

First Thessalonians
A Study-Commentary

By

R.A. Coombes

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Dedications

To the loyal and faithful readers and supporters Of The Alpha-Omega Report

This author would like to dedicate this book to the late Chester McCalley who was my mentor for many years in Biblical Studies for whom I owe much to this publication.

I would like to thank my parents, Harry and Betty, for guiding me as a child into God's truth and supporting me in my studies as a young adult studying at the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago and Calvary Bible College of Kansas City.

I also want to thank Deborah, Diana, and "Farmer Mike" for their special support in the publication of this book and The Alpha-Omega Report. I would also like to extend a special note of thankfulness to Melvin Olson of TLC Services for technical support for not only this publication but also for the Alpha-Omega Report website.

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Mr. Coombes is an author and publisher of “America, The Babylon” Volumes 1 and 2. He is also the publisher of an online Biblical Prophecy Studies and News magazine entitled: The Alpha-Omega Report which has been online since 1998.

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He has toured and lectured across the United States in seminars and Prophecy conferences since the publication of his first book in 1998.

Prior to his publishing career, Mr. Coombes has held positions in the broadcasting field as a Radio-TV announcer and newscaster. He has also been advertising-public relations consultant which included President Ronald Reagan among his clientele for the 1984 Re-election campaign.

Mr. Coombes educational background includes Biblical studies and theology at both the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago as well as Calvary Bible College in Kansas City. He has been a believer since the age of 5 and has been involved in scholastic Biblical studies since 1970.

Foreword

This book focuses on Paul's first epistle to the Church at Thessalonica. A similar book is available on Paul's second epistle to the Church at Thessalonica.

Both books are written for the average person to be able to gain a better perspective on the entire epistle as well as certain key underlying themes. In order to accomplish this, the author has utilized Strong's Concordance numbering system as a reference point for readers who have either no background in the original language of the New Testament or have only a limited understanding but know how to use Strong's Concordance numbers for use not only in Strong's but within other reference sources such as Greek-English lexicons that use the Strong's numbering system.

This author has also utilized the King James Version in large measure because of its close connections to the Strong's concordance system. The reader is encouraged to use these reference resources as part of their own study efforts in conjunction with the material contained in this book as well as in their own independent studies, if they do not already have a Greek language education.

This work was not written to be an exhaustive commentary on Paul's first epistle but rather a moderate overview of the book with some special intense study applications at pertinent points in the book. For reader comments or questions about the material in this book emails can be addressed to:

ebookcomments@aoreport.com

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An Introduction and Outline of the First Epistle to the Church at Thessalonica

Recipients of the Letter:

It was written to believers in the city of Thessalonica

Facts About the City of Thessalonica:

This letter is written to the Assembly of believers in the Grecian city of Thessalonica, which was a major city in Greece.

The Importance of Thessalonica in the Roman Empire

In today's world of marketing, we often hear of business planners trying to determine where to build a retail store or even a manufacturing plant or headquarters by following the famous adage: "Location, Location, Location." Well, the city of Thessalonica had that very advantage of "Location." It was located on what was then known as the strategic and famous "Ignatian way." Now, you're most likely going to ask, "What is the Ignatian Way?"

The Ignatian Way was the main highway connecting the city of Rome with its eastern section of the Roman Empire. It was THE main route one took to move back and forth from Rome to the eastern-most parts of the empire. By today's standards the Ignatian Way functioned much like The Autobahn highway in Germany or a key "Interstate Highway" in America, such as Interstate 70 which runs from Washington, D.C. straight westwards across the middle of America almost as if it were a north-south dividing line for America.

One might also liken it to Interstate 95 which runs up and down the eastern coast of the United States or Interstate 35 which runs from the Canadian border down to the Mexican border and thereby running throughout the states of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas Oklahoma and Texas. Interstate 35 effectively splits America between east and west in a sense.

The Ignatian Way allowed for swifter travel from the far-flung outskirts of the Roman Empire to the capital city of Rome. It was the “main” route for business trade and commerce in the eastern half of the Roman Empire. Therefore, we can state that Thessalonica was a strategically located city which had “location, location, location.”

Thessalonica’s importance was due to her location and thus Thessalonica was a wealthy city of great prominence and importance in the Roman empire, thanks in large measure to the Roman super-highway that brought goods and services to and from the city to other regions of the empire.

The Size of the Thessalonica:

The city’s population in the New Testament era of the Apostle Paul’s day was about 200,000. It is one of the few cities of that era that has remained populated and in fact has perhaps grown a little bit during the nearly 2,000 years since Paul’s day with a population today of about 300,000 people. It was the largest city in what is called Macedonia, a key region in the old Roman Empire.

Thessalonica was the largest city in the Macedonian region. Its population was primarily composed of Greeks but there were many ethnic groups living in the city including a large contingent of Jews.

Authorship:

The very first verse of the First epistle or letter to the believers in Thessalonica states that the letter is from the Apostle Paul and his co-workers Silvanus and Timothy. It is thought that perhaps Silvanus was Paul’s handwriting secretary to whom Paul dictated his letter.

There are some liberal theologians who claim there is reason to doubt that Paul actually wrote the letter. Their claims are barely worth even noting as the evidence is overwhelming that Paul wrote the letter.

Internal Evidence For Paul’s Authorship:

#1. There is total consistency of Paul’s language and sentence construction habits that compare perfectly to other of his writings.

#2. The text itself in chapter 1, verse 1, states that Paul is the author should be of the utmost importance.

External Evidence For Paul's Authorship:

#1. The early church fathers attribute the authorship to the Apostle Paul. Church fathers such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and even a somewhat vague reference by Polycarp.

#2. It was included in the Marcion and Muratorian canon of the New Testament at the earliest points. So the very earliest church leaders considered it to be from Paul and not only that, but from the very beginning considered it to be "inspired" or "God-Breathed" ("God exhaled") by the Holy Spirit.

Date of the Writing:

The book of Acts tells us explicitly about Paul's journeys and therefore we know that Paul visited and ministered in Thessalonica for a period somewhere between 2 to 4 weeks. (The text says he stayed 3 Sabbaths).

After Paul's visit to Thessalonica, he traveled on to Corinth. The Book of Acts tell us that Paul was in Corinth when the proconsul Gallio entered his term in office and Paul had apparently then arrived earlier, probably in the Spring of 50 A.D. We know that Paul stayed in Corinth in about 18 months and wrote both of his epistles to the Thessalonians while in Corinth, so this first one, likely occurred not too long after his arrival in Corinth. Why?

Paul didn't spend much time in Thessalonica and apparently Paul and Silvanus traveled together leaving Timothy and Silas behind in Thessalonica for further ministry for a short time. When Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth, he gave a report to Paul (Acts 18:5 and 1st Thessalonians 3: 1-6) which then prompted Paul to write the Thessalonians to correct a misunderstanding. Therefore we can place the date probably writing the first letter in the middle of 50 A.D.

Reason For the Letter:

Paul's brief stay (about 3 weeks) only gave him enough time to lay down the doctrine of Salvation in a solid manner. Acts chapter 17 tells the story of Paul's stay in Thessalonica, where the after about the 3rd week, Paul was just beginning to teach on "eschatology" or the prophecies concerning the Return of Jesus Christ as "king." (Acts 17: 7) That word apparently must have stirred up the hornet's nest. Probably, knowing Paul's manner of teaching, we can surmise that Paul had only just begun to teach the

Thessalonians on the doctrine of prophecy and had only begun to mention the Return of Jesus Christ as King of Kings, when that concept set off a firestorm amongst the non-believing Jews of the Synagogue in Thessalonica. The result of that firestorm was a riot that caused Paul to be arrested and bailed out and kicked out of the city, prematurely, before Paul had a chance to finish teaching the doctrine of unfulfilled prophecy still in the future.

Thus, without a solid foundation, the Thessalonians were later swayed by the words of other teachers into believing false reports and rumors which then prompted Paul to write to the Thessalonians to “straighten” out their misunderstandings and reassure them of the “hope” of Christ’s Return. This then is the reason for the writing of the book.

The letter to the Thessalonians had 4 goals.

#1. To praise and encourage the Thessalonians for their growth in grace and knowledge.

#2. To affirm the fact that the Thessalonians really were believers and to confirm that Paul’s time of ministry in Thessalonica was not in vain but instead worthwhile.

#3. To correct some eschatological errors about prophecy which the Church in Thessalonica had picked up after Paul left due in large measure to the fact that they didn’t have the benefit of hearing all of Paul’s teachings on prophecy because he was essentially “run out of town on a rail” before he could finish up the short course on Prophecy. Thus they had had no completely sound teaching on the whole subject of future predictions yet to come.

#4. To correct some other minor issues that had cropped up in the church.

The Theme of the Epistle:

The theme of the epistle is simple. The theme is of Prophecy concerning the Lord’s Return, or in other words, this book is all about the **“Rapture” of the Church.**

Don’t let anyone fool you into thinking that there is nothing in the New Testament about the “Rapture” of the church. This Epistle is all about that concept. The only problem is that the event Paul describes does not use the Latin word “Rapture” but the concept itself is there in the text and in fact it is the theme running through the entire epistle.

An Overview on the Short Commentary of the First Epistle of Paul To The Thessalonians

As we noted earlier in our introduction, the main theme of Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica is The Return of Jesus Christ. Yet underlying that overall theme are separate underlying themes. There are 9 of these underlying themes. Let's take a look at these various themes before we begin taking a closer look at the epistle itself.

- I. Service to God – Chapter 1: 1-10**
- II. The Gospel Proclaimed – Chapter 2: 1-16**
- III. Paul Relates His Joy, Hope and Crown -- Chapter 2:17-3:5**
- IV. Timothy's Bulletin From Thessalonica – Chapter 3: 6-13**
- V. Christian Life Conduct: – Chapter 4:1-12**
- VI. The Parousia, or The Lord's Return – Chapter 4: 13-18**
- VII. The Day of the Lord as a Thief in the Night - Chapter 5: 1-11**
- VIII. Relating To Other Believers - Reinforcements and Sticking Together – Chapter 5: 12-22**
- IX. Paul's Prayer & A Plea to the Church Chapter 5: 23-28**

The New Testament letters to the churches and individuals always have the standard Greek language letter format. All letters begin with a statement identifying the author of the letter and then to whom the letter is addressed then a greeting is given followed by the body of the letter itself. This is merely standard letter writing protocol in the first century A.D. era. Paul simply follows the standard format of his day. It should be noted that in Paul's original letter, there were no chapters or verses. These have been added centuries later for us to better organize the writings for reference purposes.

As we begin our look at Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica, we should note that in the first chapter Paul recalls the short, spiritual history of the church at Thessalonica. The first three chapters also denote the idea of being in service to God. We see this detailed in chapter 1, verse 9 – "how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." It should also be understood that the epistle can really be divided into 2 parts.

#1. A reminder to the believers in Thessalonica as to how they received the Gospel, sound doctrine and the Word of God. 1:1-3:13.

#2. A reminder of how to live out sound doctrine and the Word of God in their daily lives. 4:1-5:28

Chapter 1:1-10

Theme #1: Service To God

A. Paul's Greeting 1:1

“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here we see names. Paul of course is familiar to us, but what about Silvanus and Timotheus? Well both names are mentioned in Acts 17:1-2 and again in verse 14. These verses tell us that Paul and his two servants, Silvanus and Timotheus (that's Silas & Timothy in English) were the “team” that brought the Gospel to the city of Thessalonica and to those who listened and then believed the Gospel and the sound doctrines which they taught while visiting there.

It should be noted here that the pronoun “we” is used throughout much of this letter. Compare this with 1st Corinthians and you will find this use of the pronoun “we” is a marked contrast to Paul's normal usage in his first letter to the Corinthians. It would seem then that Paul is referring to himself and Silvanus (Silas) and Timotheus (Timothy) as something of co-authors with Paul in this letter.

Most likely it means that Paul dictated his words to either or both men who wrote them down as Paul dictated the words to them.

What's In A Greeting? Power

Paul opens with a powerful revelation that in English might seem rather bland and of little importance. Yet if we look at it in its original Greek form we find some blockbuster information about ourselves and our relationship with God.

Paul begins by noting that the Thessalonians (and by extension, all believers, including us today) were not only dwellers in Thessalonica BUT ALSO dwellers IN GOD, The FATHER and IN The Lord Jesus Christ.

Okay, say you ask, what's the big deal there? Note the importance of some key words. "IN" is a key word. "IN" denotes our relationship to God. We are IN Him. But who is our God? He is our Father.

Okay, so He is our Father and we are IN Him. Is this anything to get terribly excited over? Well, I would happen to think so, when we note that the term "Father" in the Greek language is the word "Patar." (Strong's # 3962) The word means literally in its root form: **NOURISHER or PROTECTOR**. Now the term then means that we are "IN God, the PROTECTOR/NOURISHER.

What then does this tell us about ourselves and our God? As believers we are **IN** a relationship with God who is our Protector and our Nourisher. He protects us and nourishes us. That is exciting when you stop and think about it. Even more so, when you also stop, to think about our salvation, which is **IN Christ Jesus**.

Our position is **IN God**, our protector/nourisher, and **IN The Lord Jesus Christ**. So what does this mean?

**Our position, our eternal existence,
rests within our relationship to God,
who is protecting us in that relationship.**

Now, keep in mind that God is sovereign, omnipotent and in complete control. How is it then that IF, and He is indeed our protector, especially for eternal life, how is it then that we could "lose" that eternal life **IF, He is, protecting us?** He would be less than doing his job in protecting us IF we could "lose" our salvation. This statement is but yet one of many small indicators given to us, throughout the New Testament epistles telling us that salvation is not something that can be lost. IF so, God is no longer Sovereign nor Protecting us.

IF we remember Ephesians 2:8-9, we see this far more clearly.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast".

In the above verse, "grace" is the word "charis" in Greek which means "un-earned" and or "undeserved" gift or favor. Faith is the word "pistuoh" which means "to rely upon." "Saved" is a Greek "Perfect Participle" which means that it refers to some event that happened in a point of time in the past and continues on into not only the present but also

on into the future, ad infinitum. A perfect participle in the Greek language is an ongoing eternal process, with eternal results that cannot be voided by anyone for any reason or any thing. A **perfect participle** in Greek grammar means it **is an infinite, eternal, unbreakable process from which there is no exit.**

In this verse, The Holy Spirit, through Paul is telling us that **we cannot get out of salvation once we're in it. We cannot lose our salvation by anything we do, once we're in the process, which comes by the mental attitude of believing or relying on Christ's substituting Himself in our place. We rely on the fact of Christ's work on our behalf for our salvation.** The Greek grammar of this passage in Ephesians makes it an absolute fact that we cannot lose our salvation once we truly understand and accept it. We can do nothing to earn it. We can do nothing to lose it. This however does not give us a license to do anything we want. We're not free to go out and "sin" all we want, but even if we do, it doesn't remove us from salvation.

Now, God, being our protector, is seeing to it, through his sovereign, omnipotence that he "keeps on keeping us" in that perfect participle situation of being eternally saved.

It's something akin to being placed in a washing machine that never stops washing us. **We are being perpetually cleansed** and the passage goes on to note that this process is **not accomplished by any thing we can do. It is NOT by works.**

It is not by anything we can do to earn it. **We can do NOTHING to earn this.**

The concept is further underscored by the terms "**Grace**" which **means literally, undeserved and unearned gift.** The concept of it happening through **Faith** or "**reliance**" also further underscores that **we can do nothing to gain eternal life.** It is a gift freely given, but it cost God everything and He is giving it to us freely.

