



I & II Thessalonians

A COMMENTARY OUTLINE

THE DOCTRINE OF
THE SECOND COMING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Outline - A Bird's Eye View of I & II Thessalonians.....	<i>i</i>
I THESSALONIANS	
Turning to God from Idols - I Thessalonians 1:1-10	1
The Gospel Preached at Thessalonica - I Thessalonians 2:1-16	5
Paul and New Believers - I Thessalonians 2:17-3:5	13
Timothy's Report - I Thessalonians 3:6-13.....	17
Christian Conduct - I Thessalonians 4:1-12	21
The Parousia - I Thessalonians 4:13-18.....	26
The Day of the Lord - I Thessalonians 5:1-11	29
Relationships Within the Church - I Thessalonians 5:12-22	33
Conclusion - I Thessalonians 5:23-28.....	37
II THESSALONIANS	
Comfort in Affliction - II Thessalonians 1:1-5	39
The Righteous Judgment of God - II Thessalonians 1:6-12	43
The Day of the Lord - II Thessalonians 2:1-12.....	48
Transition - II Thessalonians 2:13-17.....	53
Finally Brethren - II Thessalonians 3:1-18.....	55

Outline

or “*A Bird’s Eye View of I & II Thessalonians*”

I THESSALONIANS

TURNING TO GOD FROM IDOLS
or “*Serving a Living and True God*” I Thessalonians 1:1-10

- A. Paul’s Greetings 1:1
- B. Paul’s Thanksgiving 1:2-4
- C. Paul’s Confidence 1:5-10
 - 1. Paul Was Confident Because of How God’s Word Came to Them 1:5
 - 2. Paul Was Confident Because of How God’s Word Was Received by Them 1:6
 - 3. Paul Was Confident Because of How God’s Word Was Handled by Them 1:7-8
 - a. It Was Reproduced Locally 1:7
 - b. It Was Reproduced Universally 1:8
 - 4. Paul Was Confident Because of the Way God’s Word Had Affected Them 1:9-10

THE GOSPEL PREACHED AT THESSALONICA
or “*Messengers of Truth*” I Thessalonians 2:1-16

- A. Focus on the Preacher 2:1-12
 - 1. Paul’s Persistence 2:1-2
 - 2. Paul’s Message 2:3-6
 - a. Paul’s Message Was Truth 2:3
 - (1) The Message Came from the Right Source
 - (2) The Message Was Pure
 - (3) The Message Was Honest

- b. Paul's Message Was a Trust 2:4
 - c. Paul's Message Was Pure 2:5
 - (1) Pure as to Method
 - (2) Pure as to Motive
 - b. Paul's Message Was Unencumbered 2:6
 - (1) By Desire for Human Praise
 - (2) By Use of Undue Pressure
 - 3. Paul's Demeanor 2:7-12
 - a. Paul's Demeanor Described 2:7a
 - b. Paul's Demeanor Illustrated 2:7b
 - c. Paul's Demeanor Practiced 2:8
 - d. Paul's Demeanor Recalled 2:9
 - e. Paul's Demeanor Reviewed 2:10-12
 - (1) In Relationship to Himself 2:10
 - (2) In Relationship to the Thessalonians 2:11-12
- B. Focus on the Hearers 2:13-16
 - 1. The Word Welcomed 2:13
 - a. The Response to the Word 2:13a
 - b. The Effect of the Word 2:13b
 - 2. The Persecution Ensues 2:14-16
 - a. The Identity of the Persecutors 2:14-15a
 - b. The Hostility of the Persecutors 2:15b
 - c. The Effect of the Persecutors 2:16a
 - d. The Judgment of the Persecutors 2:16b

PAUL AND NEW BELIEVERS

or "Paul's Joy, Hope, and Crown" I Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

- A. The Absence of Paul from the New Believers in Thessalonica 2:17-18
 - 1. The Separation 2:17
 - 2. The Frustration 2:18
- B. The Affection of Paul for the New Believers in Thessalonica 2:19-20
- C. The Burden of Paul for the New Believers in Thessalonica 3:1-2a
 - 1. His Selfless Attitude 3:1
 - 2. His Selfless Action 3:2a
- D. The Plan of Paul for the New Believers in Thessalonica 3:2b-4

- 1. As Indicated by His Present Teaching 3:2b-3
- 2. As Indicated by His Past Teaching 3:4
- E. The Representative of Paul to the New Believers in Thessalonica 3:5
 - 1. The Thessalonian Faith 3:5a
 - 2. The Pauline Fear 3:5b

TIMOTHY'S REPORT

or "Good News from Thessalonica" I Thessalonians 3:6-13

- A. The Report 3:6
 - 1. The Good News About Their Faith
 - 2. The Good News About Their Love
 - 3. The Good News About Their Attitude
- B. The Rejoicing 3:7-10
- C. The Request 3:11-13
 - 1. Concerning Their Visit 3:11
 - 2. Concerning Their Love 3:12
 - 3. Concerning Their Stability 3:13

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

or "The Worthy Walk" I Thessalonians 4:1-12

- A. General Conduct 4:1-2
- B. Sexual Conduct 4:3-8
 - 1. As It Relates to God's Will 4:3-6
 - a. Viewed Positively 4:3-4
 - b. Viewed Negatively 4:5-6
 - 2. As It Relates to God's Call 4:7-8
- C. Affectional Attitude 4:9-10
 - 1. The Importance of Love 4:9
 - 2. The Practice of Love 4:10
- D. Social Conduct 4:11-12
 - 1. Within the Body of Christ 4:11
 - 2. Outside the Body of Christ 4:12

THE PAROUSIA

or "The Lord Returns" I Thessalonians 4:13-18

- A. The Purpose of the Instruction 4:13
 - 1. From the Mental Standpoint 4:13a

- 2. From the Emotional Standpoint 4:13b
- B. The Nature of the Instruction 4:14-17
 - 1. The Basis of Our Hope 4:14
 - 2. The Certainty of Our Hope 4:15
 - a. Its Authority
 - b. Its Parity
 - 3. The Realization of Our Hope 4:16-17
 - a. The Person of the Arrival
 - b. The Majesty of the Arrival
 - (1) The Majesty of the Shout
 - (2) The Majesty of the Voice
 - (3) The Majesty of the Trumpet
- C. The Value of the Instruction 4:18

THE DAY OF THE LORD

or “*Like a Thief in the Night*” I Thessalonians 5:1-11

- A. The Knowledge of the Day of the Lord 5:1
- B. The Illustration of the Day of the Lord 5:2
- C. The Setting of the Day of the Lord 5:3
- D. The Duty in Light of the Day of the Lord 5:4-11
 - 1. The Character of the Sons of Light 5:4-5
 - 2. The Conduct of the Sons of Light 5:6-11
 - a. General Statement of Conduct 5:6-7
 - b. Specific Elements of Conduct 5:8
 - c. Doctrinal Basis of Conduct 5:9-10
 - d. Mutual Obligation of Conduct 5:11

RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CHURCH

or “*Ways to Build Up One Another*” I Thessalonians 5:12-22

- A. Our Relationship to Spiritual Leaders 5:12-13
 - 1. We Are to Appreciate Them 5:12
 - a. The Believer’s Duty
 - b. The Leader’s Duty
 - (1) The Duty of Labor
 - (2) The Duty of Guidance
 - (3) The Duty of Teaching
 - 2. We Are to Esteem Them 5:13
- B. Our Relationship to Deficient Believers 5:14-15

- 1. Stated Positively 5:14
- 2. Stated Negatively 5:15
- C. Our Relationship to the Will of God 5:16-22
 - 1. Attitudes to Maintain 5:16-18
 - 2. Relationships to Sustain 5:19-21
 - a. In Regard to the Holy Spirit 5:19-20
 - b. In Regard to All Things 5:21-22

CONCLUSION

or “*Now May the God of Peace*” I Thessalonians 5:23-28

- A. Paul’s Prayer to God 5:23-24
 - 1. The Desire 5:23
 - 2. The Confidence 5:24
- B. Paul’s Petition to Thessalonica 5:25-28
 - 1. Pray 5:25
 - 2. Greet 5:26
 - 3. Read 5:27-28

II THESSALONIANS

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

or “*Growth Through Adversity*” II Thessalonians 1:1-5

- A. The Greeting 1:1-2
- B. The Commendation 1:3-4
 - 1. It Flowed from Obligation 1:3a
 - 2. It Was Based on Spiritual Growth 1:3b
 - 3. It Was Proclaimed by Paul 1:4
- C. The Confirmation 1:5

THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD

or “*Divine Justice Repays*” II Thessalonians 1:6-12

- A. A Description of the Righteous Judgment of God 1:6-8
 - 1. Its Outcome 1:6-7a
 - 2. Its Revelation 1:7b
 - 3. Its Subjects 1:8
- B. The Consequences of the Righteous Judgment of God 1:9-10
 - 1. The Destruction of the Lost 1:9
 - 2. The Glorification of the Saved 1:10

- C. The Prayer in Light of the Righteous Judgment of God 1:11-12
 - 1. The Content of the Prayer 1:11
 - 2. The Purpose of the Prayer 1:12

THE DAY OF THE LORD
or “*The Epoch of God*” II Thessalonians 2:1-12

- A. The Rebuttal Teaching 2:1-2
 - 1. The Subject Introduced 2:1
 - 2. The Error Exposed 2:2
 - a. Its Effect
 - (1) In Terms of Mental Turmoil
 - (2) In Terms of Emotional Turmoil
 - b. Its Perpetrators
 - c. Its Message
- B. The Review Teaching 2:3-5
 - 1. The Warning 2:3a
 - 2. The Facts 2:3b-4
 - a. The Departure Must Come Before the Day of the Lord 2:3b
 - b. The Man of Lawlessness Must Come Before the Day of the Lord 2:3c-4
 - (1) His Titles
 - (2) His Revelation
 - (3) His Work
 - c. The Reminder 2:5
- C. The Predictive Teaching 2:6-12
 - 1. Concerning the Present 2:6-7
 - 2. Concerning the Future 2:8-12
 - a. The Revelation of the Man of Lawlessness 2:8-10
 - (1) His Certain Destruction 2:8
 - (2) His Satanic Working 2:9
 - (3) His Evil Success 2:10
 - b. The Delusion 2:11-12

TRANSITION
or “*From Instruction to Exhortation*” II Thessalonians 2:13-17

- A. The Thanksgiving 2:13-14
 - 1. The Character of the Thanksgiving 2:13a
 - 2. The Grounds for the Thanksgiving 2:13b-14

- a. He Is Thankful Because of the Divine Choice 2:13b
 - b. He Is Thankful Because of Divine Call 2:14
- B. The Exhortation 2:15
- C. The Prayer 2:16-17

FINALLY BRETHREN

or “*Prayer and Discipline*” II Thessalonians 3:1-18

- A. The Request for Prayer 3:1-5
 - 1. Its Statement 3:1a
 - 2. Its Content 3:1b-2
 - a. Concerning the Message
 - b. Concerning the Messengers
 - 3. Its Attitude 3:3-5
 - a. Its Root 3:3a
 - b. Its Direction 3:3b
 - c. Its Result 3:4
 - d. Its Anticipation 3:5
- B. The Discipline of the Disorderly 3:6-15
 - 1. The Command Given 3:6
 - 2. The Support of the Command 3:7-10
 - a. The Apostolic Example 3:7-9
 - (1) The Knowledge of the Example
 - (2) The Nature of the Example
 - (3) The Purpose of the Example
 - b. The Apostolic Teaching 3:10
 - 3. The Information Requiring the Command 3:11
 - 4. The Correction 3:12-15
 - a. Directed to the Unruly 3:12
 - b. Directed to the Disciplined 3:13-15
- C. The Conclusion 3:16-18

Turning to God from Idols

or “Serving a Living and True God”

I Thessalonians 1:1-10

Thessalonica was a major city in Greece. It was strategically located on the Ignatian way, which was the main road between Rome and the eastern provinces of the empire. In Paul’s day, it had a population of nearly 200,000 inhabitants. Thessalonica is one of the few cities of the first century that has maintained continuity to our day. It has grown some, with a current population of nearly 300,000.

The opening chapters of I Thessalonians are reminiscent, recalling the spiritual history of the church located there. The first three chapters are a detailed exposition of the words “how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.” The entire book may be divided into two parts. First, the Thessalonians are reminded of how they had *received* the word of God (1:1-3:13). Second, they are told of how they must *live* the word of God (4:1-5:28).

PAUL’S GREETINGS 1:1

“Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.”

Who were these men? We find our answer in Acts 17:1-2 and 14 where we learn that these were the servants who brought the gospel to Thessalonica. Paul later dispatched Timothy to be their first teacher in Christian truth (I Thessalonians 3:1-2). Silvanus is also called Silas by Luke.

While it is too much to say that Silvanus and Timothy were Paul’s co-authors, the pronoun *we* continues throughout most of the letter. This stands in contrast to I Corinthians 1:1 where Paul associates Sosthenes with himself but by verse 4 changes to the first person singular *I* for the remainder of the book.

Every age has a conventional form for letter writing. The style in Paul’s day began with the writer’s name, then the recipient’s name, followed by a greeting and the body of the letter.

Paul notes that the recipients were not only dwellers in Thessalonica but were also *in* God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ. The word for Father is *patar* and means *nourisher* or *protector*. This position is their assurance of supply and security. *In Christ* is a basic New Testament description of what a Christian is—one who bears a personal relationship to Christ.

PAUL'S THANKSGIVING 1:2-4

"We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; ³constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, ⁴knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you..."

