted above, *consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners*. If Christ so suffered, Paul says here “you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.”

We have spoken, at length, of Paul’s afflictions. He is afraid that their natural tendencies are to think “What’s wrong here? Why is there so much affliction? Did we really understand the message that Paul brought us?” Paul uses the word “know” twice next, “*you yourselves **know** that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you **know***” This is the sixth and seventh time this word has been used so far. It was described in detail on Page 25, 60 to which you may refer. Paul was deeply concerned with the knowledge of the truth, he writes to Phillippi,

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*For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that **your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment**, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,*

Philippians 1:8-10 (NKJV)

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*For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith,* To the churches in Galatia, he wrote,

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*I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.*

Galatians 4:11 (NKJV)

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and it is the same here, “*lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.*”

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*But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you-- therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God for you,*

*for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?*

1 Thessalonians 3:6-10 (NKJV)

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Finally! As Paul suffered in Corinth, wondering what was happening in Thessalonica, Timothy returned. What would Paul have done without Timothy. Timothy was more than a “gofer” as we noted before. I suppose one might say he was also a “cumwith” as well as a “gofer.” Paul has a better name,

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To Timothy, a true son in the faith: . . .

1 Timothy 1:2 (NKJV)

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, . . .

1 Timothy 1:18 (NKJV)

To Timothy, a beloved son:

2 Timothy 1:2 (NKJV)

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He considered Timothy as if he really were his own son. He was especially happy with Timothy as he brought news from the Thessalonians. Not just any news, he εὐαγγελίζω (evangelizo) - was a messenger of good news. Timothy brought “good news” and εὐαγγελίζω (evangelizo) is the source of our word “evangelize.” There is an interesting passage in the LXX as below.

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Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the Lord has avenged him of his enemies." And Joab said to him, "You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is dead." Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran. And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." So Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready?" "But whatever happens," he said, "let me run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

2 Samuel 18:19-23 (NKJV)

And Achimaas the son of Sadoc said, Let me run now and carry glad tidings to the king, for the Lord has delivered him from the hand of his enemies. And Joab said to him, Thou shalt not be a messenger of glad tidings this day; thou shalt bear them another day; but on this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. And Joab said to Chusi, Go, report to the king all that thou hast seen. And Chusi did obeisance to Joab, and went out. And Achimaas the son of Sadoc said again. to Joab, Nay, let me also run after Chusi. And Joab said, Why wouldest thou thus run, my son? attend, thou hast no tidings for profit if thou go. And he said, Why should I not run? and Joab said to him, Run. And Achimaas ran along the way of Keechar, and outran Chusi.

2 Kings 18:19-23 LXX<sup>18</sup>

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What is interesting in this passage is the many times εὐαγγελίζω (evangelizo) is used and the fact

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<sup>18</sup>There are no books of Samuel in the LXX, ! & 2 Samuel are 1 & 2 Kings while 1 & 2 Kings become 3 & 4 Kings.

that Joab would not let Achimaas carry the news to David is because it was not “Good News.” The boy may have done the work of a ἀγγελίζω (angelizo), a messenger of new, but not good news.

Timothy brought “good” news of their *faith and love*, which Paul prayed for at the beginning of this letter. But, what about “hope?” We’ll get to that later.

Paul writes, “*you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you*” He notes that “they have a good thoughts concerning him,” and they ἐπιποθέω (epipotheo) to see Paul and the others. Thayer says this word means “to keep the θυμᾶς turned upon a thing.”<sup>19</sup> The θυμᾶς (thumas), as pointed out by Trench,<sup>20</sup> is often linked with a synonym of it, ὀργή (orge) as in the passage below.

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*Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the **fierceness** and **wrath** of Almighty God.*

Revelation 19:15 (NKJV)

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As such, it often has a bad connotation. But, just as one can be “fierce” in their anger, they can also be “fierce” in their love, and hence the word has both good and bad meanings. Trench notes that this word came to denote the strongest of all passions. He also points out that it is usually a transitory feeling. Here however, as noted above, it has a longevity associated with it. Well, this is a lot of Greek but, the conclusion of it is that they had the strongest possible desire to come and see Paul.

We have noted before the love that Paul had for these people. Now we know that the feeling was mutual. Because of this Paul can write, - *therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.*” There’s that term “brethren” again! Their love made all the other things in Paul’s life worth while.

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*Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.*

Proverbs 10:12 (NKJV)

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This verse is a bit out of context, but if love covers sins it also covers afflictions. As you may guess by now, “comforted” is from the Greek word for “Comforter.”

*For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.* IF? What is that doing there? To understand Paul’s intent, you must realize there are several types of “conditional” sentences in the Greek. This is a type B (or 2) condition.

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*Conditional clauses of Type B express conditions which are believed by the speaker to be generally true in the present or probably realizable in the future (future conditions are more often expressed by clauses of Type B than by clauses of Type A).*

GOETCHIUS, ¶353.

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<sup>19</sup>THAYER, ἐπιποθέω

<sup>20</sup>TRENCH, XXXVII

In other words, Paul knew them to be standing fast and figured they were “*probably realizable in the future.*” It would have been great if he could have used a type A (1) which is stronger, but,

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*. . . whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.*

James 4:14 (NKJV)

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Paul had confidence that, barring unforeseen circumstances, they would continue to stand fast.

*For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?*

“What thanks can we render” JFB write,

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*The high satisfaction and uncommon joy which the apostle felt are strongly depicted in the language he uses. How near his heart did the success of his ministry lie! It was not enough for him that he preached so often, labored so hard, suffered so much; what were all these if souls were not converted? And what were all conversions, if those who embraced the Gospel did not walk steadily in the way to heaven, and persevere?*

JFB, 1 Thessalonians 3:9

The devoted pastor recognizes that all thanks for spiritual progress goes to God. That the apostle Paul acknowledged that his gratitude for the Thessalonians must primarily go to God, but found no adequate words to express the fullness of his heart, is clear because he asked rhetorically, For what thanks can we render to God for you?

Paul was so profoundly in debt to God in return for all the joy Timothy's report had brought him, and he realized he had no means to express an adequate thanks. Render . . . in return translates one word (antapodounai), and expresses the impossibility of repaying the Lord for all the divine work that caused him to rejoice before . . . God. The outworkings of God's grace in their lives had made Paul grateful beyond expression.

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 3:9

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“Night and day praying exceedingly . . .” Here is one of the places where Paul is at his best - making up new Greek words out of several existing words. This one is a real whopper (if you excuss the expression). ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ (hyperekperissou) is an example of Paul “at his finest” (with respect to the language. You start with περισσοῦ (perissou) which means “beyond measure” or “exceedingly.” Then you prefix it to get εκπερισσοῦ (ekperissou) which makes it become “out of measure, exceedingly.” But that was still not good enough for Paul so he adds more to get the final form above ὑπερ (hyper) is the source of our prefix “hyper.” =”prefix , over; beyond; above”<sup>21</sup> which is barely translatable it is so intense - “superabundantly.” Vincent says, “*Superabundantly. One of the numerous compounds of beyond, over and above, of which Paul is fond. Of twenty-eight words compounded with this preposition in the New Testament, Paul alone uses twenty.*”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>OXFORD “hyper.”

<sup>22</sup>VINCENT 1 Thessalonians 3:10

Why is it that Berean Bible is not growing these days? We used to have a larger membership than we do now. We also had a true Prayer Meeting every Wednesday night. I remember a time not very long after we merged with Bible Baptist Church and we needed more space for Sunday School classes. At the Wednesday Night Prayer meeting we began praying earnestly that the Lord would make it possible for us to buy either the house on Faeh street next to the church or the one on Bennett street - we weren't particular about which one. We prayed in earnest for several months. Then, within a period of several weeks, the owners of both houses approached us, as did the owner of another house up the street a ways, and asked if we would like to buy their houses. To use Paul's style, God answered "superabundantly" and gave us both houses and the means to purchase both of them! But we do not pray like that these days. We need to. It is no wonder that the church at Thessalonica was such a good one, with Paul praying "exceedingly" for it.

He ends this section with, *perfect what is lacking in your faith*. "Lacking" is from ὑστέρημα (husterama), used 9 times in the New Testament and all, except one (Luke 21:4) by Paul. Five of them in the Corinthian Epistles. It is used only here in Thessalonians. The verb means "to come late." Here the word means to be lacking in something, as the translation says. He praised the faith before but now he says they are lacking in their faith - isn't he contradicting himself? Are you perfect in every way or are there some things which you do well, but could do even better? Their faith was good, but there is always room to grow when it comes to faith. Later in the letter, we will find out what was lacking.

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*Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.*

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 (NKJV)

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This passage sounds rather like the ending of a letter rather than what you would expect to find in the middle of it. This is on account of Paul. Most of Paul's epistles are divided into two parts. The first part is the "theological part" in which he deals with Biblical principals. The later part, then, deals with specific issues and the practical outworking of them. When we start Chapter Four, we shall see this.

I suppose I have been remiss in not providing you with an outline of this epistle. But, which one? The one below is the one used in the NASB.

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- I. Thanksgiving for These Believers (1:1-10)
  - II. Paul's Ministry (2:1-20)
  - III. Encouragement of Timothy's Visit (3:1-13)
  
  - IV. Sanctification and Love (4:1-12)
  - V. Those Who Died in Christ (4:13-18)
  - VI. The Day of the Lord (5:1-11)
  - VII. Christian Conduct (5:12-28)
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It may be intimated from the above that we are concluding the part dealing with thanksgiving and encouragement. We will be starting on the practical subjects of Sanctification, the Rapture and the Day of the Lord, and other aspect of Christian conduct.

While I do not generally approve of the “God’s Word” translation, the outline given there may be a bit clearer.

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- I. Greeting (1:1)
  - II. Paul's Prayer for the Thessalonians (1:2-10)
  - III. Paul Remembers When He Was With the Thessalonians (2:1-12)
  - IV. Paul Remembers How the Thessalonians Received the Word of God (2:13-20)
  - V. Timothy's Report to Paul (3:1-13)
  
  - VI. Instructions on the Way Christians Should Live (4:1-12)
  - VII. Comfort About Christians Who Have Died (4:13-18)
  - VIII. Be Ready for the Day of the Lord (5:1-11)
  - IX. Paul Encourages the Thessalonians (5:12-22)
  - X. Farewell (5:23-28)
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I need not comment on this outline, it is quite self-explanatory.

We have commented at length about Paul’s desire to go to Thessalonica. In his summation of this part of the epistle he asks that God would *direct our way to you*. Zacharias, in his prophetic utterance regarding the birth of John the Baptist said,

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*Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: . . . To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, **To guide our feet into the way of peace.***  
 Luke 1:67 & 79 (NKJV)

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Paul, similarly, asked for God to guide him so as to see the Thessalonians.