Now that should be especially exciting news to any one reading this who sometimes worries that he or she might do something that will cause them to "lose" their salvation. We can do nothing to earn salvation and **we can do NOTHING, TO LOSE Salvation.** God is eternally protecting us from losing salvation.

In addition to that, God as our father is also nourishing us or constantly providing us with nourishment. Now, having said that, it should also be

noted that we, just like infants in a high chair, may choose sometimes to ignore the spiritual spoon filled with baby food, (maybe like an airplane coming in for a landing in the baby's mouth) except that sometimes a baby chooses not to open his mouth and accept the food?

Sometimes, babies prefer to "play" with their food. I've noticed that little ones sometimes have a fascination for playing with things like peas, or cereal tidbits (like Cheerios cereal). So too with us, when we revert to being spiritual babies and choose not to take in nourishment.

Such rejection does not mean we're no longer babies nor are we no longer the child of our father. It just means, we're not intaking our food as we should be doing. If as a toddler, you stick your tongue in a live electrical outlet despite your father's command not to do it, what happens? Humans may disown a child but it doesn't change the fact that the father did father the child. So disobedient activities in God's family does not mean we are no longer His child. God does NOT disinherit His own.

It doesn't mean we're no longer part of the family.

So too with salvation. We are in a sinwashing machine from which we cannot escape nor get out of as the Greek Grammar of Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly explains in its original Greek format. The text is telling us that we who are believers are being perpetually washed in the substitutionary atonement process and the detergent is the blood of Jesus Christ. We cannot escape from His washing machine.

Now, before concluding this, I suspect someone will object and try to claim that my comments are taking a verse out of context. This is not the case. The context of that passage is crystal clear and unequivocal. It is the heart of salvation wrapped up in a nutshell, or in cyber-space terminology, the verse content has been "Zip-formatted." The entire book of Romans as well as Galatians are mere elaborations on Ephesians 2: 8-9. Galatians screams out loudly that salvation is not based upon merit either positively or negatively, even though some claimed that we must still follow the Law for salvation or "brownie points" with God afterwards.

God does not work on the brownie point system for salvation nor for living the Christian life thereafter. There are some heresies out there teaching that if you as a Christian do something spiritual for God, you therefore are entitled to a reward of money, or health, or whatever. It's called by some as the Prosperity Gospel. It is nothing less than sheer blasphemy against the true Gospel.

God is never beholden to us for what we do. God says through Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 64: 6 "But we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as **"filthy rags"** (literally, 2 Hebrew words **"filthy**

=Strong's #5708= "ayd" = to set a period, i.e. menstrual flux/flow; & "rags" = Strong's # 899 = "begh-ed" = a piece of clothing, a rag.

When combining the two words it means = an old, used woman's menstrual cloth – indicating it smells to high heaven and is totally obnoxious)

This is how God views our **"righteous actions"** or our good deeds. If God is really using the "brownie point system" then we're all in deep, deep trouble, because under his standards, even our best, most goodly things – smell to high heaven and are obnoxious to Him.

Fortunately for us, God doesn't use a "brownie point system" because the "brownie-point" system is anti-grace and the only thing that can please God is His grace on our behalf because as imperfect beings, we cannot be perfect ourselves.

The idea that God has a rewards program based upon our "earning it" is blasphemy. The idea that we can twist God's arm is also blasphemy.

Conclusion: Just relax and remember, God has taken care of our sin problem once and for all. Just relax on that fact of eternal life. He freely gives us all the gifts we need, based upon grace not our own efforts. So much for the TV and Radio preachers that entice people to send in money to their ministries and God will be obligated to do something in return to the giver. This is absolutely, positively false. It is blasphemous. It is anti-grace, and anti-Christ in every respect. It is often called "The Prosperity Gospel" and if will derail anyone from the grace-relationship with God.

What Else Can We Learn From This Greeting?

Now, having said all of this, stop and think for a minute. All of this truth just came from one seemingly innocuous and perhaps seemingly irrelevant letter greeting. Yet, God in the Spirit, packed that seemingly innocuous greeting with a boatload of marvelous truth.

What amazing Information In a letter greeting

So, what can we learn from this? Even the most seemingly bland verse can be packed with immensely powerful truth. Let's learn to not overlook what seems to be just ordinary words in the Bible. If we do, we're bound to miss something profoundly important.

Now, the Holy Spirit through Paul guided him to make that powerful point in that first verse in order to assure the Thessalonians that their salvation is secure "In Christ" because the Father is doing the protecting and nourishing. If it were true for the believers in Thessalonica, so too then it is

true for all believers for all time including ourselves.

In a final point on this verse, note also that “IN Christ” is describing what a Christian is—someone who bears a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as well as with the Father. It is also describing his “position” in relationship to Christ. He is IN Christ. IN Christ is a basic New Testament description seen throughout the epistles of the New Testament.

B. Paul Gives Thanks 1:2-4

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;”

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

Paul indicates here that he prays for other believers on a continual basis. Prayer for other believers was of prime importance for Paul and it apparently occupied much of his time. This passage is not the only time Paul mentions that he offers up continual prayer for other believers. You will find other references of Paul mentioning his continual prayer for believers in Romans 1:9, I Corinthians 1:4, Philippians 1:3-4, and Colossians 1:3.

What does it mean to give thanks?

In our English language we use the phrase “thank you,” normally after something has already been given to us. Paul reveals here how he views the concept of thankfulness and faith. He gives thanks for what God has already done for the believers in Thessalonica. He habitually gives thanks to God for what God has done for these believers. Here he notes that he is doing this “always.” It is not just a one-time event, but rather on a continuing basis.

Paul also uses three key words in a word trilogy.

Those words are: Faith, Love, and Hope. It is interesting to note that Paul also uses this trilogy at a later point in time when he sends his first letter to

the Corinthians in chapter 13:13, but he does so in a different word order. Perhaps in that instance he remembers his time at Corinth when he wrote to the Thessalonians and used a different word order.

Note that Paul uses the word “hope” as the last word in the trilogy to the Thessalonians. Why is it the last word used in the trilogy?

The answer can be understood when we consider his letter to the Corinthians. In his letter to the Corinthians, love is used lastly. Why? Because love is the theme of the chapter.

So what does the word “hope” mean? In this instance it is modified by the words “patience of” so we’ll examine “patience” also.

Patience = “Hupomenas” = Strong’s Code # 5281 = “endurance,” “patience,” “to wait continuously.” “to endure or wait patiently.”

Hope = “Elpidos” = Strong’s Code # 1680 = “certainty of knowledge that something is going to happen, i.e. expectation, certainty of expectation based upon the character of whom one is placing the expectations on.”

So that in verse 3, Paul is saying we are “waiting patiently with expectant certainty in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, our Father.” Or better stated – “...**Remembering ... that you are waiting patiently with absolute certainty in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, our Father.**”

Paul’s entire letter to the Thessalonians revolves on the theme of “hope” of the Return of Christ. Thus, when Paul uses a word trilogy, he puts the word denoting the theme at the end of the trilogy. So that, Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians is one of “hope”

It should be noted that each chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Thessalonians mentions the Return of Christ. We see it in chapter 1, verse 10; chapter 2, verse 19, chapter 3, verse 13; chapter 4, verses 17-18 and in chapter 5, verse 23. What then can we say about Paul’s use of the trilogy? The trilogy is NOT in itself the focal point that Paul is trying to make. Paul’s emphasis is rather on what each part of the trilogy produces.

Faith produces work.
Love produces labor.
Hope produces stability.

In verse 4, Paul uses the word “knowing” and in doing so he injects the concept of “confidence” as to why he is confident that the Thessalonians

are among God's elected ones. This confidence will be expressed for the next 6 verses.

C. Paul's Confidence 1:5-10

Why is Paul confident? He is confident the Thessalonians are among the elect because of HOW God's Word came to them. See verse 5

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

The word “FOR” introduces the reason for Paul's confidence and assurance for believing the Thessalonians were among God's elected ones. Remember that the Gospel may be understood from various perspectives. Romans 1:1 speaks of the “*gospel of God.*” This phrase notes the origin of the message is being from God. Romans 1:3 views the Gospel from the standpoint of its theme – concerning “*His Son.*” Revelation 14:6 notes the idea of the “*Eternal Gospel*” which stresses its duration. Acts 20:24 gives us the basis for calling it ***the Gospel of the grace of God.*** Paul calls it “Our Gospel” because he, Paul, is the proclaimer of it.

The word “**Gospel**” is the Greek word – **Euangelion = Strong's # 2098.** It is a compound word in Greek, i.e. two words combined into a single word.

Eu = Good

Angellion = Message – We get the English word “angel” from this term and it means messenger.

So that, Euangellion means = “good message.”

In the case of Christianity, it means the “good message” of salvation, by grace through faith, not by works. It is a freely given gift of God. That is “good news.”

The term stresses the content of the message. Notice that Paul does **NOT** say “**We came to you with the Gospel.**” Instead, he uses the phrase: “**The Gospel came to you.**” What does this change do to the concept? It focuses on the message itself and not the messengers. The Gospel is never about the messenger. It is always about the message.

The term “word only” indicates that the Gospel indicates that the Gospel came to them by the supernatural power and work of the Holy Spirit in causing the message to be understood. The following diagram shows how effective communication of the gospel takes place. It is the combination of all the natural aspects of communication of the work of the Holy Spirit.

“OUR”
Speaker

“GOSPEL”
Message

“TO YOU”
Hearers

Everything necessary for communication can be found in the diagram above, yet it can break down at any point. So what is involved?

The speaker must make a clear presentation. The message must be worthwhile. The hearers must put forth the effort to listen. Now, in Thessalonica, all of the above took place **BUT** it was in *“word only”* until it came *“in power and in the Holy Spirit.”*

So what happened? The Holy Spirit touched the speaker in verse 5 and the Holy Spirit touched the hearers in verse 6, as we will see momentarily. The message of the Gospel came in *“power”* because it is the power itself. (see Romans 1:16)). What is the result of all of this? The result is found in the words *“full conviction.”*

Now, Paul had confidence because of how God’s Word was received by them. We can see this by understanding verse 6.

“And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”

The Word of God had changed the direction of the lives of the Thessalonians. Note the word *“followers”* is the Greek word *“mimatai”* **Strong’s # 3402** = from which we get the English word *“mimic.”* The word is used six times in the New Testament, used to set four examples. We are told to **IMITATE GOD** – Ephesians 5:1.

We are told to imitate Paul in 1st Thessalonians 1:6 plus 1st Corinthians 4:16-17 and 11:1.

We are told to imitate other churches – see 1st Thessalonians 2:14. We are also told to imitate other believers in Hebrews 6:12.

There is a key verb phrase to be noted here in verse 6.

It is the participle – **“having received.”** This phrase is actually the Greek word **“Dechomai,” = Strong’s # 1209** = which means **“to welcome, to embrace, to make one’s own.”**

In the case of the Thessalonians, they quickly suffered persecution on their first reception of the Truth, (See Acts 17:6) after Paul had left them (See 1st Thessalonians 2:14-17) and as Paul is now writing. (See 1st Thessalonians 3:2-4)

So that, the Thessalonians were imitating Paul and the Lord and embraced their own affliction, with sorrow??? NO – They embraced their affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit. In other words, by imitating Paul and the Lord, they were able to embrace their afflictions with joy because of the Holy Spirit working through them and helping them to see and understand which results in joy.

Now in verses 7 and 8, Paul was confident because of how God’s Word was handled by the Thessalonians. Vss 7-8.

“So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

Verse 7 tells us that God’s Word was reproduced locally by their examples to other believers. We see this by the use of the words – **“you became an example to all believers”** and to whom were they examples? They were examples to the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. These are names for two parts of the nation of Greece.

The word **“example”** in the Greek is the word **“tupos”** from which we get the English word **“type.”** It means: **“to be a model.” Strong’s # 5179”.**

Verse 8 tells us that God’s Word was reproduced “Universally.”

The Thessalonian Church is a good example of New Testament missions. The words in Verse 8, “from you” points to the origin of the missions. The words in Verse 8 – “the word of the Lord” indicates the message. The term “faith toward God” indicates its image, and the term “every place” shows the extent of their missionary zeal and activity.

Verse 9 through 10 tells us that Paul was confident because of the way God’s word had affected the Thessalonians.

The term “**entering in**” is the Greek word “**eisodos**” **Strong’s Code # 1529** (it is the opposite of the word “exodus”) and it means – “**the way into.**” Or “**an entrance, or road.**”

The details of Paul’s arrival to Thessalonica are found in Chapter 2 of the next section. We will soon learn how Paul went to a large pagan city where there were no believers and in about three weeks formed a local assembly.

It is significant that Paul states that they turned “to God from idols,” NOT “from idols to God.” Why the former and not the latter? The first phrase indicates and emphasizes that salvation is by grace, while the latter indicates a salvation by works.

As we continue in our commentary on this epistle each chapter in the epistle contains something relative to the Return of Jesus Christ, hence our reference to this epistle as the “Rapture” Epistle.

Chapter 2: 1-16

Theme #2: The Gospel Proclaimed Amid Joy, Hope & A Crown

An Overview of Chapter 2

“Messengers of Truth” Proclaiming the Gospel At Thessalonica

With chapter 2 of this first epistle to the Thessalonians, we have two elements at work in the chapter.

- #1. Spiritual Success
- #2. An Apology or Defense

Paul's establishment of a church in Thessalonica was one of the greater spiritual success stories of the New Testament. Why do we say this?

As we noted in the introduction to this Epistle, Thessalonica was a very large and important city within the Roman Empire. The city was not only large but diverse in terms of religions being practiced. There were the “Oriental ‘mystery’ religions” being practiced. Greek philosophy was a very heavy influence throughout the region. Local gods and goddesses were worshipped. There was a very high level of “religiousness” that existed in the city of Paul's day. These religions contained a great wealth of piety, high levels of morality and principles among the residents. This was where Eastern religion met Western logic. The Roman government at that time was tolerant of various religions, as long as those religions did not interfere with Roman “peace.”

If we could step into a time machine and travel back in time to that era and watch Paul's efforts, as we walked down the streets of Thessalonica, we would see all manner of religiousness on the streets. We would see religious leaders of all types of creeds, from various nations within the Empire's realm as well as popular philosophers, and various occult practitioners along with the perhaps the “nut” cases attempting to solicit passersby for money and allegiance to their brand of thinking. This of

course, included not only the religious but all types of merchants including not only the “honest” merchants but also the crooks and swindlers. It was a mix of people who honestly believed in what they proclaimed on the city streets as well as those who were out for merely personal gain.

Spiritual Success in Thessalonica

Amidst this backdrop comes the Apostle Paul and his assistants with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to present to a city that had never heard the Gospel, at least that we know of. There is no record nor evidence that prior to Paul's appearance in the city any resident had already heard the gospel or had become a believer in the Gospel. As we noted in the introduction to this commentary, Paul's visit at Thessalonica apparently lasted less than a month, yet in that short an amount of time, a body of believers was established who over time, exhibited great spiritual maturity and growth. Yet, within months after his departure, Paul found himself needing to write to the local group of believers in Thessalonica.

Defending Truth

Why did Paul find it necessary to write back to the assembly of believers in Thessalonica? Why is it that Paul needed to remind them of the honesty of his message as found in his statement in chapter 2 verse 3? Why in verse 4, does Paul remind the Thessalonians that he is not acting to please men but rather to please God? In verse 5, we find Paul reminding them that he does not have greedy motives. Also in verse 5, Paul calls upon God to witness his truthfulness. Why does Paul make such statements in these three verses?