Prayer for other believers occupied much of Paul's time. The emphasis on continual prayer is found in Romans 1:9, I Corinthians 1:4, Philippians 1:3-4, and Colossians 1:3.

Thanksgiving is an expression of faith in what has been done for one. We say "thank you" only after we know something has been given to us. These opening words of Paul's letter reveal how he views believers. He always recalls what God has done for them before he deals with their problems. In I Corinthians 1:2-3, he calls the Corinthians *sanctified* before he calls them *men of flesh* (carnal).

Paul mentions his characteristic trilogy of faith, love, and hope. These same words occur in I Corinthians 13:13 but in different order, i.e. faith, hope, and love. Why does I Thessalonians put *hope* last, giving it special emphasis? If one thinks of the context of the two books, the answer becomes obvious. Love is last in I Corinthians 13 because it is the theme of the chapter; hope is last in I Thessalonians because the entire book focuses on the return of Christ, which is the believer's hope. Each chapter mentions the return of Christ (1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:17-18, and 5:23). The trilogy of faith, love, and hope is not in itself the focal point. The emphasis is rather on what each part of the trilogy produces. Faith produces works; love produces the labor; and hope produces stability.

Verse 4 introduces the idea of confidence with the word *knowing*. Paul will show why he is confident the readers are among God's beloved elect ones.

PAUL'S CONFIDENCE 1:5-10

PAUL WAS CONFIDENT BECAUSE OF HOW GOD'S WORD CAME TO THEM 1:5

"...for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."

The word *for* introduces the grounds of Paul's assurance concerning the Thessalonian church. The gospel may be viewed from various aspects. Romans 1:1 speaks of the *gospel of God*, which looks at the origin of the message; Romans 1:3 views the gospel from the standpoint of its theme—*concerning His Son*. Revelation 14:6 speaks of the *eternal gospel*, stressing its duration; and Acts 20:24 shows its basis in calling it *the gospel of the grace of God*. Paul calls it *our gospel* because he is the proclaimer of it.

The word *gospel* is *euangelion* and stresses the content of the message. Paul does not say, "We came to you with the gospel," but rather, "The gospel came to you." This makes the message focal, not the messengers. That the gospel did not come to them in *word only* points to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in causing the message to be understood. The following shows how effective communication of the gospel takes place. It is a combination of all the natural aspects of communication plus the work of the Holy Spirit.

"Our"	"gospel"	"to you"
Speaker	Message	Hearers

Everything that is required for communication is seen above, but it can break down at any point. The speaker must make a clear presentation, his message must be worthwhile, and the hearers must put forth the effort to listen. In Thessalonica all of the above took place, but it was in word only until it came *in power and in the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit touched the speaker in verse 5, and the Holy Spirit touched the hearers in verse 6. The message of the gospel came in *power* because it is power itself (Romans 1:16). The result of all of this is found in the words *full conviction*.

PAUL WAS CONFIDENT BECAUSE OF HOW GOD'S WORD WAS RECEIVED BY THEM 1:6

"You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit..."

The word of God had changed the direction of their lives. The word *imitators* is *mimatai* (our *mimic*). This word is used six times in the New Testament, setting forth four examples. We are to imitate God (Ephesians 5:1), Paul (I Thessalonians 1:6, I Corinthians 4:16-

17, 11:1), other churches (I Thessalonians 2:14), and other believers (Hebrews 6:12).

The participle *having received* is *dechomai*, which means *to welcome, to embrace, to make one's own*. The believers in Thessalonica had suffered persecution on their first reception of the truth (Acts 17:5-8), after Paul had left them (I Thessalonians 2:14-17), and as Paul is now writing (I Thessalonians 3:2-4).

PAUL WAS CONFIDENT BECAUSE OF HOW GOD'S WORD WAS HANDLED BY THEM 1:7-8

It Was Reproduced Locally 1:7

"...so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia."

The word *example* is *tupos* (our type) and means *to be a model*. Macedonia and Achaia represented the two parts of Greece.

It Was Reproduced Universally 1:8

"For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything."

The Thessalonian church is a good example of New Testament missions. The words *from you* point to the origin of missions; *the word of the Lord* to its message; *faith toward God* to its image; and *every place* shows the scope of their missionary activity.

PAUL WAS CONFIDENT BECAUSE OF THE WAY GOD'S WORD HAD AFFECTED THEM 1:9-10

"For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."

The word *reception* is *eisodos* (opposite of *exodus*) and means *the way into*. The details of Paul's entry into Thessalonica are given in chapter 2. There we will 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 says they turned *to God from idols*, not *from idols to God*. The former is salvation by grace; the latter salvation by works. Each chapter of I Thessalonians contains something relative to the return of Christ.

The Gospel Taught at Thessalonica

or “The Messengers of Truth”

I Thessalonians 2:1-16

FOCUS ON THE PREACHER 2:1-12

I Thessalonians 2 serves two purposes. First, it presents one of the great spiritual success stories of the New Testament. Paul had arrived in a city of almost a quarter million people where, as far as we know, there was not one single believer. He preached in the synagogue for three weeks; and when he left town, a local church existed.

Why, however, do we find Paul writing to defend his motives and ministry? Why does he need to remind them of the integrity of his message as he does in verse 3? Why does he need to remind them that he is not acting to please men but God as in verse 4? Why does he need to remind them that he did not come to them with a pre-text for greed, and why does he need to call God to witness his truthfulness as in verse 5? The answer leads us to the second feature of the chapter: II Thessalonians 2 is an apology. The Greek word *apologia* means *a defense*. A passage defending one's actions, attitudes, and motivation is called an apologetic.

There were many itinerant preachers in Paul's day, and their only concern was to feather their own nests. Perhaps a quote given by Leon Morris on page 68 of his commentary will help us appreciate the environment in which Paul worked. "There has probably never been such a variety of religious cults and philosophic systems as in Paul's day. East and West had united and intermingled to produce an amalgam of real piety, high moral principles, crude superstition and gross license. Oriental mysteries, Greek philosophy, and local godlings compete for favour under the tolerant aegis of Roman indifference. 'Holy men' of all creeds and countries, popular philosophers, magicians, astrologers, crack-pots, and cranks, the sincere and the spurious, the righteous and the rogue, swindlers and saints, jostled and clamored for the attention of the credulous and sceptical." This is why Paul found it necessary to plead his case as an honest minister of Christ.

PAUL'S PERSISTENCE 2:1-2

“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,² but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.”

The word *for* that opens chapter 2 goes back in thought to 1:9, particularly to the words *what kind of a reception we had with you*. The word *reception* is *eisodos* and is a compound of a noun meaning *way or road* plus a preposition meaning *into*. The first words of the sentence are *you yourselves* and stand in the emphatic position. They mean *you believers in contrast to my detractors*. Paul's appeal to his readers' knowledge does two things. First, it shows his confidence in them. He had no fear that they would believe the lies that were being told about him. Second, it shows his confidence in the facts of the case. The facts concerning his integrity were common knowledge and everything needed to vindicate him.