He asks that God would “*make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all*” “Increase” is πλεονάζω (pleonazo) and its significance here is that it is in the “optative” mood (aorist tense). The use of the Optative here is used to express a “wish or a prayer.”<sup>23</sup> It was his prayer that God would “cause to increase” - πλεονάζω (pleanazo) their love for each other and their love for others, and it would “be in abundance.” Paul did not expect others to do things he would not do himself, so he says, “*just as we do to you.*”

Finally, he wants them to be “blameless” before God at His coming. Wait! Christ died for all our sins so no one can blame us now. How, then would they be other than “blameless?” Three places it is found in the same sense.

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*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man **was blameless** and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. . . . Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a **blameless** and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?”*

Job 1:1 & 8 (NKJV)

*For if that first covenant had been **faultless**, then no place would have been sought for a second.*

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<sup>23</sup>GOETCHIUS, ¶387



Then ends up with a hint at where he will go in the last half of the epistle. *The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.*"

## 1 THESSALONIANS 4

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*Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.*

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 (NKJV)

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“Finally!” Don’t be misled by this word. As Robertson says,

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Finally (loipon). Accusative of general reference of loipos, as for the rest. It does not mean actual conclusion, but merely a colloquial expression pointing towards the end (Milligan) as in 2 Corinthians 13:11; 2 Timothy 4:8. So to loipon in 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Philippians. 3:1; Philippians 4:8.

ATR, 1 Thessalonians 4:1

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Vincent is not so wordy, *“The formula is often used by Paul where he attaches, in a somewhat loose way, even in the midst of an Epistle, a new subject to that which he has been discussing.”*<sup>24</sup>

Note the “brethren” again! Paul “urges” and “exhorts” them. He has urged them to do things in the previous chapters (2:12, 3:2, 3:7) but here he adds “urge.” Wuest translates this phrase as below.

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*Finally, therefore, brethren, **I request you and I beg of you, please**, in the Lord Jesus*

WUEST, 1 Thessalonians 4:1

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I do not know the justification for the translation in the NKJV of this verse - it does not follow from the Greek. So, here it is in the NIV,

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Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 (NIV)

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Collegially, he is saying “keep up the good work!” They were doing well, but they could do better so Paul spends the rest of this epistle spelling out these things they needed to do.

He speaks of the “commandments” he had given them. McGee says, *“In chapter 5 we will find twenty-two commandments for believers given”*<sup>25</sup> You may try to count them if you wish, I don’t feel like it.

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<sup>24</sup>VINCENT, 1 Thessalonians 4:1

<sup>25</sup>McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 4:2

No, we all know that no one can keep the Ten Commandments, leave alone some more from Paul! So why give them? Let me point out an important fact. “Commandment” comes from ἐντολή (entole) found some 65 times in the New Testament. Paul does not use this word, he uses another, παραγγέλλω para-angelo) used only five times. By now, you may recognize the last part of the word as the word from which we get “messenger” or “angel.” The first part, παρα (para) is a prefix meaning “along the side of.” The word thus means, “to transmit a message from one to another, to declare, announce”<sup>26</sup> In this context it has more of the meaning “to command, order, or charge.” Paul is not giving them more commands to break. He is giving them instructions to keep. He instructs them that they will “walk and please God.”

The first thing Paul instructs them is in regard to “*sexual immorality*.” Why start there? Did you know that the first conscious sin committed was in regard to sex?

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*For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

1 Timothy 2:13-14 (NKJV)

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Eve was tricked into eating of the fruit, Paul says so. But not Adam! He ate the fruit knowingly. Let me sound a bit like the National Enquirer here for a moment and recreate the scene. “Adam, if you want to sleep with me tonight, you had better eat some of this!” It was a choice between the really sexy wife God gave Adam (the Bible seems to indicate she was) or obeying God. So what did Adam do? You know the answer to that already!

To continue, do you know that Corinth was, at that time, the Sin Capitol of Europe? This is where Paul was when he wrote this epistle. He had first hand knowledge of that city. He also, later, got word of what else was happening. As one pastor I once knew said, “The problem was not that the Church was in Corinth, the problem was that Corinth had gotten into the Church.”

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*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife! **And you are puffed up**, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.*

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 (NKJV)

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Not only was there a man in the Corinthian church who was guilty of sexual immorality, immorality worse than even the other immoral people considered it bad, the members of the church were boasting about it! “Boasting?” Sure, you have heard the same sort of boasting today. “Oh, we are an open minded church, we know Christ died for all and therefore we can not discriminate against some because of what they do (or who they are). There is a church denomination today that has ordained a Lesbian to the post of Bishop<sup>27</sup> They have made three grievous errors: (1) There is no such office, each church is supposed to be independent, (2) a woman is not supposed to have authority over men, and (3) most of all, an officer of the church certainly can not be homosexual! Well, if they were in California, three strikes and they are out! They have taken great pride in how open minded and liberal they are in accepting such a person. It happened then, it has happened

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<sup>26</sup>THAYER, παραγγέλλω

<sup>27</sup>“Bishop” in some translations of 1 Timothy 3:1 should be “Overseer” and describes the work of the Elder.

now, it will continue to happen.

Now, we are not discussing the Corinthian church but the Thessalonian church. Get a map out and you will see that Thessalonica is less than 200 miles from Corinth. Arroyo Grande is further from either L.A. or San Francisco than that! So, as you might expect, sexual impurity was rampant on Thessalonica as well - but not (we presume) in their church. This is why Paul starts with this subject.

Paul begins with the positive aspect. "Each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor." This is a curious verse in that Paul uses the word σκεῦος (skeuos) which may be translated, "What-cha-may-callit." It may refer to "a vessel (boat or jar)" or "an instrument" and even a part of a ship's gear.

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*When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. On the third day we threw the **ship's tackle** overboard with our own hands.*

Acts 27:17-19 (NKJV)

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In this context, Robertson says

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*But what does Paul mean by "his own vessel"? It can only mean his own body or his own wife. Objections are raised against either view, but perhaps he means that the man shall acquire his own wife "in sanctification and honour," words that elevate the wife and make it plain that Paul demands sexual purity on the part of men (married as well as unmarried). There is no double standard here. When the husband comes to the marriage bed, he should come as a chaste man to a chaste wife.*

ATR, 1 Thessalonians 4:4

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MacArthur does not agree with this translation and has this.

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*Believers must maintain self-control over the desires of their flesh. Hence Paul exhorted the Thessalonians **that each of them had to know how to control their body's appetites. Each** believer had the same personal responsibility to control his body. **Know** is from oida, which carries the idea of having the knowledge or skill necessary to accomplish a desired goal. Every Christian needs to know himself well, so as to understand his weaknesses and evil propensities and, thereby, **know how to possess** ("gain mastery over") his own vessel.*

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 4:4

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While MacArthur is a scholarly man, not all agree with this as Robertson pointed out. While there may be many applications for a given Scripture passage, there is only one correct interpretation. So which is it? Paul, why did you use such a screwy word, are you trying to confuse us? Peter may have thought so.

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*. . . -as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which **are some things hard to understand**, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*

2 Peter 3:15-16 (NKJV)

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Those who say that “each man should choose his own wife ...” are said to be wrong, they have to be because Paul would not degrade with wife by using this Greek term. What about Peter?

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*Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the **weaker vessel**, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*

1 Peter 3:7 (NKJV)

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Paul, on the other hand said this.

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*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. . . .Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, . . . So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. . . Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

Ephesians 5:22-23, 25, 28, & 33 (NKJV)

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According to these Scriptures, the wife is supposed to be submissive to her husband, not through force or coercion, but out of love. But the bottom line to all this is that the husband is to see that the wife is submissive by loving her and thus causing her to want to be submissive. I wonder how many wives are submissive to their husbands in this country? Ever hear of the term “hen-pecked?”

I believe I will go with the following from McGee..

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*All around these Thessalonian believers were the pagans who combined sex and religion. Sex was a religion among the Greeks. You could go to Corinth and find that out, but you didn't have to go to Corinth -- you could find it out right in Thessalonica.*

*Paul says that we are to live a life that commends the gospel. The loose living that we find among some believers today brings the gospel into disrepute. Such people are not living for God or serving God. You cannot serve God and live in sin. He doesn't accept that. "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." The immorality that exists in our day is absolutely astounding. A very fine Christian leader who holds Bible classes on the campus of a college here in California told me that the boys' dormitory is Sodom and the girls' dormitory is Gomorrah. These poor kids know all about sex, but they don't know about love. God says that the body should be saved for the marriage relationship, and this applies to men and women*

McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 4:4

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*But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.*

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 (NKJV)

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Paul moves from “marital love” to “brotherly love.” That is, φιλαδελφία (philadelphia). Philadelphia is the “city of brotherly love” (supposedly). We have seen both parts of this word before, “brother” and

“love” but note it is not “agape”, God’s love, but “brotherly” love.

Peter spoke of this.

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*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*

2 Peter 1:5-7 (NKJV)

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Note that here it is translated “brotherly kindness” so as to distinguish from the other type of love. Since love is so much the center of Christianity, we need to have a good understanding of it, and, especially, the two words used for it. I do not like long citations, but here I believe it is important

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### **AMALGAMATED LOVE**

" SEEING ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22) .

As one reads these words, the question arises as to why God exhorts saints who are already loving one another, to love one another. The answer to our question is found in the fact that the first word "love" comes from a Greek word referring to one kind of love, and the second word "love" is from another word speaking of a different kind of love.

The first word "love" is from a Greek word which speaks of that glow of the heart which is kindled by the perception of that in the object loved which affords one pleasure. Whatever in an object is adapted to give pleasure when perceived, tends to call out affection, and this affection is what this word expresses. The Greeks were very much occupied with the topic of friendship. This was an ideal word for the expression of this form of affection. The word is used in such expressions as, "to be in a friendly way at one's side," "to interest one's self in him in a friendly manner," "a man showed himself friendly to men by keeping open house." Thus this form of love is the response of the human spirit to what appeals to it as pleasurable. It speaks of a friendly affection.

This is the kind of love which these saints had for one another. This love was the result of their obedience to the truth through their dependence upon the Spirit. That is, their obedience to God's Word brought them all into right relationship to God in their personal lives, and into right relationship to one another in their fellowship with one another. This fellowship was a source of joy to them all, for the truth in the heart and life of each saint found its counterpart in and was attracted by the truth in the heart and life of the other saints. Each saint found in the heart of the other saint that which afforded him pleasure. He found a reflection of his own likes and dislikes, his own interests, his own thought-world in the life of his fellow-saint.

It is like the attraction which one artist has for another artist, or one musician, for another musician. This mutual attraction results in a mutual love awakened by the sense of pleasure one finds in the company of the other. So it was with these saints. They loved each other with a mutual reciprocal love because of the pleasure each had in the other's fellowship. It was a friendly love, a glow of the heart kindled by the perception of that in the other saint which afforded pleasure.

Now, this kind of love is a perfectly proper and legitimate love. But it is a love which is non-ethical. That is, it sets no standards of right and wrong. It does not include with- in its constituent elements, the idea of self-sacrifice in the interest of the one loved. It could therefore degenerate into something selfish and self-centered. One saint may find so much in another saint with which to gratify his desire for fellowship, that he does not think of the other person, but merely of himself and of his own welfare. Thus what started out as a mutual and friendly love, would become a selfish self-centered thing.