We must remember that Chapter 2 is an “apology” or defense. The word used in Greek is the word **“apologia.”** It means **“defense.”** Paul's passage here is one of defending his actions, attitudes and motivation. The passage is what we would term an “apologetic passage,” meaning it is a defense of Paul's actions, attitudes and motives. Why?

As we noted earlier, religion in that city was primarily associated with the concept of “greed” and of religious men attempting to gain their own personal wealth. Within this greedy environment in Thessalonica, Paul proclaimed the Gospel and the sound doctrines of God's Truth. It was only natural for many to assume that Paul's actions, attitudes and motives were no different than any other religious preacher that infested the city of Thessalonica. Therefore, Paul decided that it was incumbent upon him to

explain himself, as a defense against their assumptions that Paul was no different than the rest of the religious leaders that permeated the city. By stating the purpose of his actions, attitude and motivations, Paul could then assure the believers in Thessalonica that his message was not founded on the basis of greed.

It appears that Paul feels the need to defend himself from what we infer were apparently lies being told to the believers in Thessalonica about Paul. We are not sure who is spreading the lies, but apparently some one or more people were spreading statements about Paul that were untrue. Paul felt the need to address these accusations to prevent any future misunderstandings.

Now with this introduction in mind, let's take a closer look at the text, itself.

A. The Focus on the Messenger: 2:1-12

The Persistence of Paul – verses 1-2.

“For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

“But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.”

A FLAG WORD FOR CONTEXT:

We have a “flag” word which starts the chapter. A flag word is a ‘connecting’ word that means: “Hook me on to the words I had just stated.” In this case, the word “for” means that we need to hook what will follow to the last thoughts that started in chapter 1, verse 9. This then gives us context. Any time you see a “flag” word it means to go back and make sure you’re established in the prior context with what is about to be mentioned next, hence the idea of a flag word acting as a “flag” that connects one thought with another to establish context.

Reception

The word “FOR” begins our chapter 2. The word “For” is connecting us with the context of verse 9 in the prior chapter. In other words, the context

to be connected to is the phrase in verse 9: “what kind of a reception we had with you.”

The word “**reception**” is the Greek word “**eisodos,**” = **Strong’s # 1529** and it is a compounded noun word meaning “**way**” or “**road**” plus the preposition meaning “**into.**” The first words of the sentence are “you yourselves” and are in an emphatic position. This sentence construction then means = “*you yourselves, in contrast to my detractors.*”

Now, Paul is appealing to his reader’s knowledge. He does this for two reasons.

#1. It shows Paul’s confidence in them. Paul had no fear that they would believe the lies that were being told about him.

#2. It shows Paul’s confidence in the facts of the case. The facts concerning Paul’s integrity were common knowledge and that common knowledge contained everything needed to vindicate Paul against such lies and or allegations.

Verse 1. Paul Evangelized Face to Face, One on One.

The words “**our entrance in unto you**” show that Paul was the initiator of the relationship with the believers at Thessalonica. Now this is important because it is different from the Evangelists of our day who get on TV or set up a tent and ask for unbelievers to tune in or come to the meeting.

Paul’s evangelism was different. **Paul was aggressive in evangelism** – he went out where the unbeliever was. The preposition “to” in the Greek is the Greek word “**pros,**” which **emphasizes – CLOSE CONTACT**, as in ‘face to face’ activity.

This activity was not done in vain. Paul’s activity had positive results not empty results.

Verse 2. Mistreatment at Philippi. Paul’s Example For Us Today and for believers in the Tribulation Period.

Paul states in verse 2 that he was mistreated at Philippi. Acts 16:16-24 describes what happened to Paul and Silas (Silvanus). They were dragged into the market place and severely beaten with rods before being thrown into prison and bound at their feet in stocks. Such a treatment would surely stop anyone who was merely out for greedy gain. This was not the case with Paul and Silas (Silvanus) who were acting and promoting the Gospel with pure motives devoid of any greedy desires.

The words “**to speak unto you**” are from the Greek root word “**Lah-Lay-Say**” which means “all speech.” The Greek term refers to having a state of mind from which words flow freely. In other words, torture and mistreatment did not seal Paul’s mouth. He didn’t shut up. He kept right on proclaiming in every word, the Gospel. The torture and mistreatment did not shut him up. He just kept right on talking.

HOW TO RESPOND TO TORTURE: Paul’s Example.

Question:

Would you “shut up” and quit proclaiming the Gospel if you were being tortured for witnessing to others?

Perhaps, most of us would probably be naturally inclined to want to grab a gun or a weapon and defend ourselves or else “shut up.” This was not Paul’s example. Instead, Paul’s example was in all respects, identical to those of Christ and of the early church martyr, Stephen, who also refused to physically defend themselves. Paul’s life gives us an example of how to respond to persecution and torture, which is **to keep right on giving the gospel** and to **reject the use of physical force** as a defense.

This is important especially in our time as Christians around the world are facing an increase in persecution. In fact, many American Christians would claim that the “spiritual” thing to do is to grab a gun and fight in our defense. Such notions are anti-Biblical despite the rants and rhetoric of some radio and TV evangelists or Christian survivalist talk-show hosts who claim to be Christians. Do not fall for their false teachings, which stand in total opposition to God’s word and to the sacrifices made by the early church. We must remember that we are not “wrestling against flesh and blood but we are engaged in spiritual warfare which requires the use of spiritual weapons.

Some Christian authors and right-wing talk show hosts even speak of the need to buy guns and physically fight off the Satanic forces of the Antichrist during the Tribulation period. Again, such thinking is anti-Biblical and goes against the teachings and examples of not only Jesus Christ, but also the examples of ALL the apostles, disciples and early church fathers, none of whom took up weapons in a physical defense. Instead, they allowed themselves to be slaughtered like sheep as a testimony before not only the human race, but their non-violent responses acted as a Cosmic testimony to the entire Universe.

OURS IS A SPIRITUAL BATTLE – Not Physical

Remember Ephesians 6: 12 – *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”*

There is nothing in the scriptures, nor in the prophecies, that command us to take up physical weapons against the forces of the Antichrist.

The shed blood of a non-violent martyr is more powerful than all the physical weapons in the world combined, because ours is a spiritual warfare.

It is one thing to have weapons to ward off wild animals, which might threaten us, but it's another thing to have weapons such as guns to be used against human beings intent on installing the government of the Antichrist. The use of such physical weapons negates the power of our spiritual weapons including our non-violent obedience unto death. Satan wins when use force. Satan loses when we effectively use the spiritual weapons that God has given us.

Should persecution and martyrdom loom before us in our home countries, including even in America, the only response to this spiritual war in the physical realm is the response of non-violence as a testimony to our faith in Jesus Christ.

By using our spiritual weapons effectively in a non-violent manner, non-believing individuals might be so moved by our sacrificial faith that they too come to accept the Gospel and eternal life, whereas physical, violent opposition might preclude their ever coming to a saving knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such selfless sacrifices are **spiritual 'nuclear bombs'** that only help lead to the defeat of Satan, whereas guns only serve to advance Satanic victory.

We must remember that Satan took a serious beating during the first century when he engaged human forces in violent persecution and torture against Christians. Why? Because in the early church, the believers, including the apostles recognized the battle was spiritual not physical and therefore responded with spiritual weapons to defeat Satan. The result was the spread of the Gospel and not its extermination, which was Satan's goal. He lost but he's never gotten over it.

Satan has not seemed to learn his lesson either. Why do we say that? Because, the prophecies indicate greater persecution and torture will occur during the time of the Antichrist.

QUESTIONS:

Which response to torture takes more courage?

Which is a greater testimony for the Gospel -- defending oneself with physical weapons, or spiritually allowing ourselves to become martyrs for the Gospel through non-violent testimony?

Paul's non-violent approach was bold.

In Paul's case, he responded by continuing to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This boldness is not a natural thing for human beings. Note that Paul's use of the term **Lah-Lay-Say** as used in the New Testament was ALWAYS used in connection with proclaiming the Gospel. Mistreatment and torture merely kept Paul giving the gospel. It didn't shut him up. This is boldness.

In verse 2, there is a prepositional phrase attached "in our God" indicates that this boldness is sourced from God and therefore it is humanly "unnatural." If Paul were merely a self-seeking religious leader, why would he continue to proclaim a message that only brought him suffering? The answer, obviously, was that Paul was not self-serving, nor greedy. He therefore is reminding the Thessalonian believers that his motives are therefore, pure of heart and have a divine origination.

Paul's Message: 2:3-6**Paul's Message was Truth- verses 2: 3-4**

"For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

Paul's Message was from the Right Source. Verse 3

The words "not of deceit" tells us that the message came from Truth. The preposition, "FROM" is the Greek word "EK" which means "out of" and indicates a source or origin. Therefore, Paul's exhortations come NOT from error, but the exact opposite – Truth.

Paul's Message was Pure – Verse 3

The words, “not of uncleanness” is the Greek word “akatharsis.” It was most frequently used of sexual impurity, **BUT NOT** the kind of sexual impurity we would think of today. It does not refer to common sexual misconduct like we see today. Rather, the word referred to **RELIGIOUS SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**. You see, the “Mystery Religions” of Greece originated in Babylon, from the “mystery” religion of the **chief Babylonian goddess, Ishtar, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS**. Ishtar’s religion involved engaging in religious ceremonial sexual intercourse with a Temple priestess or priest who became physically “possessed” by the spirit of the fallen angel, Ishtar. During that activity, sometimes, spiritual “revelations” or false spiritual truths were given to the worshipper while entwined with the temple priestess or priest. Thus the term used here in verse 3 indicates that Paul’s truth did not come from such an origin.

Paul's Message was Honest. – Verse 3

The word “**guile**” was the Greek word “**do-loh.**” It was used for the concept of baiting in order to catch fish. So Paul is basically stating that Paul’s message did not use bait, or gimmicks. The power of Paul’s gospel message was God’s power not that of mere gimmicks. It was Divine Power that was the empowerment of the Gospel.

Paul's Message was to Please God, not Men – Verse 3

Paul makes it quite plain here. His goal was not to please men but rather to please God. Isn’t it sad, that in today’s Church, especially in America, most pastors and evangelists are attempting to modify God’s truth, to please men and entice them to attend church, in the vain notion that in doing so, they might be saved. Such thinking is contrary to Biblical teaching.

Paul's Message was a Trust. Verse 4.

Verse 4 proves the three points that Paul made in verse 3. The message could not be error because Paul was entrusted with it by God. It could not be impure because it was approved by God. It could not be the message of a trickster or con artist because it was aimed at pleasing God, not men.

Paul's Message was Pure. Verse 5.

“For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness.”

Paul's Message was Pure as to Methodology.

Paul continues in verse 5 by reaffirming the purity of the message by pointing to his method of delivering the message. We see this by his use of the word **“FLATTERING.”**

The term for **“Flattering”** in the Greek is the word, **“kolakeias.”** **(Strong's #2850)**. In the literal sense, a **cloak or garment**. The term in English is somewhat misleading and different from the Greek concept. The word in Greek describes **the use of fair and honest words designed to gain one's own way**. So here, Paul is telling us that he didn't use honest words in order to gain his own way or to garner a result that was to his liking.

Paul's Message was pure as to Motive

The word in the KJV, **“cloak”** is the same as the Greek word, meaning literally a cloak or covering. It is used in the context for anything that covers one's real motives. So Paul is saying to the Thessalonians and to us that his motive was pure in that **nothing was cloaked or covered up** as to his motives. Instead, his message was putting forth something that is true and plausible. The message does not hide his intent.

The term **“covetousness”** is the compound Greek word, **“Pleonexias.”** **Strong's Code # 4124**. It is composed of two words meaning – **“to have”** and **“more.”** It refers to the idea **of the desire to have more of something. It is insatiable desire..** When it gets more, it wants even more, and when it gets much more, it wants even much more still. In the epistle to the Colossians, Paul calls it **“idolatry”** because it worships the desires of man.

Paul's Message was Unencumbered – Verse 6.

“Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.”

Paul's message was unencumbered by any desire for human praise. The word “nor” is a negative word and it is combined with the present participle **“sought we glory”** denies that Paul was in the practice or habit of seeking human praise. In other words, Paul is stating that neither he nor his associates used their proclaiming of the Gospel so that they could gain any human glory.

Paul's message was unencumbered by the use of undue pressure.

The phrase, **“We might have been burdensome”** is literally meaning **“having power to be men of weight.”**

No pressure was applied to anyone to believe.

There was no arm-twisting by Paul or his associates.

No pleading, no whining, no begging to “believe, oh please, oh please, do so today, before it's too late.”

No, there was none of that type of pleading or pressure used by Paul or his associates.

This stands in stark contrast to what we see all too often in today's churches and in the huge Evangelistic rallies. Even Billy Graham's crusades would make some sort of pleading attempt. NOT PAUL. No such pleadings were ever done by Paul.

To Paul such an idea was undignified and demeaned the dignity of the Gospel and it demeaned the dignity of God, Himself. By refusing to stoop to such tactics, Paul safeguarded the dignity of God, and the office in which God had placed Paul, namely that of an Apostle.

Paul's Demeanor 2: 7-12

A Description of Paul's Demeanor – verse 7a

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:”

There is a textual problem with one word in this verse. Some ancient manuscripts show the word **“nay-pi-oy,”** while other ancient manuscripts show the word **“ay-pi-oy.”**

The first word means **“babe”** while the second word means **“gentle.”** It would appear that some copyist who dutifully was copying (they didn't have photo-copy machines back 2,000 years ago) made a mental error or an inadvertent slip of the pen (quill or stylus) when copying the word in question.

Most scholars believe that the original word can be determined by context. The use of the term **“babe”** (which has the **“n”** consonant added, making it **“babe”** and not **“gentle”**) makes little sense in the sentence. The context of the verse seems to argue for the original word as being **“gentle”** since if the word **“babe”** was used it would be introducing a **‘mixed metaphor.’** How is it that Paul could be a **“babe”** and also a **“nursing mother?”** Furthermore, Paul states in 2nd Timothy 2:24 that this requirement of gentleness should be present in all servants of Christ.

Paul's Demeanor Illustrated – verse 7b

“even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”

The word **“NURSE”** is the Greek word – **(Strong's #5162) “Trophos”** is from the Greek **word # 5160 = Trophay = “nourishment, food.”** **Trophos** means literally **“nurse”** or **to provide nourishment or food.**

Cherisheth in the Greek means literally **“to keep warm.”** Also note that the pronoun is in the possessive, indicating the children are hers. Thus, the verse actually means and connotes the idea of a nursing mother.

So that, Paul's demeanor is likened to that of a nursing mother who tenderly cares for her children, indicating that Paul genuinely cares for his fellow believers in Thessalonica like a nursing mother cares for her children. In other words, Paul wants to make sure they are fed with good and appropriate spiritual food so that they can grow in grace.

Paul's Demeanor Practiced. Verse 8.

“So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.”

The phrase **“So being affectionately desirous”** is the translation of a **Greek participle** that is found only here in the New Testament and apparently was rarely, used in the first century world. It is found in the Greek Septuagint in the Job 3:2 passage. It is the word found in **Strong's Concordance** as **Code # 2442**. It is listed by Dr. Strong as the word **“himeiromai”** however in my research, I found no Greek manuscripts the word spelled that way. Instead the word is spelled **“homeiromai”** in all Greek Mss. Both spellings have the same meaning in which **the word expresses great depth of feeling and an intense longing for in a loving way.**

The imperfect tense verb **“we were willing to have”** alerts us to what was actually done, including not only the imparting of the Gospel, but also of imparting their own souls to the Thessalonians. The word **“dear”** in the Greek is the word **“Agape”** which is the specifically Christian quality of deep, spiritual love.