The words *our coming to you* show that Paul was the initiator of the relationship. This differs from evangelism that “sets up a tent” and asks the unbeliever to come to it. Paul was aggressive in evangelism—he went out where the unbeliever was. The preposition *to* is *pros*, which emphasizes close contact, like “face to face.”

How was Paul mistreated at Philippi? Acts 16:16-24 narrates the account of Paul and Silas being dragged into the market place where they were beaten with rods and finally thrown into the inner prison, bound with their feet in stocks. Men serving only themselves would certainly have been stopped by such treatment, but not so Paul who preached the gospel from pure motives. The word *boldness* refers to the state of mind from which words flow freely. Mistreatment opened Paul's lips; it did not close them. In the New Testament, this term is always used in connection with the proclaiming of the gospel. The attached prepositional phrase, *in our God*, shows that this boldness is not a natural attribute. If Paul were self-seeking, why would he continue to preach a message that brought him such suffering?

PAUL'S MESSAGE 2:3-6

Paul's Message Was Truth 2:3

“For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit...”

The Message Came from the Right Source

The words *not from error* convey this truth. The preposition *from* is the familiar *ek*, which indicates source and origin. The Greek uses the preposition with *error*, *impurity*, and *deceit*.

The Message Was Pure

The word *impurity* is most frequently used of sexual impurity. Most of the Eastern cults practiced sexual impurity as part of their religion. Ritual prostitution was a major feature of many of them. None of this was part of Christianity.

The Message Was Honest

The word *deceit* was used of baiting in order to catch fish. Paul did not use gimmicks. The power of God was behind the message, and nothing else was necessary.

Paul's Message Was a Trust 2:4

"...but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts."

This verse proves the three points made in verse 3. The message could not be error because he was entrusted with it by God. It could not be impure because it was approved by God; and it could not be that of a trickster because it aimed at pleasing God, not men.

Paul's Message Was Pure 2:5

"For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness..."

Pure as to Method

The word *flattering* is a little misleading. In English, flattery involves insincerity and even dishonesty. The word in Greek describes the use of fair and honest words designed to gain one's own way.

Pure as to Motive

The word *pretext* is literally *cloak*. It is used of anything that covers one's real motives. It is the putting forth of something that is true and plausible but hides one's true intent.

The word for *greed* is a compound of two words, *to have* and *more*. It refers to the desire to have more of something. It is insatiable—when it gets more, it wants much more; and when it gets much more, it wants much more yet. Colossians 3:5 calls it *idolatry* because it worships the desires of man.

Paul's Message Was Unencumbered 2:6

"...nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority."

By Desire for Human Praise

The negative *nor* with the present participle denies this as a practice or habit of seeking human praise. Paul and his fellow missionaries had not used their preaching in order to gain human glory.

By Use of Undue Pressure

We might have asserted our authority is literally *having power to be men of weight*. By recalling that they were apostles of Christ, he safeguards the dignity of the great office in which God had placed them.

PAUL'S DEMEANOR 2:7-12**Paul's Demeanor Described 2:7a**

"But we proved to be gentle among you..."

There is a problem as to whether the text reads *apion* (gentle) or *napion* (babes). Context seems to argue for *gentle* since the word *babe* would introduce a mixed metaphor. How could a *babe* also be a *nursing mother*? II Timothy 2:24 says this requirement of gentleness should be present in all servants of Christ. It is translated there as *kind*.

Paul's Demeanor Illustrated 2:7b

"...as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children."

The word *nursing* means *to provide food*. The verb *tenderly cares* literally means *to keep warm*. The words *her own* show that the nurse is the mother.

Paul's Demeanor Practiced 2:8

"Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."

The participle translated *having fond affection* is found only here in the New Testament and is very rare elsewhere. It expresses great depth of feeling. The imperfect tense verb *were well-pleased* points to what was actually done. The word *very dear* is the adjective form of the familiar word *agapa*, the specific Christian quality of love.

Paul's Demeanor Recalled 2:9

"For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God."

This dedication is not something that merely rests on Paul's word; it is something of which the Thessalonian church is aware. Paul's

ministry was not one of ease and personal prosperity. It could well have been that Paul rose long before dawn to work so that he could have other hours for the preaching of the gospel.

Paul's Demeanor Reviewed 2: 10-12

In Relationship to Himself 2:10

"You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers..."

Three adverbs are used to describe the conduct of Paul and his associates who preached with him in Thessalonica. The first is *hosios*, which means *devout*. It is an inner disposition that honors God. The second is *dikaios*, which denotes conduct that comes up to the full measure of what is right. The third describes the negative side of things. It is *amemptos*, which refers to a condition of life over which no just accusation can be made. Paul both believed and behaved the gospel.

In Relationship to the Thessalonians 2:11-12

"...just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹²so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."

Paul advances the family metaphor from that of a nursing mother to that of an instructing father. The words *each one of you* point to the individual and personal encouragement Paul wishes to give.

Paul speaks of men walking worthy of God and then immediately turns to the work of God for men. The two are inseparable—we are to honor Him, and it is His very own calling that makes this possible. He is both the enabler and initiator of the Christian life.

FOCUS ON THE HEARERS 2:13-16

THE WORD WELCOMED 2:13

"And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."

The Response to the Word 2:13a

The theme of this chapter is the preaching of the gospel in Thessalonica. The divine origin of the message is emphasized in verses 2 and 8 by calling it *the gospel of God*. The divine authority of the message is a fundamental conviction of Paul. He now under-

scores their understanding of that fact also. The message was divine in origin, and they responded to it as such.

The authority of Scripture has at least three implications. First, its nature should determine its priority. If we neglect it, we neglect the only infallible source of truth we have. Second, its nature should determine our method. Each word and phrase should be carefully analyzed for precise meaning. Human study should honor divine care. Third, its nature should determine our response. Infallible truth calls for a faith response.

Two words are used to describe the response of the Thessalonians to the word of God. We are told they *received* it. Usage of this word shows it is almost always used in a physical and objective sense. This contrasts the word *accepted*, which points to a personal and subjective act. It could well be translated *welcomed*. The first word points to *recognition* of what it was, whereas the second indicates *approval* of what it was.

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 2:13b

The phrase *performs its work* translates the word *energeo*. Our word *energy* is related to it. The word is almost always used of supernatural activity in the New Testament, and the present tense points to its continuous activity. The participle *believe* is also present tense. The action of the word matched the attitude of those who heard it. Faith is the condition upon which the word of God works in the believer's life.

THE PERSECUTION ENSUES 2:14-16

The Identity of the Persecutors 2:14-15a

"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out."

The connective *for* introduces the proof that God's word was being effective in their lives. The context makes it clear that the area of imitation was suffering. In 1:6 they had imitated the apostles in the area of Christian conduct. Now they join the rest of the churches in the brotherhood of common suffering. Jesus taught that the stony-heart hearers fell away under persecution (Matthew 13:20-21).