But God in His grace has provided a counter-balance which will make and keep this friendly love what it should be. The second use of the word "love" is from another Greek word. It speaks of that love which springs from an awakened sense of value in an object which causes one to prize the object loved. It expresses the love of approbation, of esteem, as over against the love of pure delight, which latter is our other word for love. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of the object loved. It derives its impulse more from the notion of prizing than of liking. It is a love which springs from the soul's sense of the value and preciousness of its object, and is the response of the heart to the recognized worth of the object loved.

Our first word is found frequently in the pagan Greek authors, but the second word is used very sparingly. This rather obscure word, used so infrequently in the pagan Greek writings, the New Testament writers as guided by the Holy Spirit select, and pour into it as into an empty receptacle, all the content of meaning we find in John 3: 16 and I Corinthians 13, where it is used. It is the response of the heart of God to the preciousness of each lost human soul that results in the infinite love God shows at Calvary. Each human soul is precious, first, because it bears the image of its Maker, even though that image be marred by sin, and second, because, it is composed of material, if you please, which God can through redemption, conform to the very image of His beloved Son. Thus, this love is a love of self-sacrifice based upon the preciousness of the object loved.

God exhorts the saints who are already loving each other with a friendly love which is called out of their hearts because they find pleasure in each other's fellowship, to love each other also with a self-sacrificial love because of the preciousness of the saint who is loved, as precious to God as Christ is precious to Him. Thus, this friendly love is amalgamated with the love of self-sacrifice. The two are fused. The first is made a thing of heaven because it is purified, ennobled, elevated by the second.

Into this fellowship of the saints is introduced the love that sacrifices for the blessing of the other, the love that suffers long, the love that is kind, the love that does not envy, the love that does not vaunt itself and is not puffed up, the love that does not behave itself unseemly, the love that does not seek its own, the love that is not provoked, that thinks no evil, that does not rejoice in iniquity but rather in the truth, the love that bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things, the love that never fails.

This love is the love spoken of in Galatians 5:22, produced in the heart of the saint who is definitely subjected to the Holy Spirit, by the Holy Spirit Himself. This is the love that God is. This is the love that should saturate the friendly love which saints have for each other. Without it, the fellowship of the saints with one another becomes a selfish unsatisfactory thing, but amalgamated with it, this friendly love becomes a thing of heaven. The secret of the fullness of this divine love, is in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And this is why God exhorts saints who are already loving one another, to be loving one another.

The translation reads as follows: "Wherefore, having purified your souls by means of your obedience to the truth, resulting in not an assumed but genuine love for the brethren, love that springs from your hearts by reason of the pleasure you take in them, from the heart love each other with an intense reciprocal love that springs from your hearts because of your estimation of the preciousness of your brethren, and which is self-sacrificial in its essence."

WUEST, "Treasures from the Greek New Testament, XI

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The difference is love have confused many. A classical example is below. Kenneth Taylor wrote the "Living Bible" which, in its time, was quite useful as there were none of the "newer translations" available. He, like you and me, was only human and made one rather grievous mistake when he published "Living Gospels." He saw the error of his ways and corrected it by the time the full Living Bible came out. I show this not to disparage Mr. Taylor, but only to show how easily men have been tripped up on the definitions of love.

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JOHN 21, LIVING BIBLE, 1966

15 After breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, are you more of a friend to Me than these others?" Yes," Peter replied, "You know how much I really love You." "Then feed My lambs," Jesus told him.

16 Jesus repeated the question: "Simon, son of John, are you really a friend of Mine?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "You know how deeply I love You!" "Then take care of My sheep," Jesus said.

17 Once more He asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you really love Me deeply?" Peter was grieved at the way Jesus asked the question this third time. "Lord, You know my heart; You know I do," he said. Jesus said, "Then feed My little sheep.

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JOHN 21, LIVING BIBLE, 1971

15 After breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others?" "Yes," Peter replied, "You know I am your friend." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

16 Jesus repeated the question: "Simon, son of John, do you really love me?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I am your friend." "Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

17 Once more he asked him, "Simon, son of John, are you even my friend?" Peter was grieved at the way Jesus asked the question this third time. "Lord, you know my heart; you know I am," he said. Jesus said, "Then feed my little sheep.

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Paul began the epistle with great praise. One of the reasons was, as he wrote, "*for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.*" They loved one another. How did they learn this? Paul says they were "God-taught." The word is Θεοδίδακτος (Theodidaktos), another of the words that Paul made up. It is literally as I stated above (and only used here).

Even though he speaks of "brotherly love," with its roots in phileo, he uses agape here. The relation between brothers (and sisters too) in Christ is to be higher than amongst the "heathen." I bet that even Hitler had some friends he liked! I doubt he had an real love! How did God teach them?

John seemed to have his finger on the answer!

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Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:7-8 (NKJV)

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

1 John 4:12 (NKJV)

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

1 John 4:20 (NKJV)

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According to John, you can not love God without loving your brother. You need no one to teach you, other than God, to love your brothers. Note they loved, not only the other Thessalonians, but all who were in Macedonia. Paul didn't have to work on that aspect. He did have four items, however, for them to work on.



- *that you increase more and more;*
- *that you also aspire to lead a quiet life,*
- *to mind your own business,*
- *to work with your own hands*

The last three are fairly easy to interpret, but what were they to “increase more” in? In chapter 3 (verse 2) Paul exhorted them to abound in love. I assume he is continuing this them, that their love should grow even stronger.

As to the rest, Robertson says,

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*Though in general the Church at Thessalonica was pure and exemplary, yet there seem to have been some idle, tattling people among them, who disturbed the peace of others; persons who, under the pretense of religion, gadded about from house to house; did not work, but were burdensome to others; and were continually meddling with other people’s business, making parties, and procuring their bread by religious gossiping. To these the apostle gives those directions which the whole Church of God should enforce wherever such troublesome and dangerous people are found; viz.: That they should study to be quiet, to hold their peace, as their religious cant will never promote true religion; that they should do their own business, and let that of others alone; and that they should work with their own hands, and not be a burden to the Church of God, or to those well meaning but weak and inconsiderate people who entertain them, being imposed on by their apparent sanctity and glowing conversation. An idle person, though able to discourse like an angel, or pray like an apostle, cannot be a Christian; all such are hypocrites and deceivers; the true members of the Church of Christ walk, work, and labor*

CLARK, 1 Thessalonians 4:11

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We, too, need to “aspire” for the things he mentions. The word “aspire” is from a rather long Greek word, φιλοτιμέομαι (philotimeothai), the first part we have dealt with before, “love” (not agape love, the other) and to this we have the word which is “to honor.” If it looks somewhat familiar, it is because “Timothy” is “(he) who honors God.” Together the word means “to be actuated by a love of honor”<sup>28</sup> or, in a looser sense, “to strive earnestly for.” This is a bit more meaningful than “aspire.”

We, like they, should strive to lead a quiet life. Does this mean we should keep our mouths shut and not go around talking to people about Jesus? Hardly! The word means quiet with respect to what we do, not what we say. We are to do the work of the ministry without saying “Hey look at what I am doing” (or, in a less obnoxious way, somehow calling attention to ourselves). I think of Timothy and all the aid he rendered for Paul. I can not think of one place in the Scriptures where even one of his words is recorded. He was a quiet man who did what was needed and took no credit for himself. Perhaps he was a bit too quiet or he would not have needed a “little wine” for his upset stomach (1 Timothy 5:23).

As far as minding their own business, this is good advice for today as well. Gossip is deadly and, in the church, is even worse. There are sources of gossip in the church you may not have even thought of. Pray is important and we have to let people know what to pray for. Some people, without realizing it, use prayer requests, prayer letters, prayer chains, etc. to spread gossip about others.

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<sup>28</sup>THAYER, φιλοτιμέομαι

“Please pray for Susie Q as she is having a horrid love affair with a man in her office!” Well, Susie surely needs prayer, do doubt about that. But what about saying, “Please pray for Susie, she is in a situation that is not honoring to the Lord nor is it good for her?” She will get the same prayers, maybe better ones, without the gossip associated with it. We can make prayer requests without getting overly explicit when it is not necessary.

Finally, what about “working with our own hands? Robertson said, “*Paul gave a new dignity to manual labour by precept and example. There were “pious” idlers in the church in Thessalonica who were promoting trouble.*”<sup>29</sup> Along with this is the idea of “minding your own business. You do your work and let others do their work. Finally, do not complain about the way someone else is doing a ministry unless you willing to do it yourself! It is one thing to complain about some task, it is another to do a better job of it.

*as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.* Paul rarely “commanded” anyone to do anything. He besought them (beseech) in Romans 12:1; Ephesians 4:1; he “asked them” Ephesians 3:13; Colossians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; and he “implored” them, Ephesians 3:13; Colossians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1. Here he “commands” them. This seems strange considering his love for them. I do not “command” my wife to do anything (it would only get me into big trouble anyway). Why does he command them here? We discussed the Greek word back on page 49 (which see). He is giving them instruction, not commands!

Nevertheless, it is important that they do what he asked, not for themselves so much as for “*those who are outside.*” There is the old excuse, “I am not going to that church, there are too many hypocrites in it” (but there is always room for one more!) To have an effective ministry, the inner workings of the church have to be above reproach to those without the church. It is necessary for the church to have an effective outreach.

Remember the praise Paul had, “you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.. (1:7)?” He wish it to remain that way. Any church is likely to have problems but these problems must be solved and remain in the church. Don’t hang out the dirty linen out for others to see!

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*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NKJV)

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Paul moves on to one of the main reason for this letter. Paul detested “ignorance” and he didn’t want it in the church. The word ἀγνοεῶ (agnoeo) is a common one - “not + knowing,” the source of our word “agnostic.” So Paul is to become their teacher and tell them about those who have “fallen asleep.”

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<sup>29</sup>ATR, 1 Thessalonians 4:11

Why does he use the euphonism “fallen asleep” rather than just come out and say “died?” He did the same when he wrote to Corinth,

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*For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many **sleep**.*

1 Corinthians 11:30 (NKJV)

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*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all **sleep**, but we shall all be changed--*

1 Corinthians 15:51 (NKJV)

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(Incidentally, the later verse belongs in the church nursery!) Robertson says

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*Greeks and Romans used this figure of sleep for death as Jesus does (John 11:11) and N.T. generally (cf. our word cemetery)<sup>30</sup>. Somehow the Thessalonians had a false notion about the dead in relation to the second coming.*

ATR, 1 Thessalonians 4:13

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and MacArthur says,

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*Of all the end-time events, the Rapture of the church seems to generate the most interest and discussion. The young church at Thessalonica also had questions about that event, so Paul addressed their concerns in this passage. But unlike most modern-day treatises on the subject, Paul's concern was not just doctrinal, but pastoral. His intent was not to give a detailed description of the Rapture, but to comfort the Thessalonians. The intent of the other two passages in the New Testament that discuss the Rapture (John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:51–58) is also **to provide comfort and encouragement** for believers, not to fuel their prophetic speculations.*

MacARTHUR 1 Thessalonians 4:13

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To ease into this subject in a manner **“to provide comfort and encouragement,”** Paul uses this euphonism. So, at this point, we begin to talk about the “Rapture” of the Church. Note, as MacArthur said above, Paul’s intent was not to give a detailed description of the Rapture and so we shall have to do additional digging.