REVIEW:

Paul is basically reminding the Thessalonians of his deep love for them, spiritually. This is part of his reminder to them of who he is, as the messenger of the Gospel and sound doctrine to them. He is basically refuting the lies and or allegations of others attempting to discredit him and his ministry to the Thessalonians. However, he is not yet done with his “defense” of himself and his ministry against such allegations.

Paul's Demeanor Recalled – Verse 9

“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”

This verse is describing Paul's dedication to ministering unto the believers at Thessalonica. He is reminding them and making them remember and making them aware again of what he had done while with them. This dedication is something that they were aware of and are now called upon to remember that dedication which worked night and day on their behalf. In other words, Paul put in long hours, night and day on their behalf.

Paul's Demeanor Reviewed – 2:10-12

In Relationship to himself – verse 10

“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.”

Paul uses three adverbs to describe his conduct and those of his associates.

“hosias” = devout. An inner disposition that honors God.

“dikaios” = correct conduct.

“amempios” = a condition of life which no just accusations can be made.

Paul is stating the he both believed in behaved according to the Gospel.

In Relationship to the Thessalonians – verses 11-12.

“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

“That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

Now Paul is advancing the earlier family metaphor from that of a nursing mother to that of an instructing father. The phrase “every one of you” points to the individual and personal encouragement Paul wishes to give. Paul speaks of believers walking worthy of God and then he turns it around to the work of God for believers. These two concepts are inseparable = we are to honor Him and it's His very own calling that makes this possible. God is both the enabler and initiator of the Christian life.

We've now completed the first section of Paul's second theme in his first letter to the Thessalonians. This second theme focused on the proclaiming of the Gospel. The first part of this second theme was the focus on the messenger of the Gospel. The second and final part of this second theme focuses on the Hearers of the Gospel.

B. Focus on the Hearers of the Gospel 2:13-16

The Word of God Welcomed – verse 13

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

The Response to the Word – verse 13a

Remember, the theme of this chapter so far is the proclamation of the Gospel in Thessalonica. The Divine origin of Paul’s message is emphasized in verses 2 and 8 by calling it The Gospel of God. That the message of Divine authority is firmly believed by Paul is now underscores the Thessalonians understanding of that fact also. The message was Divinely originated and the Thessalonians accepted that as fact also.

What are the implications of this for us today? The authority of Scripture has at least three implications.

#1. Its nature should determine its priority. If we neglect Scripture we then neglect the only infallible source of truth that has been given to us.

#2. Its nature should determine our method of approaching it. Each word and phrase should be carefully analyzed for precise meaning. Human study should honor Divine care.

#3. Its nature should determine our response. Infallible truth calls for a faith response.

Another Slight Problem With the KJV Translation:

Two words are used to describe the response of the Thessalonians to the word of God. We are told that they “**received**” it. However, the KJV uses the word properly the first time it is used in the verse. “...**when ye received the word of God...**” then its second usage is not the best nor clearest understanding of the Greek word that is used. Let’s take a closer look.

The word “**received**” in the phrase, “when ye **received** the word of God” is the Greek word “**paralobontes.**” It is **Strong’s Code #3880** which means literally, “**to take to one’s side.**” It also can be translated as “**to take**” or “**to receive to one’s self.**” So the KJV use of “received” is

probably the more readable term to use in translating without being too wordy.

However, the second time **“received”** is used, in the following phrase, **“...ye received it not as...”** has some problems. First of all, **“it”** and **“as”** are not found in the original text per se. The use of **“it”** is however implied in the Greek.

My point here is for the KJV-only crowd who likes to boast improperly that the KJV translators never added to, nor subtracted from the KJV because they translated perfectly, that here is but another of numerous examples where the KJV committee did not perfectly translate the original text.

Of course, these critical defenders of the KJV would like us to believe that some of the original manuscripts were more reliable and that today, our newer translations use inferior manuscripts more recently found that are older manuscripts that are unreliable. It's an insane defense, but we're not going to digress farther. The point is that the KJV translation is not perfect either, as the translators themselves admitted in their preface. Having made the point, let's resume our look at the second use of **“received”** in the KJV.

The phrase **“...ye received it not as...”** – here the word for received in the Greek text is the word **“edexasthe”** it roots back to **“dechomai”** = **Strong's Code # 1209**. The word here can mean **“received”** in some instances – but and particularly within the context, especially of a similar term – this second usage is indicating more than simply received – it was **welcomed warmly**, or **embraced, approved**, not rejected, also as **to make one's own.**

In other words, Paul uses a different term here to convey the idea that not only did the Thessalonians receive it – they welcomed it with open arms. So that, the KJV misses the main point Paul is trying to make here – that not only did the Thessalonians receive Paul's teaching from them, they welcomed his teaching warmly with open arms. In other words, they received it enthusiastically.

It is not to say that the KJV here is totally wrong, but its not conveying the fullest meaning that Paul was expressing. Herein lies an example of a problem for any translation of the Bible from its original language to any other language as a readable translation. Translations are not capable of perfectly transmitting all the nuances and subtle meanings from one language to the next. Therefore, it is really important for all believers, even English-speaking readers to have at least a smattering of Greek and

Hebrew language (at least knowing the alphabet) and be able to use extra tools such as “interlinears” and “lexicons” in order to study the Bible properly.

People often ask me what translation I recommend? My answer is: “I don’t recommend any translation.” I tend to use the KJV primarily in my writings because it is the standard and when combined with Strong’s Concordance numbering system, it becomes the easiest for beginners to use as a reference point for working with Strong’s code numbers.

There are flaws in every translation. After the KJV, probably the next translation for the least serious flaws is the NASV, and in fact, often has less issues than the KJV. The NIV and other modern versions however, are far less reliable and I seldom pay any attention to them. My workhorse text is the original text itself. Now, let’s return to our study of the text of Thessalonians.

The usage of “**paralabontes**” shows that it is almost always used in a physical and objective sense. This contrasts the word “**edexomai**” which points to a personal and subjective act. The first word points to a **recognition** of what it was, whereas the second indicates **approval**.

The Thessalonians distinguished the word of God from the word of man. This is easy to forget because we live and move in a world of human ideas.

The Effect of the Word – Verse 13b

The phrase “**which effectually worketh**” is translated from a single Greek word “**energeo**” – (**Strong’s Code #1754**) We get our English word “energy” from this word. The word is almost always used **of supernatural activity** in the New Testament. Note that the word was written in the present tense indicating its **continuous activity**. Equally important is **the participle “believe,”** which is also written in the present tense. **The action of the supernatural activity – continuous activity then matches up with those who heard it – continuously believing.**

This continuous, supernatural activity is responded to with continuous believing and this has tremendous implications for us who are believers today. We thus have an axiom to remember.

FAITH IS THE CONDITION UPON WHICH THE WORD OF GOD CONSTANTLY WORKS SUPERNATURALLY IN THE BELIEVER’S LIFE WHEN HE/SHE IS CONSTANTLY BELIEVING THE WORD OF GOD.

The Persecution Beings – Verses 14-16

“For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

“Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

“Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.”

Who’s Doing the Persecuting? Verses 14-15a

Notice verse 14 begins with another one of those “flag” or preposition words and in this case it is introducing proof that God’s Word was being effective in their lives. The context of the passage makes it clear that the area of imitation was suffering. In chapter 1, verse 6, we find that the Thessalonians had imitated the Apostles in the area of Christian conduct. Now, they join the rest of the churches in the brotherhood of common suffering.

Suffering for Christ has always been normal in the Christian church. The Church in America has been the historical exception to the rule. There has been little or no suffering of the Church in America in the sense as a unified, whole group. That may be about to change in the near future as things seem to be changing in our day. In just the past five to ten years, hostility against Christianity in America has grown by leaps and bounds. I can see the time is coming, perhaps fairly quickly when Christians may be rounded up and put into concentration camps in America and killed for their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the agenda of the Antichrist progresses towards its ultimate conclusion within America.

The Rapture concept, even a Pre-Trib rapture, does not mean that Christians in America are exempt from suffering, torture, persecution and martyrdom in America before Christ returns. We have been lulled into a sense that God simply will not allow believers in America to undergo the same sort of suffering other believers are experiencing in other parts of our world today or the historical suffering that believers have gone through, down throughout the ages since the New Testament era.

It would behoove each of us, to be spiritually prepared for such an eventuality should the Lord tarry long enough, because the trends in America are moving towards suffering, persecution, torture and martyrdom

and the trend now appears to be accelerating quickly in this post-911 world we now live in.

Jesus, Himself, taught that the stony-heart hearers fell away under persecution. See Matthew 13:20-21.

Persecution of the Church is normal. It has always been normal since the Church was established on the Day of Pentecost. In verses 14 and 15 of chapter 2, Paul is explaining to the Thessalonians that such sufferings and persecutions are not unique to them. The persecuted churches are identified in terms of "THEIR" owner, (churches of God) and their position (in Christ Jesus) and their geographical location (In Judea).

The Hostility of the Persecutors – Verse 15b

The persecutors of the Church are not pleasing to God. Paul had experienced such hostility from these persecutors, who just happened to be Jews who thought that they were pleasing God by persecuting the Church. How ironic. Paul had been driven out of Damascus by these persecutors. (Acts 9:23-25) and from Jerusalem (Acts 9: 29-30). He was also driven out of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:45-50). At Iconium, the Jews persecuted him and drove him out (Acts 14:5-7) and at Lystra they stoned him and left him for dead (Acts 14:19). Paul remained in Thessalonica for only a few short weeks before they forced him to leave that city too. Paul was all too familiar with persecution.

The Effects of the Persecutors – Verse 16a

The persecutors were "**hindering**" the proclaiming of the Gospel. The Jews resisted the proclaiming of the Gospel not only among themselves but also amongst the gentiles. Because Paul was an apostle to the gentiles, the Jewish resistance was all the greater. Why? Because it implied that God had forsaken Israel. Paul states in Romans 10:2 that the Jews zeal for God was not guided by knowledge, and their actions towards Paul and the gentile converts is the evidence of their ignorance of God's knowledge.

The Judgment of the Persecutors – Verse 16b

In Verse 16b – note the phrase "**fill up.**" It implies a sin quotient and a limitation. Once filled up, it is at this point that Divine wrath becomes inevitable and fully deserved. After centuries of rejection of Truth, their moment had finally arrived.

While the wrath spoken of by Paul seems to be future, yet Paul uses the

present tense. Why? The verb “is come upon” in verse 16 is also found in Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20, where Jesus first speaks of the arrival of the Kingdom in similar terminology. The thrust of the verb is the arrival at the threshold of judgment, NOT the actual entering into judgment. The flavor of the word is that judgment is now inevitable.

We’ve now reached the end of the second theme which was the Gospel Proclaimed. We will now turn to the third theme in Paul’s first epistle to the Church at Thessalonica.

Chapter 2: 17 thru 3: 5

Theme #3: Paul's Joy, Hope & Crown

A. Paul's Absence From Thessalonica – Ch 2: 17-18

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

“Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.”

The Separation – verse 17

The verse starts out with a strong contrast “**But we**”... from the context of the preceding verse, which was the activity of the persecutors against Paul and his associates. With this emphatic use of the pronoun “WE” Paul separates himself from the rebellious Jews and returns to describe his deep affection for the believers at Thessalonica. Paul uses the Greek aorist verb tense – “being taken” which points to a definite event that was forced upon Paul and his co-workers. This aorist participle means “to be orphaned.” By using this term, Paul is demonstrating by word, to the Thessalonians his fullest affection for them and it also conveys Paul's anguish of the enforced separation by other parties. Paul is stating that it certainly wasn't his will nor intent to leave them so soon.

The phrase – “**in presence, not in heart**” is a euphemism not unlike our own English metaphor, “**out of sight, out of mind.**” Here, Paul is stating that just because he's not physically present with them, doesn't mean that they are out of his mind or out of his heart. Thus he's indicating that he's thinking about them. Spiritual love is not limited by space or time. Love cannot enjoy absence, however Paul believes he must make every effort to see their faces again.

The Frustration – verse 18

In verse 18, Paul really calls attention to himself by stating – “I, Paul.” Here Paul is really focusing upon himself on behalf of his readers to let them know that he, Paul personally has a sincere desire to return to Thessalonica. Paul’s statement in verse 18 indicates that more than once Paul wanted to return to Thessalonica.

Paul now states that Satan, himself has “hindered” Paul and his group from returning back to Thessalonica. The word in Greek is a military term that pictures the idea of an army tearing up and or blocking a road so as to make it impassable.

We should also understand that Paul does not arbitrarily nor indiscriminately assign “hindrances” of Paul’s plans to Satan. It was the Holy Spirit who blocked Paul from proclaiming the gospel in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6-7). Sometimes hindrances to our plans may be from Satanic causes or from God’s own hand. Either one can work through human beings to thwart our plans.

Paul’s Affection for the Thessalonians 2:19-20

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.”

Paul anticipates seeing the Thessalonian believers as his joy at the coming of Christ in verse 19 and they are his joy at the present moment as stated in verse 20.

Let’s take a look at the 3 key words in these verses.

“hope” points to Paul’s anticipation of Christ’s coming again.

“joy” points to the fulfillment of Christ’s coming again.

“crown” points to the final victory of Christ’s coming again.

This is the first reference in Christian literature to His coming return.

The KJV term “**presence**” in verse 19 is the Greek word “**parousia.**” Let’s take a look at the word in some depth. It is **Strong’s code # 3952.**

The basic idea of the word is **personal presence**. We see it used in First Corinthians 16:17 and in Second Corinthians 10:10.

In the language of the Roman citizens, it is the word used for the arrival of a great person, a king, or an emperor. **It meant = ROYAL VISIT.** In the New Testament, the term becomes a technical term for **THE Royal Visit – THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST.** There will be more on this word later in this book.

C. The Paul’s Burden for the Thessalonians – 3:1-2a

Paul’s Selfless Attitude 3:1

“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

“And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:”

Here we see how Paul has a hard time dealing with the idea that a new believer is deprived of spiritual food. The phrase – “we thought it good” indicates not only a resolve on the part of Paul and his team, but it also connotes emotion. It’s the same verb used in 2:8 where the KJV translates the term “we were willing.”

Paul’s selfless attitude is conveyed in the infinitive phrase – “to be left behind” which in the Greek means – “to forsake,” “to abandon,” “to leave in the lurch.”

Meaning that Paul thought it would be a good idea to be left alone in Athens by dispatching Timothy to return to Thessalonica. The context connotes the idea of emotional pain of such a separation being a good idea for the Thessalonians, but a mixed set of emotions for Paul, but his primary concern was for the Thessalonians even though he enjoyed, appreciated and desired the presence of Timothy. In other words, Paul wanted to sacrifice his own interests for the benefit of the believers in Thessalonica.

Paul's Selfless Action – verse 2a

In the second part of verse 2, Paul indicates that he did send Timothy back to Thessalonica. We have no understanding as to why Timothy could return but Paul could not. It may have had something to do with Paul's personality or appearance in a personal sort of way, that prevented his return, but that Timothy's presence in Thessalonica would not be greeted so severely. It may have been simply that Timothy could remain obscure and not pose a problem for the persecutors or that they might not recognize him as they would Paul.