Mention of the Judean churches does two things. It shows that persecution was part of the church from the very beginning and that the Thessalonians are not having a unique experience. 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 2:15b

| *“They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men...”*

| Paul had experienced great hostility from the Jews. He had been driven out of Damascus (Acts 9:23-25) and 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). A few short weeks after his entry into Thessalonica, they forced him to leave.

The Effect of the Persecutors 2:16a

| *“...hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved...”*

| The Jews resisted the preaching of the gospel among themselves. Since Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, their resistance to him would be even greater because it implied that God had forsaken Israel. Romans 10:2 tells us that their zeal for God was not guided by knowledge, and their actions toward Paul and the gentile converts is evidence.

The Judgment of the Persecutors 2:16b

| *“...with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.”*

| The infinitive *fill up* implies a sin quotient and limitation. It is the point at which divine wrath becomes inevitable and fully deserved. After centuries of rejection of truth, their moment had arrived.

| The wrath spoken of seems to be future; but if this is so, why is it spoken of as though it were present? The verb *has come upon* is found in Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20 where Jesus speaks of the arrival of the kingdom in similar terminology. The sense of the verb is the arrival at the threshold of judgment, not the actual entering into judgment. Inevitability is the flavor of the expression.

NOTES

Paul and New Believers

“Paul’s Joy, Hope, and Crown”

I Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

THE ABSENCE OF PAUL FROM THE NEW BELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA 2:17-18

“But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.

¹⁸For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan thwarted us.”

THE SEPARATION 2:17

With the emphatic pronoun *we*, Paul separates himself from the rebellious Jews and returns to the theme of his deep affection for the Thessalonian believers. The aorist participle *having been bereft* points to a definite event that was forced upon them. The participle means *to be orphaned* and is thus full of affection and conveys the anguish of the separation.

When Paul speaks of being orphaned *in person, not in spirit*, he is saying “out of sight, out of mind” is not true. Love is not limited by space and time. Love cannot enjoy absence, however; and Paul must make every effort to see their faces again.

THE FRUSTRATION 2:18

The words *I, Paul* call special attention to Paul. It does not make the desire of his fellow workers any less, but it does serve to focus on the apostle himself.

The words *more than once* are literally *both once and twice* and have led some to search for the two occasions upon which Paul sought to return. It is more probable that the expression carries the idea of more than once as the NASB has understood.

The verb *thwarted* is a military term that pictures an army breaking up a road so that it would be impassable. It implies the creation of obstacles that would make movement impossible. We should note

that Paul does not indiscriminately attribute hindrances of his plan to Satan. It was the Holy Spirit who blocked him from preaching the gospel in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6-7). Hindrances to our well-meant plans may be divine at times and Satanic at others.

THE AFFECTION OF PAUL FOR THE NEW BELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA 2:19-20

“For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? ²⁰For you are our glory and joy.”

Paul anticipates the Thessalonian believers as his joy at the coming of Christ (1:19), and they are his joy at the present moment (1:20).

Hope points to Paul’s anticipation, *joy* to its fulfillment, and *crown* to the final victory. This is the first reference to *His coming* in Christian literature. The basic idea of the word *parousia* is personal presence (I Corinthians 16:17, II Corinthians 10:10). In the language of the Roman citizen, it referred to the arrival of a great person, a king, or an emperor. It meant *royal visit*. In the New Testament, it became the technical term for *the* royal visit—the return of Christ.

THE BURDEN OF PAUL FOR THE NEW BELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA 3:1-2A

HIS SELFLESS ATTITUDE 3:1

“Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone...”

Paul was unable to endure the thought of a new believer being deprived of spiritual food. The words *we thought it best* point not only to resolve but also to emotion. It is the same verb used in 2:8, translated *we were well-pleased*. Paul’s selfless attitude is further expressed by the infinitive *to be left behind*, which means *to forsake, to abandon, to leave in the lurch*. In all of its contexts, emotional pain is involved. Mark 12:19 uses it of leaving one’s loved ones in death.

HIS SELFLESS ACTION 3:2A

“....and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ...”

The person to be sent to Thessalonica is named and then described. We do not know why Timothy was able to return and Paul could not. Perhaps Timothy had not taken sufficient part in the founding of the church to rouse the ire of the Jews. The words *our brother* show the association and dependence that existed among the

| servants of Christ, while the words *God's fellow worker* stress Timothy's independence of man and responsibility to God alone.

THE PLAN OF PAUL FOR THE NEW BELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA 3:2B-4

AS INDICATED BY HIS PRESENT TEACHING 3:2B-3

| "...to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,³ so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this."

The infinitive *to strengthen* means *to put in a buttress, a support*. In classical Greek, the word was almost always used in a literal sense. Metaphorically, it means *to make firm in one's mind*. It assumes an opposing force against which one must stand. This word was used by Jesus to summarize that work which Peter was destined to do (Luke 22:32). It describes the follow-up work of Paul among the Galatian churches (Acts 18:22-23), and was the goal Paul hoped to achieve in Rome (Romans 1:11). Ultimately, it is said to be the work of the Lord in the lives of His children (I Thessalonians 3:11-13).

The infinitive *encourage*, in a literal sense, means *to call to the side of*. Usage shows that the purpose of being along side is to help.

The word *disturbed* is very colorful in the original, meaning *to wag the tail*. The Greeks apparently observed that dogs wag their tails fast when they are aroused. It was thus used figuratively for a roused condition. The verb *destined* is very strong. 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.

AS INDICATED BY HIS PAST TEACHING 3:4

| "For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know."

The imperfect tense of the verb *we kept telling* shows that this had been an often repeated theme in Paul's teaching in Thessalonica. Warning concerning certain suffering as Christians was often one of the first lessons Paul taught (Acts 14:22) and was, indeed, the first lesson he was taught on the Damascus road (Acts 9:15-16).

The verb *we were going* is *mello*, which means *about to be* and points to the imminency of suffering. The words *as you know* remind the Thessalonian believers that Paul and those that served with him knew what they were talking about. They predicted imminent suffering, and surely, it came.

THE REPRESENTATIVE OF PAUL TO THE NEW BELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA 3:5

“For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.”

THE THESSALONIAN FAITH 3:5A

Paul now repeats the things he had said in 3:1-2. In I Thessalonians 3:1-2, Timothy was being sent to benefit the Thessalonians; now, Timothy is going to be sent to benefit Paul. The repetition shows how highly emotionally charged Paul is.

THE PAULINE FEAR 3:5B

Paul assumes the reality and effectiveness of the work of Satan. He regards Satan as capable of destroying his own work among them. Paul does not identify his foe by name but by activity. This ongoing activity is stressed by the present participle. Paul knew Satan had been at work in Thessalonica, but he did not know the extent of his success.