Did you know there will be no “rapture” of the Church? There will be no “Millennium” either. Why not? Look in your Bible - do you see those words anywhere? That’s is the thinking of some people on this subject - defective thinking. Just because the Bible translators chose to translate, τὰ χίλια ἔτη (ta chilia eta) as “the thousand years” rather than “the millennium”<sup>31</sup> is immaterial. The same is true of ἀρπάζω (arpazo) which most translators have chosen to use “caught up.” The word is used a number of places in the New Testament.

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*Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **caught** Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.*

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<sup>30</sup>OXFORD, cemetery, >n . . from Gk koiman 'put to sleep'.

<sup>31</sup>OXFORD, millennium >n. (pl. millennia or millenniums) 1 a period of a thousand years, especially when calculated from the traditional date of the birth of Christ.

Acts 8:39 (NKJV)

*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one **was caught up to the third heaven.***

2 Corinthians 12:2 (NKJV)

*. . .how he was **caught up into Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

2 Corinthians 12:4 (NKJV)

*She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was **caught up to God and His throne.***

Revelation 12:5 (NKJV)

In a way, these people are right. There will be no “rapture,” it will be a “snatchure.” That is the nearest translation of the word. We will, literally, be “snatched up.” So, what does Paul teach about this Snatchure of the Church?

Before proceeding, I think the following comment from MacArthur above “sleep” is in order.

It is important to remember that in the New Testament "sleep" applies only to the body, never to the soul. "Soul sleep," the false teaching that the souls of the dead are in a state of unconscious existence in the afterlife, is foreign to Scripture. In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul wrote that he "preferred] rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord," while in Philippians 1:23 he expressed his "desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 4:13

Those who do not believe in such a thing will be like those who “*sorrow as others who have no hope.*” I certainly have no sorrow, except that it can’t come too soon for me!

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.* For “IF” begins a conditional clause of type A (class I), see page 43 for the descriptions. This is a condition that the speaker knows to be true. It is used to connect two things. That is, If Christ **rose up**, He also has the power to **come down**. If you believe the first, you must believe the second.

Paul writes, “*even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*” There are several questions we must answer with this verse. Paul does not say, “Christ will bring with Him,” but “God.” Why? Is not Christ “God.” Surely, but the more natural way to say this would be to say that Christ would bring them. The answer is really quite simple. We believe in a triune God with the three persons of the Trinity acting in harmony. When Christ comes back. God the Father will be overseeing the event and see to it that the saints are involved as well (both those already with Christ and those to be snatched up with Christ.

We now have a problem. If the “Dead in Christ rise first,” who is it that Jesus brings with him. And also, what about verses such as those below.

*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my*

labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to **depart and be with Christ**, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Philippians 1:21-24 (NKJV)

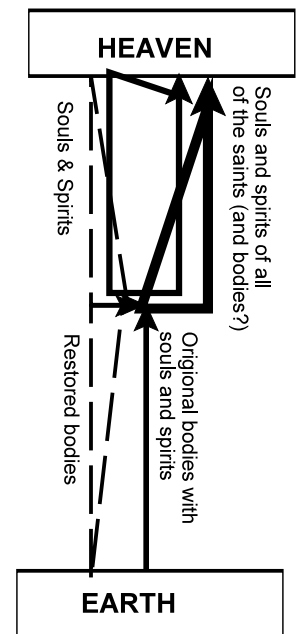
For in this we groan, earnestly desiring **to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven**, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather **to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord**.

2 Corinthians 5:2-8 (NKJV)

Let us begin with what we know. When we die, our mortal bodies (which will no longer be “mortal”) are buried across the street (or elsewhere). Our soul and spirits leave the body and go somewhere and, according to the Scriptures, that somewhere is with the Lord who is in heaven. We are forgetting something else, we already noted that He ‘will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.’”

Take a look at the diagram to the right. When Christ comes, he will bring the souls and spirits of those saints who have died. At the same time, their bodies will be resurrected and these will meet and be united in the air. They will also then be united with those (body, soul, and spirit) that are still alive.

So, then, the question is, when we go back up to heaven (or if we were already there) what about a body? Do we not have bodies now when we arrive in heaven. The problem is confused by the fact that the Scriptures are not always clear about what happens at the Snatchure and what happens when Christ returns with all the saints in their glorified bodies. There is no question that in the Millenium we will have glorified bodies. But, what about now? In the passage above Paul speaks about “being absent from the body.”



So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 (NKJV)

This Scripture is quite clear that we shall receive our new “Spiritual” bodies at the rapture when Christ raises those who have died in Him and snatchus us away with them. This would indicate that the saints in heaven do not have any (physical or spiritual) bodies. This seems strange to use, but others in the heavens have no bodies. Angels, apparently have no tangible<sup>32</sup> bodies except when they take on some form to visit man. God, of course, has no such body. Satan and his bad guys, like the angels has no such body. So, do we need one?

<sup>32</sup>Tangible meaning something we can see and touch

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To further assuage their fears, Paul reassured believers that **God will bring with Him [Jesus] those who have fallen asleep in Jesus**. Their fellow believers who died will not miss out on the Rapture but will return with Christ in glory. Some interpret the phrase **God will bring** to mean that **the spirits of dead believers will come from heaven with Christ to meet their resurrected bodies**.<sup>33</sup> Others see in it the truth that at the Rapture, God will bring all believers, living and dead, back to heaven with Christ. While the **first view is certainly true**, the second one seems to be the emphasis of this passage.

What the passage does not teach is that the spirits of dead believers immediately return to earth with Christ for the establishing of the millennial kingdom. That view places the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation and essentially equates it with the Second Coming. It trivializes the Rapture into a meaningless sideshow that serves no purpose. Commenting on the pointlessness of a posttribulational Rapture, Thomas R. Edgar asks,

*What can be the purpose for keeping a remnant alive through the tribulation so that some of the church survive and then take them out of their situation and make them the same as those who did not survive? Why keep them for this? [The] explanation that they provide an escort for Jesus does not hold up. raptured living saints will be exactly the same as resurrected dead saints. Why cannot the dead believers fulfill this purpose? Why keep a remnant alive [through the Tribulation], then Rapture them and accomplish no more than by letting them die? There is no purpose or accomplishment in [such] a Rapture. . . .*

*With all the saints of all the ages past and the armies [of angels] in heaven available as escorts and the fact that [raptured] saints provide no different escort than if they had been killed, why permit the church to suffer immensely, most believers [to] be killed, and spare a few for a Rapture which has no apparent purpose, immediately before the [Tribulation] period ends? . . . Is this the promise? You will suffer, be killed, but I will keep a few alive, and take them out just before the good times come. Such reasoning, of course, calls for some explanation of the apparent lack of purpose for a posttribulational Rapture of any sort.*

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 4:14

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Thus, he says the same as I have, that there is no mention of bodies for the deceased believer today in heaven. It is all Paul's fault that we have no more details on the present believer's state in heaven.

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. . . how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

2 Corinthians 12:4 (NKJV)

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Paul didn't (he said it was unlawful to) tell us what he saw going on up there! John was caught up to heaven (in a vision) and saw one . . .

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saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira,

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<sup>33</sup>Emphasis are mine

to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Revelation 1:11 (NKJV)

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But that was the heavens and the earth during the Great Tribulation, not now. There are people who claim to have had "out of body" experiences, usually they are really "out of their mind" experiences. Then Peter and some other disciples saw Moses and Elijah,

*And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

Luke 9:30-31 (NKJV)

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But what was it they saw? This is complicated more by the fact below.

Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

2 Kings 2:11 (NKJV)

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Like Enoch, Elijah has no body down here, he was taken up into heaven so he is a special case. Pastor Jim says (he thinks) we will have an intermediate body. There is, however, no mention of this in Scripture. MacArthur does not answer the question directly but there is a decided implication below.

*Sixth, **the dead in Christ will rise first**. As noted above, the **dead** saints will in no way be inferior to those alive at the Rapture. In fact, they **will rise first**, their glorified bodies **joining with their glorified spirits** to make them into the image of Christ, as the apostle John wrote: "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2).*

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

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(Note: the **bold** type face is MacArthur's, the **bold underlined** type face is mine.)

He does not say "Joining with the glorified bodies - we do not get them until the Snatcher. Neither does he say "Joining with their spirits with intermediate bodies." He says nothing of anything other than the spirits.

One might surely ask about the "dead being raised first." By now, Paul's body must be nothing more than some bones, a few other mineral based items, and a pile of dust. The bodies of people who have been cremated and scattered over the ocean are . . . who knows? Either the resurrection of the deceased bodies (physical bodies) is symbolic (no one will actually see them) or else God is going to have a lot of work to do! He will have to collect all of the atoms which made up your body (they are still in existence somewhere) and reassemble them as they were when you died. If the later be true, make it easier for God, don't scatter your body all over the world, leave it in a hole in the ground. God can do such a thing, being omnipotent, and if that is what is meant, that is precisely what he will do.

The main concern is answered with the statement, "*that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*" I once knew a Baptist preacher who insisted that the "dead in Christ" who will rise first are the Presbyterians. Seriously, however, he is speaking of those who are physically dead. What the Snatcher comes, I will ascend either from the

east side or the west side of the 300 block on North Halcyon. If on the west side, I'll be the first to rise!. The Thessalonians were not concerned about themselves at the rapture but with those who had died. Paul makes the answer quite clear.

The Snatchure, step-by-step (in our translations).

1. *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven*
2. *With a shout*
3. *With the voice of an archangel*
4. *With the trumpet of God*

The Snatchure, step-by-step (in the Greek text).

- . For the Lord Himself*
1. *With a shout*
  2. *With the voice of an archangel*
  3. *With the trumpet of God*
  4. *will descend from heaven*

WITH A SHOUT. . . Thayer gives the following meaning for κέλευσμα (kelusma).

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An order, command, spec. a stimulating cry, either that by which animals are roused and urged on by man, as horses by charioteers, hounds by hunters, etc., or that by which a signal is given to men, e. g. to rowers by the master of a ship (Lcian. tyr. or catapl. c. 19), to soldiers by a commander (Thuc. 2, 92; Provo xxiv. 62 ), with a loud summons, a trumpet-call, 1 Th. iv. 16

THAYER, κέλευσμα

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Paul does not tell us who gives this tremendous shout! According to McGee, *"It is the same voice which He used when He stood at the tomb of Lazarus and said, "Lazarus, come forth."*<sup>34</sup> MacArthur says the same as Thayer and McGee. I would differ in one respect. I am sure the "command" will be much louder than when he called for Lazarus. (Note: that Greek word in the call to Lazarus is not the one used here).

THE VOICE OF (AN) ARCHANGEL . . . It is not necessary to look at the Greek here, "archangel" is a transliteration of it = "chief angel." Such an angel is mentioned in only one other New Testament Scripture.