Paul's Plan for the New Believers at Thessalonica – 3:2b-4

“That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.”

Indicated by Paul's present teaching 3:2b-3

The infinitive phrase – **“to establish you”** and it is the Greek word **“sterixai”= Strong's Code # 4741 = means in the Greek – “to strengthen you” or “to buttress or support” you.**

Metaphorically in Greek, the term means:

“to make firm in one's mind.”

The term assumes that there is an opposing force against which one's mind must take a stand against something.

The other infinitive phrase – “to comfort” means in the Greek in the literal sense – “to call to the side of.” The usage shows that it is the purpose of being along on the side as a helper.

In verse 3 we have a colorful phrase: “That no man should be moved.”

The term moved is a very colorful one in the Greek, meaning literally – “to wag the tail.” The Greek's were very observant in noting that when dogs were aroused for some reason they would wag their tails very fast. Here it is used for an aroused condition of any sort or in this case, so that no man may aroused or alarmed by the afflictions that may come in the future. In

other words, Paul wants to get them mentally stabilized so that they don't "freak-out" when trials and tribulations come their way as they inevitably would.

The term "**appointed**" in the Greek is a very strong word. It is used in Luke 2:34 to describe the destiny of Jesus relative to Israel. It refers to anything that is stable and cannot be altered. In this case, Paul is nothing that afflictions are coming and this fact cannot be altered.

Indicated by Paul's Past Teaching 3:4

The phrase – "**we told you before**" shows that this had been an often repeated theme in Paul's teaching in Thessalonica. This indicates that one of the first things that Paul taught new believers was the warning that certain suffering as Christians as Christians was inevitable. Paul himself, new well about sufferings and persecutions. After all, before his own conversion, he was one of the ringleaders in persecuting Christians. Paul was dramatically reminding the believers at Thessalonica that persecution and suffering were imminent and a normal part of the Christian life. The same can be said for our day and age in much of the world and will no doubt soon be the case everywhere in the world, even America, until He returns for believers.

Paul's Investigative Reporter To Thessalonica 3:5

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

Investigating the Faith -- verse 5a

Paul's real concern was to know how the Faith of the new believers at Thessalonica were holding up. We noted in verse 2 that Paul had sent Timothy to Thessalonica to benefit the Thessalonians. In verse 5 we find that in sending Timothy, it would also benefit Paul, because he is anxious to know how the Thessalonians are really doing. Is their faith really holding up? He'll find out by sending Timothy to investigate and report back.

Paul's Fear – verse 3b

Paul is assuming in the latter part of verse 3, the reality and effectiveness in the work of Satan. He recognizes Satan is capable of destroying Paul's hard work among the Thessalonians. Notice that Paul does not identify Satan by name but rather by his activity – tempting. The present participle that Paul uses in verse 5 indicates that Paul knew Satan was already at

work amongst the believers at Thessalonica, but Paul didn't know the extent of Satan's success within the body of believers in Thessalonica.

This then ends our section on the third theme of Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians.

Chapter 3: 6-13

Theme #4 Timothy's Reports From Thessalonica

A. Timothy's Report 3:6

“But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:”

Paul had dispatched Timothy back to Thessalonica to investigate just how well the new believers at Thessalonica were getting along. Paul couldn't return, but he was so terribly concerned about the new converts in Thessalonica that he couldn't stand the idea of not knowing how well the congregation was getting along. Paul couldn't return but he could send Timothy to investigate the situation among the new believers in that city. If there were any minor difficulties, Paul no doubt reasoned that Timothy could at least handle smaller issues.

Until chapter 3 and verse 6, Paul has been reviewing and reminiscing with the believers in Thessalonica. Paul now begins to discuss what he has learned from Timothy, after Timothy's investigative trip back to Thessalonica.

Here in chapter 3, verse 6, Paul can wait no longer to burst forth his understanding of the situation in Thessalonica. Timothy had reported back to Paul the good news that things were going well amongst the Thessalonian believers. Paul uses the term “good news” to describe the report given to him by Timothy.

The term “good news” is used more than fifty times in the New Testament and in every case it refers to the “good news” coming from God to man. It is the word used to describe the saving-work of Christ. It is the word we often translate as the “gospel.” There are three elements in Timothy's report that excited Paul.

#1. The Good News About Their Faith.

Paul had mentioned his concern for their faith in 3:2, 5. Since faith requires a valid and dependable object for its value, the faith spoke of here must refer to the Thessalonian attitude towards Christian truth.

It should be noted that Satan has two goals regarding the believer's relationship to truth. First, Satan wishes to limit our exposure to truth. (1st Thessalonians 2:18). Secondly, Satan wishes to destroy our faith in it. (1st Thessalonians 3:5). Satan may experience success at either point.

#2. The Good News About Their Love.

Just as faith is the believer's characteristic attitude towards God, so love is the believer's characteristic attitude towards fellow believers.

#3. The Good News About Their Attitude.

Paul, no doubt had wondered how successful his detractors had been during his separation from the believers in Thessalonica. The news that Timothy brought back exceeded Paul's expectations. They continued to look back on Paul's time with them with an attitude of joy. Moreover, they eagerly awaited Paul's return to them.

B. The Rejoicing 3:7-10

“Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

“For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

“For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

“Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?”

In this section of verses in chapter 3, we find a reference to the faith of the Thessalonians. It is the fourth time in chapter 3 that the term is used.

There are two things that cause Paul to forget about his own intense

sufferings. In Romans 8:18, Paul notes that he is comforted with the anticipation of his future glorification in eternity. The second recorded instance of Paul forgetting his own afflictions and sufferings is now found in chapter 3 and verse 7 where he is comforted to know that the Thessalonians are experiencing spiritual growth and stability in the Christian life and within the assembly of the believers in Thessalonica.

Paul seems to act as if his very life depended upon the spiritual success of the Thessalonian church.

Note the use of the words “**stand fast**” is a metaphor for the stability of believers. Walking is the metaphor for conduct in the Christian life. Running is the metaphor for service in the Christian life and seated is the metaphor for the believer’s position in Christ.

If we doubt that Paul really is deeply involved with the Thessalonians, that doubt should be erased by noting how many times Paul uses the personal pronoun for himself in verses 6-10. He uses the personal pronoun no less than 10 times. He’s definitely wrapped deeply in concern for the welfare of the Thessalonian believers.

In verse 9, Paul attributes the thanksgiving back to its ultimate source, the work of God, not Paul, himself. Paul takes no credit for the spiritual success now enjoyed by his fellow believers in Thessalonica.

Paul was so caught up in concern for the welfare of his brethren in Thessalonica that verse 10 indicates his concern for their progress is what drove him to such intense prayer on their behalf. We should learn a lesson from this.

For us, many times it takes a personal need, a tragedy, a pressure, a problem, a danger, or uncertainty to cause us to pray. This was not true with Paul. The Thessalonian believers were growing but that didn’t stop Paul from praying. Instead he prayed all the harder for them.

If you will note Colossians 1:3-4, 9 and 2:!, you will find that Paul didn’t even have to know the person or persons for whom he was praying.

C. Paul's Request 3:11-13

Concerning their visit – verse 11

“Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.”

This verse is a prayerful petition to God. The verse also has some interesting doctrinal content. First of all it teaches the brotherhood of all believers. This is conveyed the use of the pronoun “our God and Father.” Secondly, the words Father and Jesus are linked by the conjunction, “and” which links the two words together. They are the joint subjects of the sentence. The subject of the sentence is a singular verb, “direct.” Paul is therefore indicating to us the full divinity and the deity of Jesus.

Concerning their Love – verse 12

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:”

Here we have a reminder that though Paul has the most earnest desire to see and visit and teach the Thessalonians, their spiritual growth is ultimately in the hands of the Lord (not Paul's) regardless of whether Paul visits with them or not. Paul here urges them to grow and increase their love, towards one another and towards all men, even unbelievers. Paul then cites them to follow his example in doing this.

Concerning Their Stability - verse 13

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

The work of Timothy and that of God are both intended to “establish” the Christians at Thessalonica. The two work in hand in hand and present no contradiction.

God is the source of the stability while Timothy is the agent used by God to bring it about.

The words “unblameable in holiness” give us a good definition of glorification since they are connected to the return of Christ.

This ends our Third theme in the first epistle to the Thessalonians.

Chapter 4: 1-12

Theme #5 Christian Life Conduct

We have reached a point in this epistle where it would benefit the reader to understand Paul's letter-writing methodology. Paul liked for his letters to have a certain structural order. After the traditional opening and greeting, Paul would discuss doctrinal matters and respond with answers to any questions his readers might have asked. Paul then follows up with the implications of the doctrines he mentions for application in living the Christian life. Often times Paul uses a particular transition phrase "Finally then." In his first letter to the Thessalonians he uses this phrase which we find in chapter 4, verse 1. This means that Paul is now going to apply previously discussed doctrine to everyday Christian living. The believer's conduct can be noted under four basic headlines:

General Conduct – verses 1-2
Sexual Conduct – verses 3-8
Affectional Attitude – verses 9-10
Social Conduct – verses 11-12

#1. General Conduct – verses 1-2

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

“For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.”

Paul had begun instructing these new believers at Thessalonica immediately after their conversion. From the very beginning of their Christian lives, they were being “taught” not preached at. They were being instructed. The verb phrase “ye have received of” is a Greek aorist tense indicates an action that is complete in and of itself. Paul is indicating that in the short time he remained with them at Thessalonica, they had received complete instructions on how Christians should live and think in their daily life. He left nothing out. Their instructions were complete.

It should be noted that the living of the Christian life was taught by Paul in the imperative mood. The word “**ought**” is the Greek word “**dei**” and it is the Greek term indicating an absolute necessity. Jesus used the same word when He told Nicodemus that he “**dei**” (must) be born again. In other words, Jesus was saying to Nicodemus that it is absolutely necessary to be born again. Also note that the English translation fails to include the Greek definite article “**the**” in front of the word “**how**.” This is important because what Paul is saying is that he taught them “**the how to**” of the Christian life. It’s one thing to teach someone a concept, but it’s another thing to teach someone how to do it, and the use of the term “**the how**” indicates that Paul taught them “**the how to**” of living the Christian life.

Paul uses a metaphor in describing the Christian life. He presents the Christian life as a walk meaning it as a metaphor for conduct and life-style. By using this metaphor, Paul is telling us to set aside the idea of the Christian life being a series of fireworks. Instead, the Christian life is a step-by-step, inch-by-inch matter. In other words, the Christian life is a continuous sequence of putting one foot in front of the other and moving forward. The motivation for Christian living is taken to its roots or in other words, pleasing God. The Christian life is all about pleasing God. The Christian life is one of growing in increasing maturity/wisdom. We see that in this passage by the use of the words: “**abound more and more.**”

#2. Sexual Conduct 4:3-8

The next five verses relate to sexual conduct in the Christian life.

A. Sexual conduct as it relates to God’s Will – verses 3-6

(1.) Viewed in the positive sense – verses 3-4

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;”

In Greek text of verse 3, the noun “**will**” has no “**the**” with it. If the word “**the**” was in front of the word “**will**” then we would expect Paul to present a full presentation of God’s will in everything. However, the absence of the article “**the**” means that there is emphasis on the character or essence of the noun. So that Paul is telling us that what he is saying bears the quality of these words he gives as being the will of God. In other words, Paul is saying that is but one of many qualities of God’s will and that there are many aspects to God’s will besides sexual conduct.

Note the word “Sanctification.”

Sanctification is the Greek word “**ahgiahsmohs**“ (“**ah-gee-ahs-mohs**”) which is **Strong’s Code #38**. In the New Testament usage **it means moral purity and or consecration of one’s heart and or life to purity.**

However, this word is taken from a totally pagan context. **This word was also used for pagan, cultic usage.** It really is a pagan concept for the quality possessed by things or persons who could approach a deity. The root meaning of the word **agiasmohs** in the Greek language itself is **“to set apart.”**

It has 3 distinct aspects for the Christian life:

#1. there is positional sanctification with Christ.

#2. there is ultimate sanctification (I Thessalonians 5:23) anticipating our glorification.

#3. there is experiential sanctification. (refers to our Christ like quality that we develop during our life on earth.

This third aspect is what Paul is referring to here in chapter 4, vs. 3.

Why does Paul give the command in verse 3 to the new believers in Thessalonica, to “**abstain**” from fornication?

Greek society placed little concern for sexual conduct or misconduct. In fact, much of Greek religion was borrowed from Babylon’s chief religion – the worship of the Goddess Ishtar, who was known as the Mother of the Harlots.

The Greek’s worshipped Ishtar under various ethnic names such as Aphrodite, and Astarte. Other aspects of Ishtar were syncretized and broken down into Ishtar’s individual doctrines and as such, other goddess names were used, such as Athena, Artemis, Persephone, and other names.

Ishtar worship involved the concept of having one’s sins forgiven by engaging in sexual actions with a temple priestess or priest and by doing so, the priestess or priest would become possessed by the spirit of the goddess and thus worshipper and temple priestess or priest became “one” with goddess and the resulting sexual excretions became a “holy” baptism

that removed the sins. Afterwards the worshipper would give a gold or silver coin offering in the temple collection box as a thanksgiving offering to the goddess.

This is how prostitution came into existence. The idea of “sex for money” originated in the religion of Ishtar. For that matter, so did the concept of money, as well as the idea of banking and even the idea of ‘fractional reserve’ banking. It was all invented by Satan’s cohort, a fallen angel who represented itself as the feminine, Ishtar for the purpose of offering up a fraudulent method of salvation.

As a result of this religious dogma, sexual relations were considered not looked down upon in general Greek society except in certain cases of incest and even then only in some quarters of Greek society, because Ishtar worship condoned incest as well as homosexuality. Ishtar reportedly engaged in both activities while “she” visited earth during the time before the Flood, according to the Royal Records of the Kings of Babylon.

Therefore, in this context, we find the Apostle Paul giving the command to abstain from such behaviors. Why? Because it had a connection back to idolatry and a Satanic, occult, religious aspect that was an insult to God.

Paul’s reasoning here was that Believer’s needed to be reminded not to pattern their sexual conduct after a society that does not adhere to Divine standards or morality. Why? Christians are always influenced by the contemporary thinking of the world around them and so reminders are necessary to help believers maintain conduct that adheres to God’s morality and not of paganism that promotes worship away from God and into a false salvation.

First Corinthians 6:19-20 tells us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit not a temple for being occupied by the fallen angel, Ishtar. The Holy Spirit resides within us, and He does not relish having the company in his home of a fallen, rebel angel.

How can a believer abstain from sexual misconduct? First Corinthians 6:18 tells us to “flee immorality” which includes among other things, sexual misconduct. In other words, we should stay away from situations that can provide temptation.

(2.) Viewed in the negative sense – verses 5-6

“Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

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

Verse 5 begins with a negative – “**NOT**” indicating that what follows is NOT to be practiced.

The words “**lust of concupiscence**” denotes the idea of overpowering desire. From what my research into Ishtar worship entailed, the religious act of sexual worship by the temple priestess or priest and the worshipper who were involved in an all night or an extended time frame of activity in which much of that time was involved in creating an overpowering desire.

Today’s society would refer to it as “extended foreplay” that might last for hours and hours before final culmination. It worshipped the concept of building and growing lust for the sake of lust. In other words, the much of the ritual was in worshipping lust itself as a concept. In the doctrine of Ishtar, this was called **LIBERTY** or **FREEDOM**. Hence, **Ishtar was the Goddess of Liberty or the Goddess of Freedom**.