T Timothy's Report

or "Good News from Thessalonica"

I Thessalonians 3:6-13

THE REPORT 3:6

"But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you."

We would do well to recall the setting of this verse. Paul could no longer endure the separation of new believers from teaching (I Thessalonians 3:1). Timothy had been dispatched to Thessalonica to meet this need (I Thessalonians 3:2). According to Philippians 2:19-20, the unavailability of teachers was due to a common problem of self-interest. Timothy was a notable exception. The words *but now* that open verse 6 give a temporal fix. They refer to the immediate present. Everything has been reminiscent in I Thessalonians; and now with the arrival of Timothy, things take a dramatic new turn.

Paul's excitement bursts forth as he says *Timothy has brought us good news*. The word *good news* is significant. It is used over fifty times in the New Testament, and in every case it refers to good news coming from God to man. It is *the* word used to describe the saving work of Christ—it is the word often translated *gospel*. Three items in Timothy's report have fueled Paul's enthusiasm.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THEIR FAITH

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

Satan has two goals regarding the believer's relationship to truth. First, he wishes to limit our exposure to it (I Thessalonians 2:18). Second, he wishes to destroy our faith in it (I Thessalonians 3:5). He may experience success or failure at either point.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THEIR LOVE

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

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDE

Paul had doubtless wondered how successful his detractors had been during his separation from Thessalonica. The news brought back by Timothy was better than Paul expected. They had continued to look back on his time with them with joy. But more—they eagerly await their reunion with him.

THE REJOICING 3:7-10

"...for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; ⁸for now we really live if you stand firm in the Lord. ⁹For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, ¹⁰as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?"

For the fourth time in this chapter, we have reference to the faith of the Thessalonians. Two things cause Paul to forget his intense afflictions. Romans 8:18 speaks of the present sufferings as not even worthy of comparison to the anticipation of glorification. Now, here in I Thessalonians 3:7, he is comforted in affliction because of the growth and stability of the Thessalonian church. The word *this* is singular and gathers up the three ideas of their faith, their love, and their favorable attitude toward Paul.

The words *about you* contain *epi*, a preposition used to introduce the basis on which something rests. Paul pictures the situation in Thessalonica as though his very life depends upon their spiritual success (3:8). *Standing* refers to firmness in the faith (Romans 11:20, II Corinthians 1:24).

Standing is a metaphor for the believer's stability, *walking* for the believer's conduct, *running* for the believer's service, and *seated* for the believer's position in Christ. Paul is deeply involved with the Thessalonian church. In verses 6-10 he uses the personal pronoun no less than ten times!

With verse 9 Paul takes the thanksgiving back to its ultimate source since it was not the work of Paul but the work of God that made them steadfast. Verse 10 shows that it was the progress of the Thessalonians that drew Paul into prayer for them. Many times it takes a personal need, a tragedy, a pressure, a problem, a danger, or uncertainty to cause us to pray. Not so with Paul! The Thessalonian believers were growing, and Paul prayed all the more. If one looks at Colossians 1:3-4, 9, and 2:1, we learn that Paul

did not even require personal acquaintance to involve himself in prayer for others.

The word *complete* in verse 10 is important and colorful. The word was used literally for the mending of fishing nets in Matthew 4:21. It also carries the idea of providing what is necessary to carry out a mission, as in Hebrews 10:5 (*prepared*). The word *lacking* is a plural noun and shows that more than one thing needed rectification.

THE REQUEST 3:11-13

CONCERNING THEIR VISIT 3:11

“Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you...”

Though this verse is a petition, it also has interesting doctrinal content. First, it teaches the brotherhood of believers. This is conveyed by the plural *our God and Father*. Second, the words *Father and Jesus* are linked by *and*, making them joint subjects. They are the subject of a singular verb *direct*. Paul thus ascribes full deity to Jesus.

CONCERNING THEIR LOVE 3:12

“...and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you...”

Here is a reminder that though Paul has the most earnest desire to see them, their spiritual growth is ultimately in the hands of the Lord, whether he gets to visit them or not. The word *increase* is *pleonazo* and ties significantly into II Thessalonians 1:3 where it is translated *greatly enlarged*. What Paul prayed for in I Thessalonians is seen as realized in II Thessalonians.

CONCERNING THEIR STABILITY 3:13

“...so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

The work of Timothy and that of God are both intended to establish the Christians at Thessalonica. The two work hand-in-hand and present no contradiction. God is the source of the stability and Timothy is the agent used by God to bring it about.

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

NOTES

CChristian Conduct

or “The Worthy Walk”

I Thessalonians 4:1-12

All of Paul’s letters have a certain order. He usually opens his letter with the treatment of doctrinal matters; any questions his readers may have asked are answered. He then follows with the implications of doctrine for Christian living. This transition is often marked by the words *finally then*, as is true of I Thessalonians 4. The believer’s conduct may be handled under four headings, providing an outline for these twelve verses.

GENERAL CONDUCT 4:1-2

“Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.² For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.”

Paul instructed these new believers immediately after their conversion. The very first days of their new lives as Christians were filled with instruction. The aorist tense of the verb *you received from* conceives of an action complete in itself. Paul had been in Thessalonica three to four weeks and had given them complete instructions concerning the Christian walk.

The living of the Christian life was presented as an imperative matter. The verb *ought* is *dei*, the word for absolute necessity. It is the same word used by Jesus in telling Nicodemus that he *must* be born again. The definite article *the* precedes the word *how*. Paul taught “the how” of the Christian life.

Paul presented the Christian life as a *walk*, a metaphor for conduct and lifestyle. The metaphor sets aside the idea that the Christian life is a series of fireworks. It is a step-by-step, day-by-day, inch-by-inch matter—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, i.e. pleasing God. The concept of ever increasing maturity is conveyed by the words *excel still more*.

SEXUAL CONDUCT 4:3-8

AS IT RELATES TO GOD'S WILL 4:3-6

Viewed Positively 4:3-4

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor..."

The noun *will* has no article with it. If it did, we might expect these verses to be a full presentation of God's will. The absence of the article places emphasis on the character or the essence of the noun. Thus, *bears the quality of being the will of God* is the idea. This leaves room for a statement of the will of God in other matters also.

The word *sanctification* is taken from a totally pagan context. It was a cultic concept for the quality possessed by things or persons who could approach deity. Its root meaning is *to set apart*. It has three aspects to it. First, there is positional sanctification (I Corinthians 1:2), which speaks of a sanctification due to our union with Christ. Second, there is ultimate sanctification (I Thessalonians 5:23), which anticipates the day of our glorification when we are fashioned in Christ's image. Finally, there is experiential sanctification, which refers to the Christlikeness that is developed in the believer during his life on earth. It is this of which I Thessalonians 4:3 speaks.