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*Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

Jude 1:9 (NKJV)

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Michael is mentioned in the Old Testament in a rather important book.

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*But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, **Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. . . . "At*

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<sup>34</sup>McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 4:16



*that time **Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people**; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.*

Daniel 10:13 & 12:1-3 (NKJV)

So, is it Michael whose voice is heard? First, note that it says the voice of an archangel. MacArthur sums it up quite well.

*the voice of the **archangel** will sound. There is no definite article in the Greek text, which literally reads, "an archangel." In Jude 9, the only other passage in Scripture that mentions an archangel, the archangel is Michael. Scripture does not say whether or not he is the only archangel (there were seven archangels according to Jewish tradition). Thus, it is impossible to say who the **archangel** whose **voice** will be heard at that Rapture is. Whoever he is, he adds his **voice** to the Lord's shout of command.*

MacARTHUR, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

In reading the passage from Daniel, you must realize that the Snatchure and the Second Coming are all viewed as a single event to Old Testament prophets - in fact, since the Snatchure involves only Christians who are never in view in the Old Testament, the words in Daniel refer to His Second Coming.

THE TRUMPET OF GOD . . . "Trumpet" is σάλπιγξ (salpinks). Paul, apparently, refers to this same trumpet below.

*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NKJV)

I can not help but cite what McGee has to say about this trumpet - it is true McGee style.

*"The trump of God." Will there be trumpets there? No, it is His voice that will be like a trumpet. Can we be sure of this? In Revelation 1:10, John, who was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, wrote, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." He turned to see who it was, and he saw the glorified Christ. It is the voice of the glorified Christ that is like the sound of a trumpet.*

*That ought to get rid of all this foolishness about Gabriel blowing his horn or blowing a trumpet. I don't think Gabriel even owns a trumpet, but if he has one, he won't need to blow it. The Lord Jesus is not going to need the help of Gabriel. Do you think the Lord Jesus needed Gabriel to come and help Him raise Lazarus from the dead? Can you imagine the Lord Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus saying, "Gabriel, won't you come over here and help Me get this man out of the grave?" How absolutely foolish! The Lord Jesus will not need anyone to help Him*

McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

DESCENT FROM HEAVEN . . . The is a common word in the Greek. It is found in the same type of context below.

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*And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.*

Matthew 28:2 (NKJV)

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The question is not where He will “descend from” but where He will “descend to.” There verb holds no indication of this. Verse 17 says that we will meet “in the air,” ἀέρ (air) Three of the other four<sup>35</sup> appearances of this are below

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*Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air,*

Acts 22:23 (NKJV)

*Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

1 Corinthians 9:26 (NKJV)

*So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.*

1 Corinthians 14:9 (NKJV)

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In all three verses, it is obvious that, of the three heavens<sup>36</sup>, only the first makes any sense. You can not throw dust into the universe and, certainly not, into heaven. This leaves only the question of the “clouds.” (a common Greek word). *“Living much in the open air and being of a poetical nature, the people of the East would naturally make clouds figurative of many things. Thus clouds are the symbol of armies and multitudes of people (Isaiah 60:8; Jeremiah 4:13; Hebrews 12:1).”*<sup>37</sup> I believe most Bible scholars believe these are not ordinary rain clouds.

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Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

Acts 1:9 (NKJV)

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Mark 13:26 (NKJV)

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Jesus rose into heaven in a cloud which “received” him, He will descend from heaven in clouds at the Second Coming. Thus, these clouds may descend with Him at the Snatchure. There are those who read this as the “dead in Christ will rise in the clouds.” (The Greek text does not have a definite article here). Why not both, the two sets of “clouds” will meet in the air?

*And thus we shall always be with the Lord .* Having shown what is to happen in the future, at the time of the Snatchure, that we shall always be with the Lord, Paul writes, *“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*

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<sup>35</sup>The last is in Revelation 16:17 which is full of imagery and not very descriptive

<sup>36</sup>Paul was caught up into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 2:12), so there are three heavens, (1) our atmosphere (air), (2) the universe, and (3) God’s abode.

<sup>37</sup>UNGER, clouds

## 1 THESSALONIANS 5

*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (NKJV)

We have look at the event of the Rapture (Snatchure) in detail in the last chapter. We did not say when it was to occur. So, now Paul gets to that topic. *But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren,* Brethren, there is that term again. Paul is still dealing with them in a loving manner as “a nursing mother cherishes her own children.”(2:7)and “exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children.”(2:11)

So, he turns to “the times and the seasons.” των χρόνων καὶ των καιρῶν (ton chronon kai ton kairon). One may ask, what is the difference between “times” and seasons?” This Greek phrase is found at one other place in the New Testament and one place in the old (that I know of).

*And He changes **the times and the seasons**;*

*He removes kings and raises up kings;*

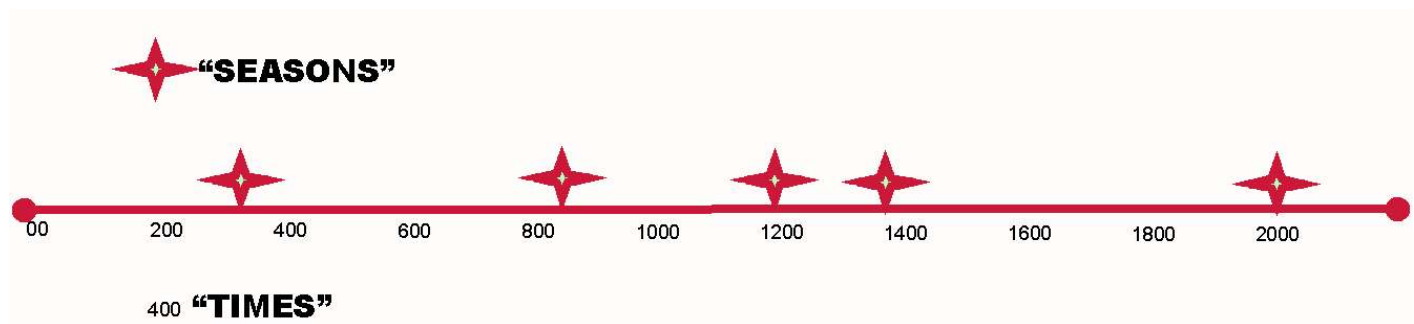
*He gives wisdom to the wise*

*And knowledge to those who have understanding.*

Daniel 2:21 (NKJV)

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

Acts 1:7 (NKJV)



The diagram above should help understand the subtle difference. “Times” refers to time in general as it proceeds from 00AD to 2000AD+. “Seasons,” on the other hand, refers to specific times when

some event takes place. “Times” is the more general of the two. It is somewhat like asking, “What date will spring come to the East next year (time) and how many weeks (usually 1) will it last (season)?”

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*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NKJV)

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The length of the Snatchure will be short. We read the first of the above two verses already. The second tells us it will be in the “twinkling of an eye,” which Robertson says, “Only here in N.T. Used by the Greeks for the flapping of a wing, the buzz of a gnat, the quivering of a harp, the twinkling of a star.”<sup>38</sup> One person writes, “*The fundamentalist philosopher Jack Van Impe has defined the twinkling of an eye as “eleven one-hundredths of a second.” We would like to hear from anyone who has verified this number experimentally.*”<sup>39</sup>

Well, the “season” of the Rapture<sup>40</sup> will be short. What about the time? We shall answer that in more detail later, but for now, let us just take a look at the various viewpoints

- Amillennialists Not only do the not believe in a Rapture, they do not believe in the Millenium
- “Post-Trib” Actually two groups, one who believe there is no Rapture and those who believe it occurs at the Second Comming (it if occurs then, it really is not a separate event.
- “Late Trib” A new movement, started by Rosenthal, who claims the Rapture will come near the very end of the tribulation (I will not even comment further on this point)
- “Mid Trib” Those who believe the Rapture will come after the first 3 and one-half years of the Trubulation (see below)
- “Pre-Trib” These are people like me, and (I hope) you, who believe the Rapture will come before the seven years of Tribulation begin.

There is some merit to the “Mid-Trib” viewpoint since, if you say, “The Church will not go through The Great Tribulation,” (Revelation 7:14 and others), they could be right since the last 3 and one-half years are called that. As we shall see from this passage, the problem with this viewpoint (one of them) is that when the Tribulation begins, we can start counting out the days and years and, when it has been nearly three and one-half years, we can say, “Aha, the Rapture is going to come very soon!” But as we go on with this study, we shall find that we will not be able to do that.

MacArthur has already explained the Post-Trib position on page 60. Let’s see what Paul says about the “times!” “*You have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*” If you consider this statement too carefully, you can really get confused! When is a thief most likely to come into your home? Most of you, I imagine would say “at night.” You wouldn’t expect a thief to come in the middle of the day (unless you are on vacation). So, just think of the metaphor as meaning “when least expected.”

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<sup>38</sup>ATR, 1 Corinthians 15:52

<sup>39</sup><http://www.improb.com/news/2000/aug2000/impe-twinkle-2000-08.html>

<sup>40</sup>I think I have used Snatchure enough to make the point.

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*Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

Luke 12:37-40 (NKJV)

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV)

Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

Matthew 24:42 (NKJV)

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Let me describe three things, time-wise: (1) The Rapture, (2) The Day of the Lord, and (3) The Lord's Return. Let me describe them in terms of "times and seasons."

● Rapture	twinkle of an eye	T-7 years
● The tribulation	7 years	T-7 to T
● The Great Tribulation	3 ½ years	T-3 ½ to T
● The Lords Return	twinkle of an eye	T

"T" is the date of the Lord's return. From the above, you can see that, if you know the date when any of these events begins, you have the dates for the others. I you knew the Lord would return in 2010, we would be in trouble because that is only six years - we missed the Rapture! If you have been waiting for information on what happens after the Rapture (i.e. between "T-7" and "T," you will be disappointed! Neither of these epistles say anything about that period of time. You will have to study the books of Daniel, Revelation, and a few others.

Paul says to the Thessalonians, *For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.* There is an important phrase here, repeated, "**they shall not escape.**" Paul does **not** say, "We shall not escape." They will not escape but we will because we will be gone.

Before we proceed, we really have not determined why the Lord will Rapture us. Is it so we will not have to go through the horror of the Tribulation? Well, perhaps partly. Let me begin at the beginning with this subject.

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*The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the **Spirit of God was hovering** over the face of the waters.*

Genesis 1:2 (NKJV)

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The Hebrew word for "hovering" is also found below.

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As an eagle stirs up its nest,  
Hovers over its young,  
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,

Carrying them on its wings,

Deuteronomy 32:11 (NKJV)

The inference of this is that the Holy Spirit was protecting the earth (in whatever state it was in). The Holy Spirit is in the world today protecting it from the horrible things which are described for the Tribulation.

*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.***

2 Thessalonians 2:3-7 (NKJV)

We shall comment more on this passage when we come to it in the study. For now, note that the Holy Spirit must be taken out of the world before the Tribulation can begin. Where is the Holy Spirit? Today, every born-again believer has the Holy Spirit abiding within him. To remove the Holy Spirit, it will be necessary to remove every believer with Him. This is sort of similar to the idea below.