In Rome, she was originally worshipped as the goddess Libertas. By the time of Julius Caesar her name had been changed to Venus. Today, America has borrowed her from the Romans and America has featured her prominently as a symbol in statue form and on government coins. She stands in the harbor of New York City as the Statue of Liberty and in Washington, D.C. atop the US Capitol Dome, and again on the Capitol buildings of the state of Georgia and Texas. (perhaps other state capitols also). Her sculptors were Freemasons who had honored the Masonic doctrines which absorbed much of Ishtar dogma, but refer to her by her Roman name as Libertas. You can research this for yourself through US Government records and archives of the sculptors themselves who denote these origins.

That Paul is addressing this type of religious sexual misconduct is underscored by his reference to the Gentiles in the latter part of verse 5.

Verse 6 indicates that if we engage in such sexually religious conduct, which was rampant in that era, then we defraud or mislead our brothers. In other words, engaging in such activity could lead others to embrace paganism or to simply discard the sound doctrines and God’s truth and morality. This then becomes an even greater sin that triggers God’s

vengeance as sin piles up upon more sin of a different nature, namely that of idolatry and paganism.

The sexual misconduct itself was not nearly so great a problem in that era as it was the implications that in doing so, one was engaging in or promoting the pagan worship of Ishtar and her false gospel of salvation by 'holy' sex, whether it is in the temple or merely with a next door neighbor or visiting stranger. The whole concept of sexual misconduct in that era was steeped in the false religious dogmas of Ishtar worship. God's response to this type of sexual misconduct is clearly different than the misconduct found in Old Testament Saints like David and his many wives and concubines or that of Solomon or of Jacob or even of Abraham.

Until the Church comes to grips with understanding the Religion of Ishtar and its full impact on societies from 1,500 B.C. through the New Testament period, the Church will fail to fully grasp the issues of sexual misconduct and sexual sin. The Church will also fail to understand Revelation 17 and 18 as it pertains to the "mystery" of Babylon. This is particularly true for Revelation 17, where Ishtar is explicitly identified, but yet no one, even since the Reformation has been able to come to grips with the Truth and the fact that Revelation 17 is all about Ishtar worship.

Today the Church, especially the Church in America is blinded to the reality of the Ishtar religion. Today, thanks to false claims by men such as Alexander Hislop, most Protestants think Revelation 17 is about the Roman Catholic Church. This is not the case. Ishtarism permeates Western culture and especially American culture in more unique ways, creating a patriotic religion of Liberty through which goddess worship is slowly creeping into mainstream Protestant denominations at an alarming rate under the false notion that the Holy Spirit is feminine and thus the goddess – the mother goddess. Eventually the next step will be to openly worship Ishtar in Protestant churches as Ishtar and engage in all sorts of sexual misconduct in a manner that would horrify Paul and the rest of the Apostles to no end.

Already the creeping form of goddess worship has heavily infiltrated the Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Lutheran and American Baptist denominations to a greater or lesser extent. It is even making attempts at inroads within the Southern Baptist denomination. It has already enveloped much of the Charismatic movement, especially the revival movements of the Toronto Blessing and Brownsville movements. New movements such as the "emerging church" and the "purpose-driven" and the "contemplative" movements will no doubt begin to embrace this goddess concept in the near future.

B. Sexual Conduct as it relates to God's Call – verses 7-8.

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.”

Sin must be viewed from the standpoint of the ultimate issue. For believers, sexual misconduct is not only an issue of relationship with fellow human beings. Sexual misconduct is also an issue of one's relationship to God. Sin is always against God as the Psalmist notes in 51:4 *“Against Thee and Thee only, have I sinned ...”*

Since the body of the believer is the temple or residence of the Holy Spirit, sexual misconduct has a direct bearing on our relationship to God but particularly when it has pagan overtones of misdirecting worship away from God and messing up our understanding of God's Truth, particularly regarding salvation.

C. Affectional Attitude verses 9-10

1. The Importance of Love – verse 9.

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.”

Paul now introduces a new subject by the use of the Greek term **“Peri dei”** which the KJV translates – **“But as.”** Probably a better way of stating this in today's English is – “Now concerning” which indicates he is transitioning subjects. Paul will use this same term in Chapter 5, verse 1. Both are apparently referencing different aspects of Timothy's report on his visit back to Thessalonica.

The term **“brotherly love”** is the Greek word – **“Philadelphia.”** This was the word used by the Greeks for love among blood relatives. New Testament usage denotes it for love of believers for one another who comprise the family of God. Paul connotes love as an inbred part of the family of God. It flows from within and is not fused from without.

2. The Practice of Love – verse 10.

“And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;”

Here we have a verse that should be proof that Christians are truly taught by God to love on another. Paul is indicating that the Thessalonians are already practicing this among fellow believers in other parts of Greece whom they have never seen.

At the end of the verse, Paul is encouraging the Thessalonians to increase their love more and more. This is Paul’s way of safeguarding against stagnancy in the Christian life.

D. Social Conduct 4:11-12

1. Within the Body of Christ – verse 11.

“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;”

Here at the beginning of the verse we have another “Flag” word, “and.” This flag word connects us back to the previous verse indicating that there is a close connection between what was just stated and what is about to be stated.

The actions of verse 11 may be regarded as the details of a manifested love for the brethren. This encourages personal independence in carrying on the necessary functions of life. Nothing disrupts the Christian community more than those who refuse to shoulder their personal responsibility for their own lives.

The verse is another example of encouragements given to Christians to resist the cultural behaviors, attitudes and standards that fail to measure up to God’s standards. The Greeks had a disdain for work, but Christians are to pursue it. Why? In working, one of avoids the pitfalls of idleness.

2. Outside the Body of Christ. – verse 12.

That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

In verse 12, Paul is noting conduct outside the Body of Christ. This type of conduct should have two results.

#1. It should win respect from unbelievers. (“outsiders” = unbelievers)

#2. It should enable them to fulfill their social responsibility by not being dependent citizens.

Paul’s comments in verse 12 conclude his applications for Christian doctrine concerning everyday conduct of the unbeliever. He will now turn to a new doctrinal subject and its applications for every day living. That subject is one of Prophecy -The Lord’s Return for the Church.

Chapter 4: 13-18

Theme #6

The Parousia or The Lord's Return

A. Paul's Purpose In Mentioning This Doctrine 4:13

1. From a mental standpoint -- Verse 13a

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

When Paul arrived at Thessalonica, the Thessalonians welcomed the Word of God that he brought to them. However, as is typical of the human mind, the passage of time tends to blur the memory and questions had arisen in the minds of the Thessalonians concerning what happens to believers who die before the “Parousia.”

If we look at Chapter 3, verses 11-13 which reference His Return, the Thessalonians might have felt that these words imply that Christ will come during their lifetimes.

Paul's use of the phrase: **“But I would not have you be ignorant,”** as a formula to introduce something that is new to his readers. In other words, what Paul is about to write to them in the succeeding verses will be “news” to them. We see how Paul uses this same phrase elsewhere – in Romans 1:13, 11:25; 1st Corinthians 10:1 and 12:1.

The term **“asleep”** is a frequent metaphor for the death of a believer, not humans in general. The term here is used as a present tense participle which means that it points to an action that is continuing. He is referring to the regular occurrence of death that is taking place perhaps almost daily among the believing community in Thessalonica. Undoubtedly, in the intervening months since Paul's visit, some of the believers had likely died. Thus the surviving members were concerned for the situation of their fellow believers who died prior to Christ's Return.

Now, keep in mind that the sleep metaphor only applies to the body, not the soul. The sleep metaphor is appropriate for two reasons.

#1. When sleeping, one continues to exist.

#2. When sleeping, one is in a temporary state.

The soul of a believer who dies does not sleep, but is active in heaven as Paul notes – “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

#2. From the Emotional Standpoint – verse 13b

“that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

The Christian view of death stood in total contrast to that of the pagans. Most Pagans believed that there was no life after death, that death ended it all. For those pagans who did believe in life after death, they certainly didn’t relish it, nor await it with open arms.

Among some of the ancient writings that have been recovered by archaeologists is one little piece of writing that indicates the attitude of condolence that a pagan might give to another who is grieving over the death of someone dear to them.

“Irene to Taonnophris and Philo, good comfort. I am as sorry and weep over the departed one as I wept for Didymas. And all things, whatsoever were fitting. I have done, and mine (5 names are given). But, nevertheless, against such things one can do nothing. Therefore, comfort one another.”

Aristides, observing Christians, is quoted by the Ante-Nicene Church fathers as saying, “And if any among them passes from the world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they escort the body as if he were merely setting out from one place to another.”

In verse 13b, Paul’s words – “**that you sorrow not**” do not reflect the Greek stoicism of that day. They do not present an unfeeling viewpoint at all. The present tense of the verb “**sorrow**” indicates that the sorrow or grieving is a continuous activity. Grief is sustained – but it should not be a continuous, debilitating thing.

Unbelievers are described by three terse expressions.

#1. Unbelievers are described as “outsiders.” – separated from Christ.

#2. Unbelievers are termed, “the rest” they are deprived of the blessings of belief.

#3. Unbelievers have **NO HOPE**. They have nothing to hope or look forward to.

B. The Nature of this Instruction – Chapter 4: 14-17

1. The Basis For Our Hope – verse 14

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

Here again we have a “flag” word – “**IF**” which means to connect what was just said with what is about to be presented. In this case, the idea of death and hope.

The word “**IF**” is what grammarians term a “**First-class Condition**” meaning a condition that is assumed to be true.

The simple condition is to **BELIEVE**. **Faith is only made valid by its object and here it is presented as 2-fold.**

#1. “Jesus Died” – which points to the act that secured our salvation.

#2. “and rose again” – shows the act that provides the sufficiency of the death of Jesus.

The use in this verse of the Greek aorist tense points to the fact of the historical events. Christian hope does not rest on philosophical speculation but on historical events.

What does the term “sleep in Jesus” mean?

The preposition “**in**” is the Greek word “**dia,**” **Strong’s Code # 1223** and while it has many applications in meaning, depending on its grammatical relationships, here it **literally means “through” or “by means of.”** So what is Paul telling us here in this phrase?

Paul is saying, “Through Jesus, death becomes sleep.”

The emphasis would lie on the transforming power of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ relative to death for believers.

In other words, Christian believers do **NOT** die in the fullest sense of the word death, and the reason is because of the cross-work death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The believer who dies has believed that Christ's work and resurrection has paid the penalty for the believer's sins so that, not only is the believer forgiven, but has the promise of being raised from the dead and into eternal life in a "resurrection body" at some point in the future.

The words "**will God bring**" strongly imply that already the dead believer must presently be with Him. Note: Paul does not say that "they shall be raised" This means that the body is not what returns with Christ. When a believer dies, his body goes to the grave, but his soul and spirit go to be with Christ. It is the soul and spirit that wait to come back with Christ.

This answers the question – "What part will believers who have died have in Christ's return? The answer is simple. Their souls and spirits will accompany Him to meet their resurrected bodies in the air.

2. The Certainty of our Hope – Verse 15

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep."

Here again, we have a Flag word "For" indicating to hook what was just stated to what comes next.

a. The authority of our hope:

The pronoun "**this**" points to that which follows, making these words an introduction to what follows. The Divine authority of the things about to be taught are being stressed here in this verse, indicating that this is all supported by the Word of the Lord.

(1.) The parity of our hope:

One of the concerns of the Thessalonian church had been the relationship that believers who had died would bear to the Return of Christ. The next verse, 16, assures them that there will be parity between the dead and the living at this great moment in time.

Word Focus on “the coming” of the Lord

We need to understand the special Greek word used here for “the coming.”

The Greek word used here is the word:

“parousia” = Strong’s # 3952 = It is nominally translated as **“presence”** or **“arrival”** or it can be translated as **“coming.”** It can also be translated as **an “advent” as in the first step of presence.** This was often used for the term by many Greek speakers for hundreds of years. One of the more prominent names noted to have used it was the Greek philosopher, Sophocles.

Now of particular interest in this choice of words is its usage for Royal dignitaries. It was used when a King, Emperor or another person acting on the dignitary’s behalf would make a visit, usually for collecting taxes or making payments. In Moulton & Milligan’s work “Vocabulary of the Greek Testament,” it is noted that the term was used in such cases as when the King and Queen of Egypt visited Memphis, Egypt and the Serapeum Twins went to meet them and lay out their grievances before the royal couple. In that papyri writing, this term **“parousia”** is ascribed to the royal dignitaries.

The term **“parousia”** in its normal usage implied a **TEMPORARY** nature to their presences or coming. In other words a **“parousia”** was normally a brief, **temporary** event.

There are early church writings dating from the earliest church times up to about the 4th Century A.D. which showed that early Christians understood this quasi-technical aspect of the term, including the temporariness, according to Milligan’s work cited above. So that, the early Christians also picked up on the idea that Paul is writing in 4:15 to indicate this **“parousia”** of the Lord was a short, **temporary appearance** and NOT the 2nd Advent wherein He is coming to reign.

Paul uses **“parousia”** in the previous chapter, in verse 13 and again here in 4:15. He does NOT use it in 5:2. The reason why he does not use it again will be dealt with shortly in the commentary when we reach that verse.

3. The Realization of our Hope – Verses 16-17

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

FLAG WORD: “FOR” (A flag word says: “hook me on to what was just said and hook me onto what follows next.”) gives us context which is His return for the Church – **NOT HIS SECOND COMING** to conquer the Earth. Nothing in the text indicates conquering and claiming planet Earth anywhere in the passages.

The original Greek text has a different word order, than the English translations and in the Greek language; placement of words is a way of giving emphasis or stress to various ideas.

Here in verse 16, the original text’s word order is the following and in a more literal translation:

“Because, himself, the Lord, with a word of command, with a voice of an archangel and with a trumpet of God, will step down from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise again firstly, ...”

Notice how the word order differs from standard English translations? The English puts the action of descent or stepping down first in the order rather than the “shout” or “word of command.” Is there any significance in meaning by the difference? Perhaps. Notice that the statement indicates three elements precede words for the rising of the dead in Christ.

1. a word of command (translated as ‘shout’ in KJV)
2. voice of an archangel
3. a trumpet of God

By putting the vocal activity before the movement, the indication is that the vocal activity triggers the downward movement, rather than the idea that the vocal activity is summoning the dead to rise first and later the ones still living.

Is it possible, that “a word of command” relates to the initial movement downwards. something akin to saying, “Let’s go down, now?” If so, this would indicate that the Lord is not alone.

It may well be that there is no actual vocalized summons. Perhaps instead the rising of the dead is triggered by the blowing of the trumpet of God.

In 1st Corinthians 15:51-52, Paul writes:

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall no all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Here we find in this verse, no mention of a voice triggering the transformation. Instead, we find only the mention of a trumpet sounding.

It will happen “in a moment,”... “in a “hripay” of an “ophthalmou” (or eye)

“hripay” = Strong’s #4493 = a throw, a stroke, a beat, a jerk, a wink, In terms of time, it is brief moment of time, as contextually implied.

“ophthalmou = Strong’s #3788 = an eye

We should note in verse 52 that Paul is imitating Hebrew poetic form. Unlike English poetry, Hebrew poetry does not rhyme with phonetic sounds, but rhymes ideas. A statement or idea is made, then it is restated somewhat differently, usually with a little more insight. There are variations on poetic formatting. One idea may be stated two, three or more ways in succession, then a different idea is presented and again might be followed by one, two three or more restatements, and then the next idea and so on. Or ideas could be interspersed. One subject idea is given, then a different one, then the third line or statement is an elaboration on the first and perhaps the fourth line or idea elaborates on the second one. There are all sorts of potential variants to Hebrew poetic formatting.