Why is a command to abstain from fornication needed in the Thessalonian church? Because sexual sin was so lightly condemned by Greek society. Continence was regarded as an unreasonable demand on a male. The command issued here is not necessarily intended to rebuke a sin that was being practiced among believers. Because of the low standards of the day, Christians needed to be reminded not to pattern their sexual conduct after a society that does not adhere to divine standards or morality. Since a Christian is always influenced by contemporary thinking, reminders are very much in order.

How can a believer be sure he or she *abstains*? The answer does not lie entirely in willpower. I Corinthians 6:18 is helpful in its command to *flee immorality*. Paul is warning Christians to stay away from situations of temptation—run!

Fornication is a unique sin. If one steals, he has committed a sin *by* his body; if one envies, he has committed a sin *in* his body; if one commits suicide, he has sinned *upon* his body. In fornication, one sins *against* his body.

What does it mean to sin against one's body? Fornication violates God's purpose for the body as shown by I Corinthians 6:13, "Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body." Even more sobering is the truth that fornication is a sin

against the resident of the body as I Corinthians 6:19-20 reads, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you....”

Possessing one’s own *vessel* has been taken two ways. First, some take it to mean one’s wife. Others take vessel in the sense of II Corinthians 4:7, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels....” This seems to fit the context best since Paul is speaking of the exercise of sexual discipline over one’s own body.

Viewed Negatively 4:5-6

“...not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.”

The word *passion* denotes the idea of overpowering desire. Paul is picturing men who allow passion to control—who have no control over their lives. The Christian is to be unlike the society in which he lives, both in belief and conduct.

AS IT RELATES TO GOD’S CALL 4:7-8

“For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. ⁸Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”

Sin must be viewed from the standpoint of the ultimate issue. For the believer, sexual morality is not merely an issue of relationship with man; it is an issue of one’s relationship to God. Sin is always against God as stated by Psalm 51:4, “Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight....”

The mention of the Holy Spirit as God’s gift to us is especially pertinent to sexual morality since the body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

AFFECTIONAL ATTITUDE 4:9-10

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE 4:9

“Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another...”

Now as to is a Pauline way of introducing a new subject (4:13 *about*, 5:1 *as to*). They apparently introduce different parts of Timothy’s report concerning the Thessalonian church.

The Greek word *philadelphia*, translated *love of the brethren*, was used among the Greeks for love among blood relatives. The New Testament uses it for love of believers for one another who com-

prise the family of God. Paul sees love as an inbred part of the family of God. It flows from within; it is not infused from without.

THE PRACTICE OF LOVE 4:10

“...for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more.”

This verse may be viewed as the proof that Christians are truly taught by God to love one another. The Thessalonian believers *do practice it* toward those in Greece that they have never seen.

Paul always safeguards against stagnancy in the Christian life. Here he does so by the words *excel still more*.

SOCIAL CONDUCT 4:11-12

WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST 4:11

“...and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and to attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you...”

The word *and* shows the close connection of this verse with the preceding one. The actions of verse 11 may be regarded as the details of a manifested love for the brethren. In essence, they all encourage 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.

This verse is another example of exhortation given to Christians to resist the cultural habit of their day. Greek society degraded labor, but Christians are to pursue it. In so doing, they will avoid the pitfalls of idleness.

OUTSIDE THE BODY OF CHRIST 4:12

“...so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.”

This type of conduct should have two results. First, it should win respect from unbelievers. *Outsiders* are those who have no connection with Christ and are outside the family of God (I Corinthians 5:12-13, Colossians 4:5, I Timothy 3:7). Second, this will enable them to fulfill their social responsibility by not being dependent citizens.

The Parousia

or “The Lord Returns”

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

THE PURPOSE OF THE INSTRUCTION 4:13

FROM THE MENTAL STANDPOINT 4:13A

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep...”

The Thessalonians had gladly welcomed the word of God; but with the passage of time and the march of events, questions had risen in their minds. A primary one was, What becomes of believers who die before the *parousia*? Referring back to I Thessalonians 3:11-13, the original readers might have felt that these words imply that Christ will come during their lifetimes.

With the words *we do not want you to be uninformed*, Paul uses a formula to introduce something that is new to his readers. The word *brethren* is added to show the affectionate attitude that accompanies this new teaching. For similar passages see Romans 1:13, 11:25, I Corinthians 10:1, 12:1, II Corinthians 8:1. *Sleep* is a frequent metaphor for the death of a believer. Its use as a present tense participle points to an action that is continuing. He is speaking of the regular occurrence of death that is taking place daily among them. It is important to remember that the metaphor of sleep applies only to the body, not the soul. The metaphor is appropriate for two reasons. First, when sleeping, one continues to exist. Second, when sleeping, one is in a temporary state.

FROM THE EMOTIONAL STANDPOINT 4:13B

“...that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.”

The Christian view of death stood in total contrast to that of the pagan. Most pagans believed that death ended it all; and those who believed in life after death certainly did not glory in it. The following is the kind of condolence that a pagan could give to another. It is taken from the first century. “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 in the Ante-Nicene 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.”

The words *that you may not grieve* do not present a stoic, unfeeling viewpoint. The present tense of that verb speaks of grieving as a continuous activity. Grief is sustained; but it should not be a continuous, debilitating thing.

Unbelievers are described by three terse expressions. First, they are described as *outsiders* (4:12), pointing to their separation from Christ. Second, they are termed *the rest*, which points to their deprivation of the blessings of Christianity. Finally, and most tragically, they are said to have *no hope*. There is no article with this noun, meaning they have nothing that even bears the character of hope.

THE NATURE OF THE INSTRUCTION 4:14-17

THE BASIS OF OUR HOPE 4:14

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.”

The word *if* introduces a condition assumed to be true. The simple condition is to *believe*. Faith is only made valid by its object and is here presented as two-fold. That Christ *died* points to the act that secured our salvation; and that Christ *was raised* shows the act that proves the sufficiency of the death of Christ. The aorist tense of each points to definite historical events. Christian hope does not rest on philosophical speculation but on historical events.

What do the words *fallen asleep in Jesus* mean? The preposition *in* is *dia* and literally means *through* or *by means of*. Taking this meaning, Paul is saying, “Through Jesus, death becomes sleep.” The emphasis would lie on the transforming power of the death and resurrection of Christ relative to death. Christians, then, do not die in the fullest sense of the word; and this is because of Jesus.

The words *shall bring* strongly imply that they must presently be with Him. He does not say *they shall be raised*. This means 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.

THE CERTAINTY OF OUR HOPE 4:15

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.”

Its Authority

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 is stressed, saying this is all supported *by the word of the Lord*.

Its Parity

One of the concerns of the Thessalonian church had been the relationship that believers who had died would bear to the return of Christ. Verse 16 assures them that there will be parity between the dead and the living at this great event.

THE REALIZATION OF OUR HOPE 4:16-17

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

The Person of the Arrival

The word *Himself* is emphatic. It is no human being, no angel, not even Gabriel, nor any of the highest of God’s creation, but the Lord *Himself* who will return—deity descends!