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:13-16 (NKJV)

*"For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you . . ."* There are three words of importance here - "they," "them," and "you." Previously I noted you would have to study other Scriptures if you wanted to know about the Tribulation. Well, I was not entirely correct. Here we have, the notice, *"For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them. . ."* There, that's all that it says about it! An interesting note here regarding labor. The Thessalonians demonstrated their "labor of love" (in which I noted the similarity of a woman in labor) and those who go through the rapture will have "labor pains." Which kind of labor do you want? I trust that you have chosen the former!

*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.* Before we talk about day and night, let us note that we will not be "overtaken.," καταλάβη (katalabe, Subjunctive Aorist). This form of the verb is referred to as the "Hortatory Subjunctive", used to express exhortations.<sup>41</sup> Two other such uses are below.

*And wherever it **seizes him**, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."*

<sup>41</sup>GOETCHIUS, ¶343

Mark 9:18 (NKJV)

*Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness **overtake you**; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.*

John 12:35 (NKJV)

These are things that. In concept, could happen, but probably won't. That is, they will not be "overtaken" if they are "sons of the day" (i.e. Born-again Christians). Paul speaks of "this day." which is reference to one or a combination of (1) the last days, (2) the last day, and (3) the Day.

There is a difference between the above terms. First, the "last days."

'And it shall come to pass in **the last days**, says God,  
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your young men shall see visions,  
Your old men shall dream dreams.

Acts 2:17 (NKJV)

But know this, that in **the last days perilous** times will come:

2 Timothy 3:1 (NKJV)

*has in **these last days** spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

Hebrews 1:2 (NKJV)

*Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in **the last days**.*

James 5:3 (NKJV)

*knowing this first: that scoffers will come in **the last days**, walking according to their own lusts,*

2 Peter 3:3 (NKJV)

With respect to the first verse, Peter said the prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost. The verse in Hebrew is in past tense. The scoffers will (have) scoffed because nothing has yet happened.

Brothers (and Sisters if you are part of the feminist movement), we **are** living the the **last days!** With respect to the passage in Peter, I should point out that some days are "more last" than others.

To this, I suppose, it is important to include the following.

*And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in **the last days**:"*

Genesis 49:1 (NKJV)

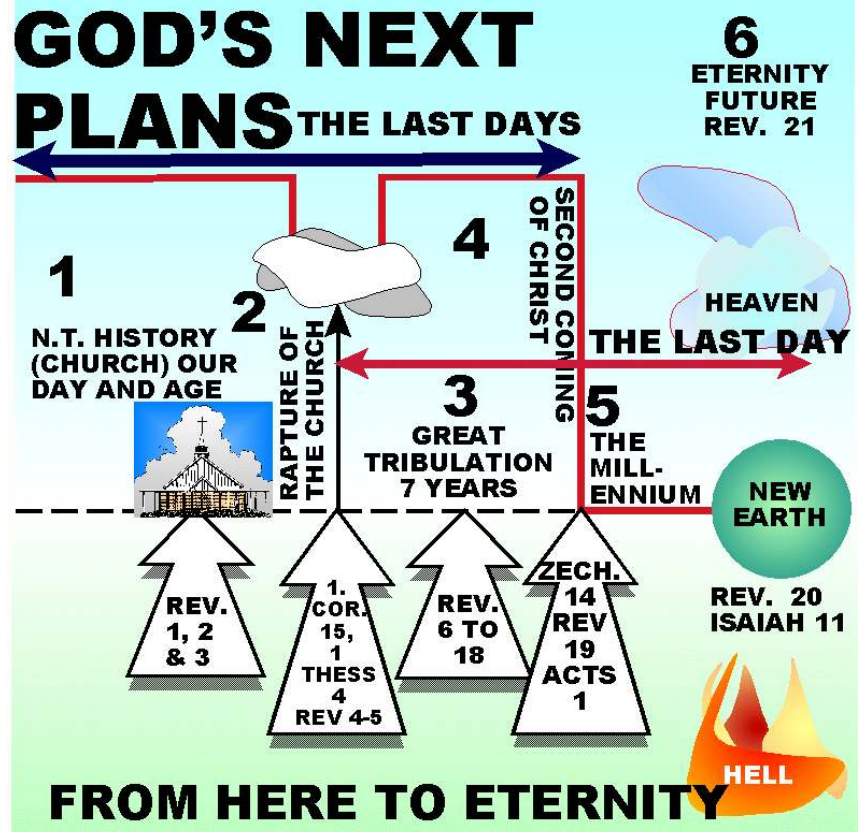
It is important to note this verse because it indicates that something will "befall" the Jews in the last days. If you are a Covenant or Substitutionary Theologian, I don't know what you will do with this verse because, if God is totally through with Israel, as claimed by them, what does this verse mean?

Now, taking up the term "The last day." we must ask, what day is this? Further, we must ask if we are talking about 24 hours or about a period of time such as the "day of the horse and buggy."

Many will not agree with this, but there really is no Biblical way we can do other than to assume a period of time greater than 24 hours. Why? Consider the following

*But **the day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*  
2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV)

*. . .looking for and hastening the coming of **the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*



2 Peter 3:12 (NKJV)

Does this sound like the Day of the Lord when He returns to earth to reign for a thousand years? Hardly. Peter is very descriptive here. I once did an extended study on the various terms used here. Since this is a study of Thessalonians, I will not repeat the study. Let me just say that the terms can lead one to no conclusion that he is speaking of a nuclear holocaust in which the earth will, literally, be devolved into its constituent atoms and the heavens likewise.

*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

*And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

*Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four comers of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of*



heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, **for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.**

Revelation 20:1-21:1 (NKJV)

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There is a clear correlation here. Peter is describing what happens at the end of the Millennium and calls it the "Day of the Lord." and "the Day of God." Notice, further, there is a resurrection at the end of the millennium. The Day of the Lord also refers to His Second Coming and so, as noted, covers about a 1000 years. You will remember the verse that says that, with the Lord, a "Day" is as a thousand years." It would be taking that verse out of context to prove this point but it does show that God regards time differently than we do.

Now, no more words about the Second Coming, the Millennium, etc. as all Paul has in view in this book is the Rapture.

*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.* Paul uses the metaphor of the thief again to say that they will not see all of the awful things coming, they, like us, will be snatched away at the rapture. One question that sometimes arises is, "Will we be aware of what is taking place here on earth? I would say, "Definitely not (I think)." (Excuse the wishy-washiness of that reply).

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And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)

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If there will be no sorrow or crying, it would seem impossible that we could know what was happening on earth(it would make us sorrowful). The only problem is the above verse is somewhat out of context as it refers to the "New Heaven and New Earth. It seems to me there is, likely, no sorrow there now. Heaven is a perfect place and "sorrow" is not a "perfect" emotion.

Our last Bible Study was on the book of Genesis. Let me recall a few verses.

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*Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God **divided the light from the darkness.** God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.*

Genesis 1:3-5 (NKJV)

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and **let them be for signs and seasons**, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and **to divide the light from the darkness**. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:14-18 (NKJV)

When we were doing this study, I noted that Genesis 1, while not regarded as poetic, has the rudimentary poetic form. This means, like other Hebrew poetic passages, it will have an immediate meaning but it usually has a further, deeper, spiritual meaning. Paul picks this up when he says the Thessalonians (as well as us) are "sons of light," or "Sons of the Day." in contrast with the others are would thus be the "sons of darkness" or "sons of the night." From Genesis 1 on, there is a simple moral equation:

DAY = GOOD  
NIGHT= BAD

Let me cite a few of the many passage of Scripture that bring this out.

*Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness;  
He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.*

Psalms 112:4 (NKJV)

*Then I saw that wisdom excels folly  
As light excels darkness.*

Ecclesiastes 2:13 (NKJV)

*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;  
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;  
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

Isaiah 5:20 (NKJV)

*The people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light;  
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,  
Upon them a light has shined.*

Isaiah 9:2 (NKJV)

*I form the light and create darkness,  
I make peace and create calamity;  
I, the Lord, do all these things.'*

Isaiah 45:7 (NKJV)

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

John 8:12 (NKJV)

*to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith*

in Me.'

Acts 26:18 (NKJV)

*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

2 Corinthians 4:6 (NKJV)

*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

2 Corinthians 6:14 (NKJV)

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*

Ephesians 5:8 (NKJV)

Many of these passages are self-explanatory. Let me point out that all of the Old Testament Scriptures are from the poetic literature. Notice, especially, Isaiah 45:7 where God said He “created” the darkness. He did not say He created the light, because God is light.<sup>42</sup> I have noted before you do not have a choice of accepting Christ or remaining neutral. Live is not a multiple choice quiz:

- [  ] I accept Christ as my Savior
- [  ] I don't care
- [  ] I reject Christ as my Savior.

The middle choice is not there! The Bible does not speak about the “Twilight Zone,” it is either Night or Day, Darkness or Light. “Twilight” is mention a few times in the Scriptures.

*For at the window of my house  
I looked through my lattice,  
And saw among the simple,  
I perceived among the youths,  
A young man devoid of understanding,  
Passing along the street near her [wisdom's] corner;  
And he took the path to her house  
In the twilight, in the evening,  
In the black and dark night.*

Proverbs 7:6-9 (NKJV)

As above, it is attached to night.

*Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.* In order to get this right, note the following.

Biblically, “sleep” may be used (1) for the dead (as on page 56); (2) it may be used of physical sleep like we usually do at night, and (3) it may be used as in the expression “Asleep at the Switch,” meaning not paying attention to ones duties. “Let us not sleep” can not apply to the dead. If we were dead, we wouldn't be reading this information and, likewise, it is hard to read when you are sound asleep. So, we are speaking of the sleep of carelessness. It is a completely different word for sleep

<sup>42</sup>1 John 1:5

than the one used previously. It is used “metaphorically for ‘to yield to sloth and sin, and be indifferent to one’s salvation: Ephesians v. 14<sup>43</sup> and here. I wonder what Paul would say if, today, he could visit the United States and go to various churches and see how much sleepiness there is? I should point out that the verb here is in the “Present ,active subjunctive (volitive), **let us not go on sleeping**<sup>44</sup> How do we “keep awake?” Paul gives us an outline to follow.

*But let us who are of the day*

- *be sober,*
- *put on the breastplate of faith and love*
- *put on a helmet the hope of salvation.*

Paul speaks of the last two in his epistle to Ephesus.

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*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--*

Ephesians 6:13-18 (NKJV)

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Notice that he mentions a number of other parts of the armor here, the “whole” armor. Let us do a little comparing.

#### EPHESIANS

*girded your waist with truth*

*put on the breastplate of righteousness*

*shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel*

*taking the shield of faith*

*take the helmet of salvation*

*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*

#### 1 THESSALONIANS

. . .

*put on the breastplate of love*

. . .

*.put on the breastplate of faith*

*put on a helmet the hope of salvation*

. . .