Here in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians Paul makes a statement. “In a moment” is a descriptive statement. He then follows it with a re-statement elaborating on the first. –

Statement-idea #1 – Time length -- When

“In a moment”

followed by an elaboration

“in the blink of an eye.

Statement idea #2 -- What is involved - Action

“at the last trumpet”

followed by an elaboration

“Trumpet shall sound.”

Statement idea #3 --Response -- Result

“The dead shall be raised incorruptible”

Followed by an elaboration...

“We shall all be changed”

The word “last” does mean last in the original Greek, with the idea that there is nothing more to follow it. The English word “trumpet” matches up to the original Greek word.

So, in comparison to Paul’s writings to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians we find that Paul does not indicate to the Corinthians that a shout is involved. Instead a trumpet is involved in the resurrection process.

This strongly suggests that in 1st Thessalonians 4:16, the **“word of command”** refers to the initial order to move downward from heaven, not the call to come up. The signal for the transforming progress is apparently a trumpet and not a vocal command. At least this is how the Greek grammar is indicating the event. The transformation takes only a moment of time. Now let’s return to Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians

a. The Person of the Arrival

The word “Himself” is emphatic. It is no human being, no angel, not even the archangel Gabriel or Michael, nor any of the highest of God’s created

beings, but rather the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself who will return – i.e.
DEITY DESCENDS!

b. The How of the Arrival

The term **“Shall Descend”** is **kataBaysetai** from **KataBainoh - Strong’s Code # 2597**. The word is a compound word **“kata”** and **“Bainoh”** or **“Basis”** =

Kata –Strong’s #2596 = **movement from a downward direction**. From a higher to a lower place.

Bainoh/Basis – Strong’s # 939 = the foot, by implications, **movement by foot, i.e. to walk or to step**.

Literally, in this case it means = to walk down from higher to lower, to descend as in a stairway.

In the usage employed in this verse, the word is in future tense, indicating that the Lord “will descend” or “will walk down from (Heaven) to a lower point.

There is nothing in the text to indicate actually walking on or descending to the ground. **The term is most likely intended to convey deliberate, downward direction.**

c. The Majesty of the Arrival

(1.) The Majesty of the Shout

Let’s look at the word “shout.” It is the Greek word, **“Keleusmati”** **“Strong’s” #2752**. It means: **“an order,” “a command,” “a stimulating cry.”** It was used in the first century, for example, of the cry made by the ships master to his rowers to row the boat. It was also used by an army commander to his soldiers. Contextually, for the passage we are examining the idea is one of a “loud summons,” probably to move out of heaven towards Earth. It is also theoretically possible that it is an order to blow the trumpet.

(2.) The Majesty of the Voice

The word has no definite article with it. For this reason it is best not to assign it to one such as the archangel, Michael or Gabriel. Most likely it is the voice of the Lord God, Himself.

(3.) The Majesty of the Trumpet

This is associated in the Old Testament with “**Forward, March.**” Some also attempt to attribute it to the blowing of the Shofar during the Jewish festival of Rosh Hoshanah. Unfortunately, such attribution cannot be dogmatically proven, and thus should not be dogmatically asserted, no matter how dogmatically such adherents attempt to make that claim. They may be correct, but it cannot be dogmatically proven, 100% beyond a doubt. It shouldn't be ruled out and it shouldn't be ruled as absolute fact, but merely a very good and perhaps even a likely theory.

Verse 17 – THE RAPTURE CONTROVERSY

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Verse 17 is an elaboration on this transforming event. First Paul focuses on those who had died, in part because, that was a big concern among the Thessalonians, who were worried not only about their relatives and friends who had died already, but also worried about what would happen to them, themselves should they die before He comes. Paul gives us some insight into their thinking a bit further on in Chapter 5 which we will address later in this commentary.

Perhaps the most argued about term in the history of the Bible, and certainly the most argued about term in Biblical Prophecy is the Greek word in this verse which the KJV translators identify as “shall be caught up.” It is the Greek word **“Harpagaysometha.”** It is to this term that many Christians of the last 150 years have applied an English translation as **“Rapture,”** which is in fact that derives from the Latin, not the Greek. Let's take a closer look at this controversial word.

I am not a scholar of, nor do I know much of the Latin language. I am not exactly certain of the correct spelling of the Latin term for which the English word “rapture” comes from. On the internet I've been amazed at the cornucopia of spellings and I suspect different root words. Here is what I've found to floating around the internet as the appropriate Latin word:

Rapare, rapere, rapis, rapturo, raptis, rapierre, rapio, and several others that were even more bizarre and I'm sure even more, if one took time to track them all down. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon notes it to be "**rapio**" My point here is that the Latin is not important to the issue. What is important is the original Greek term.

Harpagaysometha = "arpahdzoh" or harpahdzoh. There is no letter "H" in the Greek language. Instead the sound of "h" is designated by what is called a "rough-breathing" mark, like a comma or a backwards comma placed over the appropriate letter to indicate a "huh" sound. This word in Greek contains such a "rough-breathing" mark but for a non-Greek student to go finding it in a Greek lexicon, would be difficult without knowing to look under the first letter of the Greek alphabet, the "alpha" or "a" letter.

Strong's code number is #726. It means **to seize, to snatch away, to take away by force.** It can carry the context of **snatching away in a rescue from impending danger or destruction.**

Now the indication in verse 17 is that the **"snatching"** is done in **"clouds"** and then to a meeting of the Lord in the air. Yet, to many Christians, the popular thinking is that we meet him in the clouds. Now, while that might well be the case, with perhaps clouds surrounding us, yet I suspect the meeting will be perhaps above the clouds where He and we can see. Maybe that is a bit presumptuous, but one thing interesting about the original Greek text and the word order is as follows.

Most literal translation of verse 17 in its raw Greek text word order...

"then we, the ones living, - remaining together with them – shall be "harpodzohd" (i.e. rescued, or seized in a snatching up and away) in clouds (note there is no word "the" used.) to a meeting of the Lord in air, and to always with the Lord we shall be. "Now let me remove the "aside" remarks...

"then we, the ones living, - remaining together with them – shall be seized in clouds to a meeting of the Lord in air, and to always with the Lord we shall be."

Does it not tend to indicate that believers are enveloped in clouds and then transported up to a meeting with the Lord in air, somewhere?

Is it possible, that in an instant we are transported much like the “sci-fi” TV show, turned into movies – “Star Trek” and the concept of popular phrase: “beam me up, Scotty?” In that special effects system, the concept conveyed a beam of light and sparkles, which could be construed as something akin to the 1st century term “cloud.”

Please do not misunderstand this commentator’s intent. There is no attempt to claim that the “Rapture” of the Church is conducted like in “Star Trek” beaming technology. It is perhaps a possibility that it will be something similar to that. It may involve literal clouds, or a mist perhaps.

Our point is to simply make an observation, ask a question and draw up a hypothetical possibility.

It seems to us, that somehow, the wording of the text indicates that our ascension is masked from view by the world, via the idea of clouds.

However, there may be someone unskilled in Greek who looks at the Strong’s Concordance dictionary and sees that the word is **“nephelays”** an alternate possibility that “clouds” is not even being addressed here.

The Greek word in the text here is the word **“nephelais”** and the root is **“nephelays”** is **Strong’s Code # 3507**, and Strong’s dictionary then also notes its similarity to **#3509**, which in Strong’s dictionary, reiterates cloud. However, if the non-Greek student happens to have a Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, coded to Strong’s Code numbers, he/she will find that Thayer’s entry for #3509, which is only a related word, can carry the meaning of either a literal cloud or, a cloud of people or “witnesses.” Thayer’s and other Lexicons note that the word in #3509 is “nephos” which is a distant relative of “Nephelays” and these lexicons will cite Hebrews 12:1 “...seeing we also are compassed about with so great a **cloud** of witnesses..” Can you see where the twisting of logical projection could be headed? Some might think that the 1st Thessalonians passage is not referring to literal clouds but rather “clouds” or throngs of either people or witnesses” so that the believers are transported in throngs to a meeting in the air.

Now while we may be transported in “throngs” in the air, and we should have no doubt that there will be throngs, (considering that there is a 2,000 year build up of time to get that throng) yet, the text will not allow us to use such a definition as a crowd or throng, because 3509 and 3507 are not the same words even though both can refer to clouds. They’re similar, but #3509 is not the same as the real word used, **#3507 which does not connote throngs of people, just clouds. Thus, real clouds or mists – which is what clouds are anyway, mists is the idea of the word.**

So that our being “seized” or “raptured” may involve our bodies being enveloped in a cloud that makes us invisible to the rest of the world that is suddenly, unable to see what is going on in regards to us. That cloud then covers us up as our bodies ascend to a meeting with the Lord in air.

C. The Value of the Instruction – verse 18

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Rarely is a passage assigned a specific application, but here is one of those passages. It is designed to encourage and support and, as has been suggested, is the one true funeral sermon for the believer.

Chapter 5: 1-11

Sub-theme #7

The Day of The Lord “As A Thief In The Night”

Introduction by way of Review:

In our previous section on Chapter 4: 13-18 we find that Paul addresses the problem that the Thessalonians ignorance on the Lord's Return. Paul, therefore, proceeds to inform them of the facts surrounding the Lord's Return. Their ignorance revolved around the “parousia” of Jesus Christ.

They had a problem understanding the place that the dead believers would have in this future event. They feared (out of their ignorance) that because of death, they would be excluded from Christ's Return. Paul then teaches them that both the living and the dead believers will participate in the “parousia.”

The first three verses of chapter 5 addresses the Thessalonian's knowledge concerning the Day of the Lord. Paul's purpose for these first three verses is to encourage them to have proper and correct conduct in their lives and also to correct some false teaching that had entered into their church.

Verse 4 gives us a reference to an interesting metaphor that Paul also used in his first letter to the Corinthians. After verse 4, the only really significant new revelation that Paul makes eschatologically speaking is in verse 9 where we are told that the Church is not appointed to wrath. We'll deal with these and all other elements in the pages ahead, but lets start with verse 1.

A. Knowledge of the Day of the Lord – verse 1

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.”

Notice again, we have another “Flag” word ...”but”... which means we are to contextually hook together the upcoming words with what just preceded. Yet, the term here means much more than that. The term also indicates a sharp contrast in the context is about to develop. It means that a shift in thought on the overall subject is at hand. The overall context is prophetic events, but Paul uses the term “**peri de**” a Greek particle that could best be translated as **“But concerning.”** He is now going to shift from the concept of the “snatching away” of the Church, to the term “Day of the Lord” which indicates there is a distinct difference.

What does Paul mean by the terms “**times**” and “**the seasons?**” While it may seem hard to distinguish between the two terms, the following chart may help clear up some confusion and provide the reader with some valid distinctions.

CHRONOS “Times”

Looks at sequence of events (when?)

Emphasis on order of events

Example: next year

Indicates quantity of time

KAIROS “seasons”

Looks at nature of events (what?)

Emphasis on character of events

Example: bad year

Indicates quality of time

The Thessalonian believers knew something of the order of events, but not when they would take place. The Scriptures do not sanction the setting of dates for Christ’s Return. Attempts to do so only bring the prophetic hope into disrepute.

B. The Illustration of the Day of the Lord – verse 2

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”

Here again, another “Flag” word – “For” means that the context of future events will be continuing.

Paul uses the term “day of the Lord” and so the context of the future continues. Paul then uses the verb “cometh.” He then uses the metaphor “thief in the night” We need to take a look at both of these words.

“Cometh” is the Greek word “**erxomai**” and it means **to come**. It is not the same word that is used by Paul in describing the Rapture in the prior chapter, which was the word “parousia” which the KJV translates as “**coming**.” These two words are not related. It is indicative that Paul has indeed shifted gears and is talking about two different events as if one precedes the other.

The phrase, “**the day of the Lord**” refers to the period of the great Tribulation, in which God sends down His wrath first in a series of divine judgments.

The term “**thief**” is the Greek word “**kleptays,**” **Strong’s Code #2812**. It means “**thief**” in this context although the term can also apply to an embezzler, as well as false teachers who use their position for personal, or monetary gain. Context does come into play, regarding the exact meaning. Here, the term is connected to “night,” which rules out the idea of an embezzler or a false teacher because the timing context is expanded upon in verse 3 which connotes the idea of “**suddenness**.”

Paul notes that the Thessalonians already knew that the Day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. This knowledge is part of what all believers need to know about any Biblical doctrine. The Apostle Peter writes in 2nd Peter chapter 1 about how knowledge, studious, scholastic knowledge is an absolute requirement in the Christian life. It is imperative because all of God’s blessings and gifts flow from the knowledge we store into our minds. Knowledge produces blessings but knowledge comes from studying God’s word. Here, Paul is merely reaffirming the New Testament principle that Believers are to KNOW and learn by studying God’s Word.

Notice in verse 2 that two ideas may be derived from the thief metaphor.

Primarily, Paul is emphasizing its unexpectedness, but also too perhaps is the idea of devastation. Since a thief can bring devastation, which is what

the Day of the Lord does, this may be a secondary idea. This may be supported by the words “peace and safety” which follow in verse 3.

It should be noted also the sequence of future elements as Paul presents them, beginning in chapter 4 and verse 13 and continuing on through chapter 5 and verse 11. So that this entire series of verses are in reality one body of thought. Therefore, a question arises. Is this sequence of facts also conveying their order in a timeline of sequential events? If so, then the reference to the Resurrection of the dead in Christ and the transformation and translation of living believers off the face of the earth comes before, the “Day of Lord” (i.e. the Day of the Lord) begins. This means that a “pre-tribulation” event is being described because the Day of the Lord is the Tribulation period.

C. The Setting for the Day of the Lord – verse 3.

“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

The tense of the verb “**they shall say**” denotes a more unique Greek verb tense known as the subjunctive-present tense that is active. **It denotes continuous action.**

The destruction occurs while men are in the midst of peace talks. To the Greek, peace meant the absence of war while safety meant security. The term for safety or “security” meant that there was nothing that could happen to do away with peace.

Note that the term “Day of the Lord” spoken of in verse 2 has no definite article for either of the two nouns. In the original text “**the**” does not exist as a separate word for either “Day” or “Lord” – so that, the term itself should technically be read in the absolute literal rendering as – “**Day of Lord.**” So what does this mean to us?

The lack of the definite article “the” indicates and places emphasis on the character of the day. It is uniquely the Lord’s day. In the present age of longsuffering, God patiently tolerates the sin of man, but however, this tolerance will come to an end – and --- it will end – **SUDDENLY.**

There are 3 basic elements to the Day of the Lord:

#1. Punishment of the wicked

#2. Vindication of God's Justness

#3. Establishment of Christ's rule and reign on Earth

Note that the original Greek word order in verse 3 is very forceful but its forcefulness is lost in English translations which sacrifice exactness in favor of an easy English readability for English readers. Yet in the Greek, word order can seem somewhat convoluted to an ordinary English reader but regardless, word order in Greek can carry enormous meaning that is lost to the English reader who is merely reading an English translation. So, let's look at this word order

Greek literal rendering in the original Greek text order:

"then sudden upon them comes destruction" -- 'shall not escape.'

The word order here stresses the **"suddenness"** of it all.

The term **"shall not escape"** by its placement at the end, **stresses the inevitability of the event.**

It should also be noted that in the Greek text, there is a **DOUBLE NEGATIVE** which means that we could more literally translate the phrase as:

"There shall be no escape – NONE!"

D. Duty in light of the Day of the Lord – verses 4-11

1. Character of the Children of Light – verses 4-5

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

From the outset of verse 4, the term **"but ye brethren"** indicates a sharp contrast between the believer and those mentioned in verse 3. Those mentioned in verse 3 are the unbelievers and the unthinking who are caught in God's sudden wrath.

The noun “**that day**” is an abbreviation for the Day of the Lord. Often in the Hebrew Old Testament the prophet and scribes would abbreviate the phrase and shorten it to “**day.**” In this case of course, it is a direct reference back to the phrase already used in verse 2.

We can affirm this is the case because of our “Flag” word that begins verse 4 which ties the context back to that of verse 3 which has its own flag word which connects it back to verse 2. So that Paul simply strings ideas together here with these flag words. Paul just loved to use flag words to keep a sentence going. In fact, Paul’s writings will simply “flag” a reader to death sometimes. This is especially true of his epistle to the Romans. Take a casual read sometime of Romans and note his extensive use of prepositions which connect phrases together with other phrases.

Also in verse 4, the verb “**should overtake**” again denotes the idea of surprise but it also denotes hostility.

In verse 5, believers are called “**Children of light**” in the KJV – but **in the Greek, the word is “sons.”** Believers possess light and it becomes their total environment so that they can move around in an environment as if it were daytime and thus the term “**sons of day**” is the root idea of the phrase as opposed to being sons of night which describes the state that unbelievers are in.

Paul uses the pronoun “we” connected to “are” so that Paul can identify himself with his readers. Paul’s assertion of the character of the readers now becomes the basis for encouraging the readers to proper conduct.

2. The Conduct of the Sons of Light – verses 6-11

a. General statement of Conduct – verses 6-7

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

The verb “**sleep**” as used here is a metaphor for indifference to spiritual reality. It is the act of living as though the Day of the Lord does not exist, or one could also state it as “apathy to truth.”

It should also be noted that the term “sleep” used in verse 7 is not the same word that is used for death of believers. Paul uses two totally different words.

Here again in verse 7, Paul uses the first person plural and thus Paul includes himself in his admonition indicating that Paul realizes that even he, himself is not immune to spiritual apathy. Yes, even the great, Apostle Paul was concerned the he too could be overcome with spiritual apathy. It should also be noted that the believer is to stand in contrast to what others do. In other words, a Christian is to reject the “herd mentality” and use his mind to think for him or her self and not let “group-think” take over his mind.

The exhortation to be sober echoes Jesus’ teaching concerning spiritual alertness. (See Matt 24:43-44; Mk 13:33-36; Luke 12:37). To be sober is to be rational and self-possessed, in control of one’s mind, senses and thinking.

Finally, in verse 7, we find yet again the flag word “For.” Here the word is used in a confirmatory sense, related back to confirming and underscoring what was said in verse 6.

Verse 7 is showing us that there is activity characteristic of the night and also activity, that by implication, is not characteristic of the night, so is sleep characteristic of those who live in spiritual night.

b. Specific Elements of Conduct – verse 8

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

The words “putting on” are from a Greek verb that means “to clothe.” This is one of Paul’s favorite metaphors for the donning of Christian armor. The use of the terms breastplate and helmet indicate to us that a believer is to not only be a watchman but also a spiritual warrior.

The breastplate was an indispensable piece of armor. It covered a first century soldier from the neck down to the waist, covering the heart and all the other vital organs. The helmet represents hope, or the believer’s ultimate salvation and victory.

c. Doctrinal Basis of Conduct – verses 9-10

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

God's purpose for His children is stated both negatively and positively in verse 9.

First, **“wrath” is not His purpose for His own.** “Wrath” should be understood in the sense in which it has been used in this letter, i.e. context, context, context, or stated another way, the context is prophetic wrath. The wrath that awaits the unbeliever is NOT for the Christian. Specifically, the wrath is that of the Day of the Lord. The judgment to be poured forth on men is described in passages such as Revelation 6:15-17 and 14:10 and again in 19:15.

The salvation that awaits the believer is that of eternal fellowship with Christ. The words: “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” shows us that He is the one who secures salvation which consists of fellowship with Himself.

Let's look at the terms “appointed, “and “to wrath” in detail.

“appointed” = etheto = tithaymi = Strong's #5087 = to set, put or place something or someone. It can also mean to appoint or ordain or to be predestined or predestinated.

“wrath” = orgayn = Strong's # 3709 = wrath, anger, punishment.

Verse 9 tells us that God has NOT appointed or predestinated or ordered us to undergo the Divine wrath of the Tribulation period. If we are not assigned to undergo that wrath, where will we be? The answer to that question is found in the prior verses.

Conclusion: Christians are not assigned, nor appointed, ordained or predestinated to undergo the Divine wrath of the Great Tribulation period.

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d. Mutual Obligation of Conduct – verse 11

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Yet again, we have another “flag” word – “**Wherefore.**” It introduces a conclusion to what was stated in the prior verse and in this case is introducing our Christian duty, which is based on sound doctrine to ‘**comfort yourselves**’ and “**edify**” each other. It points to a mutual responsibility of believers to bear one another. Paul is always very skillful in choosing his words into a structure that combines recognition of achievement with an encouragement to grow even more and not be satisfied nor resting on one’s laurels.

Chapter 5: 12-22

Theme #8

Relating To Other Believers

“Ways to Build Up One Another”

A. Our Relationship to Spiritual Leaders 5:12-13

1. We are to Appreciate Them – verse 12

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;”

a. The Believer’s Duty

The infinitive “**to know**” involves the idea of acquaintance and understanding. In other words, leaders are to be known and appreciated. It should be noted that this is not a matter of personality but responsibility. The verse indicates three descriptive functions of a leader and it has nothing to do with personality or likeability.

b. A Leaders Duty

(1.) Duty of Labor

The word translated as “**labor**” does not merely focus on the effort put forth but upon the exhaustion that results therein. Laziness disqualifies one for leadership. This is a clear rebuke to those in Thessalonica who refused to work (see 4:11).

(2.) Duty of Guidance

The participle “**are over you**” give the details of how the leaders are to labor. Admonition is part of leadership. The phrase – “**in the Lord**” shows that this is not a cold, authoritarian and external leadership but one of warm family relationship.

(3.) Duty of Teaching

The tone of “**admonish**” is not merely brotherly but big-brotherly. The word used here is frequently used where there is a special tie between the teacher and the one taught.

2. We are to Esteem Them – verse 13

“And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.”

The word translated as “**esteem**” means – **‘to consider, to regard, to think.’** Deliberate and objective consideration is to be given to the leaders and the functions that they are to perform.

How are leaders to be thought of? The term “**very highly**” is a strong double compound superlative adverb and it means – **‘out of all bounds,’ or “beyond measure.”** The term “**in love**” points beyond duty and describes the nature of the esteem given.

“**be at peace among yourselves**” is a term that contextually means that there should be peace and love between the leaders and the one’s being led. Believers are to love their leaders and those who lead are to love the one’s being led.

B. Our Relationship To Deficient Believers – v.14-15

Stated Positively – verse 14

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”

Some have taken these exhortations to be directed to the leadership only. However, keep in mind that dealing with deficient believers is in a special way the duty of the leadership, but its not exclusively confined to the leadership. In other words the exhortations are given to both the leadership and to the congregation as a whole.

We have 3 classes of deficient believers:

#1. The unruly. The word in the original Greek means “to be out of order” and indicates a state of lack of discipline.

#2. feebleminded. The word in Greek literally means to be “little souled.” In other words, those who are easily discouraged, despondent and or timid.

#3. weak. Paul is not speaking of physical weakness but those who are morally weak. The term “support” means to “hold them up” indicating that their ability to remain moral is like wanting to keel over and thus needing someone to steady them in an upright manner so as to hold them up.

At the end of the verse comes the command to be patient and refers to a quality needed in dealing with all three types of cases of deficient believers. The ability to be patient toward those who try us is an ingredient of Christian love. (I Cor 13:4)

2. Stated Negatively – verse 15

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”

The imperative “**see**” anticipates the watchfulness that is necessary to prevent a retaliatory spirit from working its way into the church. No vice is more ingrained into the human heart than desire for retaliation – and we often call it – “Sweet revenge” don’t we? Romans 12: 17-21 and I Peter 3:9 teach this same concept.

The word “**but**” is a strong adversative and introduces the action that is required when wronged. In other words, forget about revenge, but instead bless the one who wronged you. We are to administer blessing to the one who wronged us. It is NOT an option. The phrase here is in the “**imperative mood**” meaning that it is a command, much like a military command given by an officer to a soldier. We are commanded or ordered to obediently – bless those who wronged us. The fact that is has to be given as a command indicates that is not always an easy thing to do.

C. Our Relationship to the Will of God-verses 16-22

1. Attitudes to Maintain – verses 16-18

“Rejoice evermore.”

“Pray without ceasing

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Here we have three unconnected verses. In other words, Paul stops using flag words. They are however in the **“imperative mood”** in Greek grammar, which means these are very “terse” commands. There is no optioning out of these commands. We are to obey and do them.

All three of these commands are mental attitudes.

Rejoice always – regardless of the circumstances, even if they are horrible.

Pray without stopping. This term conveys having a reverential attitude rather than a time length. The term “ceasing” or stopping does not refer to uninterrupted prayer but rather to constantly recurring prayer, i.e. **pray often as if it were non-stop.**

Giving thanks in every thing is not dependent upon pleasing or gratifying circumstances. Things that happen to us, pleasant or unpleasant are not to interrupt an attitude of thankfulness at all times.

Now in the middle of verse 18 – we have a flag word. It doesn’t start a verse that connects verses, but instead here it is connecting the prior three commands with a reason. “For” is always a flag word that indicates a reason or a justification for what preceded it. In this case, “For” is indicating a reason for giving those commands and it is also the reason for obeying those commands. SO what is the reason for these commands?

We are to obey these three commands because it is the will of God that we are to do so. It should be noted that in the Greek, the word “will” lacks the definite article, “the.” This means that this is not an exhaustive statement of the will of God. In other words, these are not the only things in God’s will.

2. Relationships to Sustain – verses 19-22

a. In Regard to the Holy Spirit- verse 19-20

“Quench not the Spirit.”

“Despise not prophesying.”

The negative is used in each of these two verses in such a way as to prohibit the continuation of an ongoing action. **STOP quenching** the Spirit and **STOP despising** is the contextual meaning. The first command is general and non-specific. The Holy Spirit was being quenched by their refusal of His word in the form of prophetic utterances.

b. In Regard to All Things – verses 21-22

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

“Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

This verse (vs. 21) balances the preceding verses. They should not despise prophecy on one hand, and yet on the other, they should not be credulous, and should not be accepting every claim to have had a message from God.

In verse 22 we have a screamingly serious error in the KJV translation. The word **“appearance”** is in the opinion of many to be extremely misleading and even dangerous because it plays into the notion of **“legalism.”**

The original Greek word in question is the Greek word – **“eidous.”** **Strong’s #1491)** The word should be translated as **“Form.”** i.e.

“Abstain from all form of evil.”

Why “form” and not appearance?

Contextually, the evil spoken of here is real, not apparent, as the word “appearance” implies. The use of the word appearance then incorrectly implies that the evil may not be real, but evil is real and not apparent.

The idea of examining and holding fast affirm the importance of Christian judgment guided by Christian truth.

Chapter 5: 23-28

Theme #9

Paul's Prayer and Plea

A. Paul's Prayer to God – 5:23-24

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

1. The Desire – Verse 23

The KJV again botches the original meaning of the text in verse 23. In fact, **the KJV leaves out a key word** – **“Himself”** a reference to God.

Here we have an indication of how badly the KJV messed up, despite the morons who claim that the KJV is the “inspired” version of God and without error and indeed superior to the original Greek text. The “KJV-only” crowd would have us believe the translators never left anything out of the original text. Well, here in chapter 5, verse 23, they left out the word “Himself”... The original Greek texts – in all – and I do mean ALL manuscripts, including those handled by the KJV committee, (which by the way included freemasons as well as King James himself being a mason) contain the words –“autos de’ho”–which should be translated as:

“And Himself, the God of peace...”

The pronoun, “Himself” stands emphatically at the beginning of the sentence. It indicates that all their working, no matter how sincere, will not be successful without Divine assistance. – By dropping the pronoun, “Himself” the KJV translators negates this emphasis and ignores that Divine assistance is necessary. Here again, such thinking helps to underscore the false teaching of legalism, albeit in a very subtle manner, but then, Satan works in very subtle ways.

Now, in making this known, I am not implying that we should all dump our KJV Bibles and go for the modern translations. My point is that all, and I mean ALL translations, past and current along with any future translations will never be able to perfectly transmit what was stated in the original language texts.

It is impossible because the ancient Greek and Hebrew languages have enough differences to the English language that you can never have absolutely, positively, unequivocally perfect translation that absolutely, perfectly matches what is stated in the original texts. Yet, the KJV-only crowd would have us believe otherwise and indeed boldly make the claim that the KJV translation is absolutely perfect and even to the point that no words are dropped. Well, here in First Thessalonians 5:23, the pronoun, Himself, referring to God, is dropped for no good reason.

My point is that we are to not worship what has been translated by men. Instead we are to study God's written Word, using all the tools that are available including the original language texts when possible along with lexicons as well as translations. It also doesn't hurt to refer to commentaries and opinions of others, but here again, do not take commentaries as infallible, including this one. Engage your minds and do your own studies and research into the texts for yourself.

Now let's return back to our evaluation of verse 23.

The word "sanctify" is an aorist tense verb and it points to the definite event that will occur at the Coming of Christ = which is the believer's glorification.

The word "wholly" is the Greek word "holotelas" and it is a compound word made up of the word "whole" plus the word "end." We could paraphrase the word as "wholly reaching the goal."

Now the second half of verse 23, elaborates on the words "sanctify you wholly" by explaining the details. Paul enumerates the three areas in which he desires to see sanctification, and together they constitute the whole person. While it may be admitted that Paul is not specifically arguing the tri-partite nature of man, it should be noted that he recognizes and assumes this to be so.

2. The Confidence – verse 24

The prayer is not a cry of despair or a feeble hope. Its ultimate accomplishment is rooted in the character of God, Himself. Since we are objects of His calling, we should rejoice in His faithfulness to effect that calling all the way to glorification.

B. Paul's Petition to Thessalonica – verses 25-28

1. Pray – verse 25

“Brethren, pray for us”.

The word “**brethren**” is placed in the emphatic position in the Greek sentence structure. This is the only place in the entire letter where it is placed first in the sentence. The request for prayer is based on Christian brotherhood. It is a habit of Paul to remind his readers at the beginning of his letters that he is praying for them and at the end to request prayer for himself.

2. Greet – verse 26

“Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.” .

The word “**holy**” indicates that the kiss is an expression of Christian, not romantic love. A kiss upon the cheek was a common form of greeting among friends in the first century. Indeed, it is still the case in some parts of the Middle East, particularly among the Arab nations.

3. Read – Verses 27-28

“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”

It is clear that Paul regards his written letter to bear the same authority as his personal presence. The reading was to be public – in the presence of all the believers at Thessalonica. It also shows a major feature of the duty of the church leadership, namely, communication of the Word of God to all. As in all of Paul’s letters, Paul begins and concludes his letter by referring to God’s grace.

End of this E-book

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**"America, The Babylon:
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You can also visit the "America, The Babylon" book web site for excerpts from the 2 books at:

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