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<sup>43</sup>THAYER, καθεύδω

<sup>44</sup>ATR, 1 Thessalonians 5:6

The pieces of body armor that Paul does not mention here are “girding the waist with truth,” which the Thessalonians had already done; “the feet with the Gospel,” they had already put feet to the spreading of the Gospel (see page 23), and, finally, with all they suffered in Thessalonica, they knew well how to use the “sword of the Spirit.” So, Paul only lists those which they needed to pay more attention to.

Let’s go through these three items in order (and in detail). First, the “breastplate” of love. Note what the breastplate (shown to the right) does - it covers the heart - the source of our love. Hence one may use the term “breastplate of love” in a very correct sense. Paul thanked God for their love but love can change quite easily. Therefore, it is an imperative that we protect it. So, Paul asks them to put one on (figuratively, of course). He also calls it the “breastplate of faith.” One might say, physiologically speaking, the faith is in the head. But how many preachers and evangelists have you heard that said your faith had to drop about 18 inches from you brain to your heart?” In Paul’s day, at least, faith was of the heart as well.

He says to put this on “soberly.” The word νήφω (nepho) appears six times in the New Testament, Peter uses it three times. It means “to be calm and collected in spirit.”<sup>45</sup> As ATR points out, what Paul has envisioned here is, “the idea of watchfulness brings the figure of a sentry on guard and armed to Paul’s mind as in Romans 13:12 “the weapons of light.”<sup>46</sup>

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Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, **be sober**, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 1:13 (NKJV)

Soberly guarding the gate



But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and **watchful** in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”

1 Peter 4:7-8 (NKJV)

**Be sober**, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NKJV)

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The advice is not just from Paul, Peter gives the same sort of advice as above. Then there is the “helmet the hope of salvation.” The helmet is one of the most important pieces of armor. In Ephesians 6, it is the last piece of armor mentioned (the sword, which comes last, is a weapon, not a piece of armor.) Unger says, “The helmet as a part of the Christian’s armor represents salvation (Ephesians 6:17), “the hope” of

The Helmet



<sup>45</sup>THAYER, νήφω (it also means not to be drunk)

<sup>46</sup>ATR, 1 Thessalonians 5:8

salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8).<sup>47</sup> Do you think Paul is inconsistent in his writing? Look what he says next! “For God did not appoint us to wrath.” If that is the case, why the armor? Does it make sense? You bet it does! If you were a mugger (heaven forbid!) And there was a weak gaunt looking guy walking down the street and a soldier with all his badges on his chest, which would you pick to mug? We need the armor so as to avoid wrath. We need it as we “obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.”

Paul concludes this section with “that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” It might have been better if Paul made a better choice of euphemisms Here he goes back to using “sleep” for “dead.” We “should” is another Subjunctive Aorist verb (see page 68) for comments on this).

Paul had confidence they would see each other in heaven. As such, he writes “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” As you might guess, both “comfort” (a word we have seen before) and “edify” are both in the imperative mood - they are commands. Edify is οἰκοδομέω (oikodomeo), and interesting word as, literally, it is οἶκος (oikos) = “house or home” and δομέω (domeo) = “to build.” Hence “to build up a house.” I suppose it could be use for “to build a temple also since we are the “temple of God” (1 Corinthians 3:16). The metaphore is a good one, We are to work at building each other up in the faith. Paul is not admonishing them, he compliments them by noting “as you also are doing.”

## EXTRA-BIBLICAL NOTE REGARDING OUR HEAVENLY BODIES

I have had a number of people ask me what kind of bodies we will have when we get to heaven (i.e. before the rapture). Since the Bible does not deal with this explicitly (or even implicitly) in answering this question, we have to go with feelings and logic, which might be right but are not from God’s inspiration (unless He inspires me on what to write, but I do not want that . . . everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; (Revelation 22:18 ). I have enough plagues!

Pastor Jim (Wickstrom) says we will have an intermediate body. I understand that is “extra-Biblical teaching from Dallas. I believe that might make some people feel better, but I don’t think it is true. Let me note some examples.

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*Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*

Matthew 17:1-5 (NKJV)

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Before Peter (or the others) could rush over and shake hands with Moses, Moses and Elijah were taken back into heaven. Note that Christ was “*transfigured before them*” (Obviously that is what this is referred to as the Mount of Transfiguration). It would be logical that, as they conversed, they would have been in the same “transfigured” form as Christ. I believe that, had Peter actually reached out

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<sup>47</sup>UNGER, “helmet”

to Moses to shake his hand, his hand would have gone right through Moses. There would be no physical substance there to actually grab hold of. They were pure images with no actual material. You say "Baloney!" Even today, through the use of Laser technology, we can project an image into space and yet there is nothing there - kind of the same thing (but the Lord does not use Lasers.)

Next,

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*And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. **Jesus came, the doors being shut**, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"*

John 20:26 (NKJV)

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Now, you can not enter a room when the doors are shut - try it sometime (if your medical insurance is paid up). It just won't work. But, after Jesus arose from the dead, he had a different body. It did not obey the laws of science, it could pass right through a wall. As I worked on this, I rather answered a question I've always had. If Jesus was in His Glorified Resurrected body, why were there still nail prints in his hands and feet? That does not sound right to be. It was certainly a transformed body and, perhaps, the kind of body we may have in heaven, a body that is visible not physical.

So, what I am getting to is that we have some form of visible presence without any material content. This way we will recognize one another but not be restricted by and of the physical limits we have now. Wouldn't that be great - it would put the airlines out of business! One would also have to ask, if at the Rapture our bphysical bodies will rise from the grave while the Lord will bring back the spirit and soul's of them and unite them into a glorified body, where would become of these "intermediate bodies" (assuming them to be more than a visible manifestation)? Would they be left lying around littering up heaven?

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*And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.*

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 (NKJV)

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Now, Paul turn to some final matters. "*And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*" Who are these who labored among them?

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*Let the elders **who rule well** be counted worthy of double honor, **especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.***

1 Timothy 5:17 (NKJV)

See also 1 Timothy 3:4-12;

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He is speaking of the Elders (Overseers, Bishops) of the church and, especially the preachers. Paul

wants them to “recognize” these men.<sup>48</sup>

McGee speaks of this in his usual style.

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*Paul is telling them that certain men and women had been given certain gifts of leadership, and they should respect them. They should look to them for admonition.*

*We still have the problem today that very few people in the church pay any attention to the teachers God has given them. People say they believe the Bible is the Word of God and they believe every word of it. Then why don't they obey it? Why don't they listen when it is being taught? One man said to me very candidly, "I believe the Bible from cover to cover, and I am ignorant of what is between the covers." Now that is an untenable position to hold. I think if people knew what was between the covers, they would believe it. But it is a hypocritical position to say you believe it and then be ignorant of what it says. Anyone who says he believes the Bible is the Word of God is obligated to know what it says. Therefore, those who are preaching and teaching the Word of God should have the attention of the believers.*

McGee, 1 Thessalonians 5:12

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MacArthur states

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*Placing such men into leadership positions within the early church was essential (cf. Acts 14:23), but the task was not easy. In Thessalonica, as in other Greco-Roman cities where Paul planted churches, it was difficult to find qualified elders. First of all, the church was less than a year old and contained primarily new converts. Therefore, few, if any, of the members would have been sufficiently mature and wise enough to articulate the truth and direct the congregation with discernment. But the apostle Paul nevertheless exercised his Spirit-given authority (cf. Acts 13:1–3; 15:22–29; 16:1–5; 2 Corinthians 10:8, 14) and discernment, identified certain qualified men, and started training them to become elders. Although 1 Thessalonians makes no mention of elders, overseers, pastors, or leaders, they are in view as those who had **charge over** the Thessalonians.*

**Second, finding qualified elders from among the Thessalonians was difficult because those new believers generally were common people.**<sup>49</sup> *Many of them were slaves who were not accustomed to leadership responsibilities. Thus they would have had to learn how to grow spiritually and develop as leaders at the same time.*

*The difficulty in identifying qualified elders in Thessalonica led to a conflict within the church (5:14–15). Apparently some in the flock, wondering why other equally new believers in Christ were given charge over them, were not submissive to the new leaders. That conflict, although not a threat to the life of the church (such as the factionalism and charismatic excesses at Corinth were to that church), was serious enough that Paul wanted it resolved as soon as possible. To a great extent, the resolution of that conflict lay in the proper fulfillment of pastoral and congregational roles. Hence Paul admonished the Thessalonians about the relationship between shepherds and sheep, starting with the shepherd's responsibility to the sheep.*

MacARTHUR 1 Thessalonians 5:12

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Well, Berea[n Bible Church] was not far from Thessalonica. I can relate very well to what John MacArthur. When we contemplated starting Berean Bible Fellowship (later “Church”), we needed

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<sup>48</sup>I say “men” because Paul lived before the “Feminist Movement!”

<sup>49</sup>Underscored emphasis is mine, bold emphasis was MacArthurs’



people to serve as interim elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers, and so on. After we got started, we realized that Pastor Jim should not run the entire service himself, some of the men needed to get up and give announcements, lead the singing, and so on. The problem was we had very few members with any kind of experience.

For Elders, Hal Belch and Bruce McLennon were chosen along with me. I had served on church boards for a couple of years, not much experience, and neither Hal nor Bruce had served in any capacity in the church. It did not take very many Elder meetings before Hal came “alive” and did a very credible job as Elder. Bruce, while not quite as active, began to learn to be an Elder as well.

Then came the deacons. I do not believe anyone on the Deacon board has ever “deaced” before. Jack and Betty Hunter (Kristy Koon’s parents) took over as chairman of the Deacons and did a remarkable job of getting them organized and taught them how to “deac.” Sunday School teachers and Secretary was no problem as we have several experienced Sunday School teachers and Gail McMorran as secretary.

When it came to having men get up before the church service, we encouraged a quite a number of men to do this. I have to admit that when a few of them got up there, I had to grip my chair and pray, “Lord, don’t bring any visitors today!” But many of them mature in the Lord and in His service. It was not very long before we had a fully functional church with well over 150 members.

MacArthur said, above, that “*apparently some in the flock, wondering why other equally new believers in Christ were given charge over them, were not submissive to the new leaders.*” That was not a problem we faced. The problem we faced was similar to another problem they had at Thessalonica, however.

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*But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.*

Acts 17:5 (NKJV)

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We discussed this in the introduction to the book. Our “mob” consisted of a number of people from another church in town<sup>50</sup> who did not want Berean Bible to survive its infancy. I would be tempted to say “strangely” most of their tactics backfired on them and helped us to grow. I shouldn’t say “strangely” as I know it was the Lord at work.

Getting back to “*esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake,*” again we had no trouble with this, our church is a loving church that was begun that way.

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Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

1 Timothy 5:17 (NKJV)

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This was Paul’s advice to Timothy and it is also meant for all churches. Pastor Jim has never lacked honor among (most) of our members. One day, Lord willing, we will be applying this to Pastor Randy as we get to know him more and more.

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<sup>50</sup>I will not name it for the Lord’s sake.

Paul concludes his instructions for them, fourteen of them.

- *Warn those who are unruly*
- *Comfort the fainthearted,*
- *Uphold the weak,*
- *Be patient with all.*
- *no one render evil for evil to anyone,*
- *Always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.*
- *Rejoice always*
- *Pray without ceasing*
- *In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
- *Do not quench the Spirit.*
- *Do not despise prophecies.*
- *Test all things;*
- *Hold fast what is good.*
- *Abstain from every form of evil.*

“Warn” is νεοθετέω (neotheteo) - It is a combination of νεος (neos) = “the mind” and τιθημι (Tithemi) = “to put”, hence “to put in mind” or, “remind.” Paul used it with reference to them in verse 12. As Christians we need to remind our brothers who are “unruly” in their conduct. The “unruly” were ἄτακτος (atraktos) and is a good translation if you take the word literally, “disorderly and disruptive; difficult to control.” The ones who would not yield to the instructions of the leadership (hence “unruleable.” Since I am writing this at election time, I think of a preacher who urges his congregation to get out and vote (no names of course). “Not me,” says one member, “I’m going to stay home!” That is unruly. Paul was to warn them. God intends the members of a local church to pay attention to their pastors (not that they have absolute rule, but they need to be listened to). To make this a bit clearer, it would not be wrong that they didn’t vote as the pastor urged, it would be their attitude, “You’re not going to tell me what I should do - who do you think you are?”

We have already dealt with “comfort.” so we go next to “upholding.” which is ἀντέχω (antecho), which is a combination of two common Greek words, ἀντί (anti), the meaning of which you can guess - “against” and ἔχω (echo) meaning “to hold,” Hence it is, literally, “to hold against.” The meaning is not that of “holding something against someone) but to “hold them up.” Thayer says, “to aid them, to care for them”<sup>51</sup> If they are timid and afraid to do anything, help them to stand up and do what is needed. It is to be done in an attitude of love - love for them and love for the Lord.

“Rendering evil for evil” is adequately defined in the scriptures.

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"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:43-48 (NKJV)

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<sup>51</sup>THAYER, ἀντέχω

We have talked about “pray without ceasing” a number of times.

“Give Thanks” This is not a suggestion, it is a command. If you do not think so, consider first,

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Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous,  
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

Psalm 97:12 (NKJV)

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Then there is Psalm 18:49; 30:4; 30:12; 75:1; 92:1; 97:12; 105:1; 106:1; 106:47; 107:1; 107:8; 107:15; 107:21; 107:31; 118:1; 118:29; 119:62; 122:4; 136:1-3; 136:26; and 140:13. All of these say “Give thanks” as a command (the verbs are in the imperative). God “so loved the world,” we ought to be able to give thanks to Him, not just for our salvation, but for the way He cares for us.

“Do not quench the Spirit.” Robertson says,

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*the present imperative means to stop doing it or not to have the habit of doing it. It is a bold figure. Some of them were trying to put out the fire of the Holy Spirit, probably the special gifts of the Holy Spirit as 1 Thessalonians 5:20 means. But even so the exercise of these special gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4; Romans 12:6-9) was to be decently (1 Thessalonians 4:12) and in order (kata taxin, 1 Corinthians 14:40) and for edification (1 Corinthians 14:26). Today, as then, there are two extremes about spiritual gifts (cold indifference or wild excess). It is not hard to put out the fire of spiritual fervor and power.*

ATR, 1 Thessalonians 5:19

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In this regard, McGee says,

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*One of the figures that is used for the Holy Spirit is fire. How do you quench a fire? You dampen it down and don't let it burn. To quench the Spirit means that you refuse to do the will of God; that is, you are not listening to the Holy Spirit. You refuse to let the Holy Spirit be your Guide to lead you. You and I quench the Holy Spirit when we take matters into our own hands.*

*This is the same teaching that Paul gave to the Ephesian believers: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). You cannot grieve a thing; you grieve a Person. The Holy Spirit is a Person, and He is grieved by sin in our lives. Also, He is quenched when we step out of the will of God.*

McGEE, 1 Thessalonians 5:19

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We need to take the next two items together - *Do not despise prophecies, and Test all things.* We are to not despise prophecies and yet we are to test all things. The two go together.

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*when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.*

Deuteronomy 18:22 (NKJV)

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Before we heed prophecies, we need to test whether the prophet is a true one or not. If he (or she) prophecies things that do not come to pass, mark that person and pay no attention to them.

On the other hand

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*As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent."*

Jeremiah 28:9 (NKJV)

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If the prophecies all come true, then you may trust the prophecy. Unfortunately, there is a large middle ground here. Many times we can not apply this test. So then,

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*"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'--which you have not known--'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 (NKJV)

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This is where the "test all things" comes in. If one make a prophecy and that prophecy is contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures, you must reject it!

Jesus Himself taught this.

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Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

John 13:19 (NKJV)

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When He had fulfilled His words, died on the cross and rose again, His disciples knew that we truly was the Messiah and that what He spoke was true.

The last two items also go together, *Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.* What do you hold on to and what do you say "hands off" to? The obvious answer is "good" and "evil." But how do you know which is which? You all have 66 books you can read through to find the answer. It is bound to be there somewhere if you look. If you have not "quenched" the Spirit, the Spirit can lead you to the right books, chapters, and verses.

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*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28 (NKJV)

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Paul's final words are to ask God to "sanctify" the Thessalonians completely. I thought only the Pope could do that!? The word means, "to consecrate, to separate from things profane."

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*But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.*

1 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV)

*O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and*

*contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge--*

1 Timothy 6:20 (NKJV)

In other words, your thoughts need to be directed upwards, not downwards. You need to be continually conscious of your place in Christ. As I am writing these words, it is freezing cold and raining and I am feeling quite poorly - so I will return to this study when things are better . . . But wait! That is what it is all about. You can not be downtrodden with the affairs of this world and be consciously led by the Spirit at the same time! Note that "profane" as used in the above verse does not just refer to "profanity" as spoken but all things which are not honoring to God.

*May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*  
Some insist that man is a dichotomy (two parts) and yet Paul here speaks of three distinct parts. The body, which goes to the grave, the spirit to go to be with the Lord and the soul that . . . ? You know, I do not know what happens to our soul when we die. I suspect that either it goes with the spirit to heaven or just "goes away." Apparently, we will need no "souls" when we receive our glorified bodies. Paul taught,

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:44 (NKJV)

The above would be better translated (for our purposes, anyway),  
*It is sown a soulitua body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a soulitua body, and there is a spiritual body.* My Word processor says there is no such word as "soulitua," I made it up. The meaning of the verse is that, now, we have bodies that satisfy the needs of our souls. Then we will have bodies that satisfy the needs of our spirits. So, perhaps, there will be no need for a soul in the spiritual body. There is, in fact, no spirit in the physical bodies of anything on earth except man.

Some teach that man is a dichotomy - (1) a body and (2) a soul and spirit. In other words, there is no distinction between soul and spirit. It is true that they seem to be used interchangeably in a number of Old Testament passages, but not in the New Testament!

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to **the division of soul and spirit**, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

JFB note this.

*. . .that is, reaching through even to the separation of the animal soul, the lower part of man's incorporeal nature, the seat of animal desires, which he has in common with the brutes; compare the same Greek, 1 Cor. 2:14, "the natural [animal-souled] man" (Jude 19), from the spirit (the higher part of man, receptive of the Spirit of God, and allying him to heavenly beings).*

JFB, Hebrews 4:12

But Robertson says, "not an argument for trichotomy. Psychology is constantly changing its

terminology.<sup>52</sup> Most commentators (the ones I've seen) stick to the trichotomy of man, although the passage in Hebrews surely indicates that there is a fine line between the soul and the spirit. The grammar of the verse we are studying does not allow for less than three things. Let me add before going on, if we need our souls in our resurrected bodies, they will be there one way or another.

*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.* The only amplification needed here is what is meant by "do it?" Paul simply means that God does not call you to salvation and then, somehow, you get lost in the crowd. He will carry your salvation out to the end, you can rest assured.

Paul writes, "*Brethren, pray for us!*" Wait a minute! People like Paul and these other great men of God do not need our puny little prayers! Satan would surly like you to believe that. When Paul wrote to his friend Philemon, he said,

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*But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that **through your prayers** I shall be granted to you.*

Philemon 1:22 (NKJV)

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Paul asked Philemon to pray for him for, if Philemon didn't, Paul might not make it. Note the words, "I shall be granted to you." In other words, through his prayers God would deliver Paul to him. Paul needed prayer as much as anyone, most like more than most. We do not need to pray for Paul, he has already gained (to die is gain). We do need to pray for those who lead us today. The fact that a man is a preacher does not make him immune to anything that we are plagued with, In fact. In addition all that we have to cope with, they have Satan attacking them all the time, attempting to discourage them from teaching and preaching the Word.

*Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.* This was one of my favorite verses when I was in High School! I never could seem to convince the girls in the group that this applied to them. They believed that I did not know how to give "holy kisses." However, JFB write

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*holy kiss—pure and chaste. "A kiss of charity" (1 Peter 5:14). A token of Christian fellowship in those days (compare Luke 7:45; Acts 20:37), as it is a common mode of salutation in many countries. The custom hence arose in the early Church of passing the kiss through the congregation at the holy communion [Justin Martyr, Apology, 1.65; Apostolic Constitutions, 2.57], the men kissing the men, and the women the women, in the Lord. So in the Syrian Church each takes his neighbor's right hand and gives the salutation, "Peace."*

JFB 1 Thessalonians 5:26

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I think you must all have the correct understanding of this. We should greet one another in whatever the custom for greeting "beloved friends" is current. In most cases, a good hearty handshake will suffice.

*I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.* If you read this in the Greek, it says the same thing. It was not just Paul's desire that his letters be passed around, he commanded it.

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<sup>52</sup>ATR, Hebrews 4:12

*Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

Colossians 4:16 (NKJV)

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Paul intended to have his letters passed around and shared! I must say, He really had his desires in this satisfied - how many people have read them? Then there is Paul's epistle to the churches of Galatia: Note the plural. This epistle was sent to a whole group of churches.

Paul ends with "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" The "Amen" is not part of the (better) Greek texts. Someone must have added their "amen" to it. If not, we can certainly add our Amen! to it. This is a rather short close as compared with his other epistles. But this was his first, he no doubt added to it as he wrote more and more epistles.

AMEN

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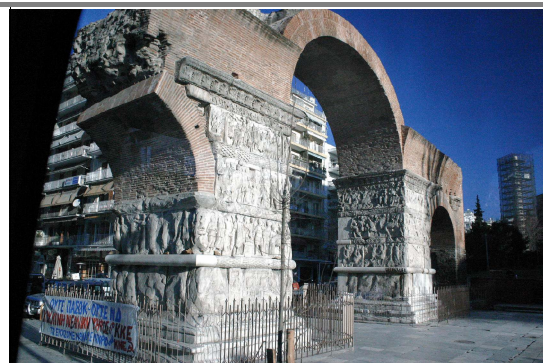
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