The Majesty of the Arrival

The Majesty of the Shout

The word *shout* means *a cry of command*. It was used, for example, of the cry made by the ship’s master to his rowers.

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 Michael.

The Majesty of the Trumpet

This is associated in the Old Testament with “Forward March!”

THE VALUE OF THE INSTRUCTION 4:18

“Therefore 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.

NOTES

The Day of the Lord

or “Like a Thief in the Night”

I Thessalonians 5:1-11

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 addresses the Thessalonian ignorance on the matter of the Lord’s return. Its purpose, therefore, is to inform them of the facts. Their ignorance centered about the *parousia* of Jesus. They had a problem understanding the place that dead believers would have in this event. They apparently believed that because of death, they would be excluded from Christ’s return. Paul teaches them that both living and dead believers will participate in the *parousia*.

I Thessalonians 5:1-3 addresses the Thessalonian knowledge concerning the day of the Lord. Its purpose is to exhort them to right conduct and correct some false teaching that had entered the church.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD 5:1

“Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.”

What are the *times* and *epochs*? While the two words seem hard to distinguish at times, the following chart may help provide some valid distinctions.

CHRONOS - “times”	KAIROS - “epochs”
Looks at sequence of events (when?)	Looks at nature of events (what?)
Emphasis on order of events	Emphasis on character of events
Example: next year	Example: bad year
Indicates quantity of time	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.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD 5:2

“For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.”

Two ideas may be derived from the thief metaphor. Primarily, Paul is emphasizing its unexpectedness. Since a thief can bring devastation as does the day of the Lord, this may be a secondary idea. This may be supported by the words *peace and safety* that follow.

THE SETTING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD 5:3

“While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

The tense of the verb *they are saying* denotes a continuous action. The destruction occurs while men are in the midst of peace talks. To the Greek, *peace* meant absence of war; *safety* meant security. The word *security* meant there was nothing that could happen to dispense with peace.

The *day of the Lord* spoken of in verse 2 has no definite article. This 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 this will end, and it will end suddenly.

There are three basic elements in the *day of the Lord*. First is the punishment of the wicked; second, the vindication of God’s justice; and third, the establishment of Christ’s rule on earth.

The word order in verse 3 is forceful—“then sudden upon them comes destruction.” The inevitability of the event is stressed by the words *shall not escape*. The Greek uses a double negative, and we could represent it by translating “there shall be no escape—none!”

THE DUTY IN LIGHT OF THE DAY OF THE LORD 5:4-11

THE CHARACTER OF THE SONS OF LIGHT 5:4-5

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; ⁵for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness.”

But you, brethren introduces the sharp contrast between the believer and those mentioned in verse 3. The world is made up of the unbelieving and unthinking who are caught in God’s sudden wrath. The verb *should overtake* denotes both surprise and hostility. *The day* is a reference to the *day of the Lord* spoken of in verse 2. The connective *for*, which opens verse 5, offers further confirmation of the assertion of verse 4.

Believers are called *sons of light*. The noun *sons* followed by a genitive *of light* is a semitic construction meaning *to be characterized by*. The description of a person as *the son of* pointed to what controlled or dominated them. The words *sons of day* are an advancement on the words *sons of light*. Not only do believers possess light, but it becomes the total environment in which they move and are thus sons of day.

With the verb *we are*, Paul identifies himself with his readers. The assertion of the character of the readers now becomes the basis for exhortation to proper conduct.

THE CONDUCT OF THE SONS OF LIGHT 5:6-11

General Statement of Conduct 5:6-7

“...so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. ⁷For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.”

The verb *sleep* is a metaphor for indifference to spiritual reality. It is the act of living as though the day of the Lord does not exist—it is apathy to truth. It is a different word than that used to express the believers death in I Thessalonians 4:13-15.

The imperative *let us not sleep* is first person plural. Paul includes himself, showing that no one is immune to spiritual apathy, even the great apostle. The conduct of the believer is to stand in contrast to what *others do*. The believer is to reject “herd mentality.”

The exhortation to be *sober* echoes the teaching of Jesus concerning spiritual alertness (Matthew 24:43-44, Mark 13:33-37, Luke 12:37). To be *sober* is to be rational and self-possessed, in control of all of one’s senses.

The word *for* that introduces verse 7 is confirmatory. The verse shows that there is activity characteristic of the night and activity that, by implication, is not characteristic of night. As sleep is characteristic of night, so is sleep characteristic of those who live in spiritual night.

Specific Elements of Conduct 5:8

“But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

The words *having put on* are from a verb that means *to clothe*. It is one of Paul’s favorite metaphors for the donning of Christian armor. The *breastplate* and *helmet* show that a believer is not only a watchman but also a warrior.

The breastplate was an indispensable piece of armor. It covered the soldier from neck to waist, covering the heart, an obviously vital

organ. The helmet represents hope, or the believer's ultimate salvation and victory.

Doctrinal Basis of Conduct 5:9-10

"For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him."

God's purpose for His children is stated negatively and positively. 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., eschatological 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, 14:10, and 19:15.

The *salvation* that awaits the believer is that of eternal fellowship with Christ. The words *through our Lord Jesus Christ* show that He is the one who secures salvation which consists of fellowship with Himself.

Mutual Obligation of Conduct 5:11

"Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing."

The connective *therefore* introduces the Christian duty, which is based on Christian doctrine. *One another* is a reciprocal pronoun and thus points to the mutual responsibility that believers bear to one another. Paul is always skillful in combining a recognition of achievement with an encouragement to grow even more.

Relationships Within the Church

or “Ways to Build Up One Another”

I Thessalonians 5:12-22

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO SPIRITUAL LEADERS 5:12-13

WE ARE TO APPRECIATE THEM 5:12

“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.”

The Believer’s Duty

The infinitive *appreciate* is literally *to know*. This involves acquaintance and understanding. Leaders are to be known and appreciated. It is important to note that this is not a matter of personality but a responsibility. The three-fold description of the function of the leaders has nothing to do with their personality. It is an understanding of these duties and an appreciation of the true value of good leaders that will beget an appropriate relationship to leaders.

The Leader’s Duty

The Duty of Labor

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

The Duty of Guidance

This and the following participle give the details of how the leaders labor. Admonition is part of leadership. The words *in the Lord* show that this is not a cold authoritarian and external leadership but one of warm family relationship.

The Duty of Teaching

The tone of this participle 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.

WE ARE TO ESTEEM THEM 5:13

“...and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”

The word translated *esteem* means *to consider, to regard, to think*. Deliberate and objective consideration is to be given to the leaders and the functions they are to perform. *Very highly* is a strong double compound superlative adverb and means *out of all bounds, beyond all measure*. *In love* points beyond duty and describes the nature of the esteem given.

Some interpreters attach the exhortation to *live in peace* to the verses that follow rather than verses 12 and 13. If this be the case, the command is general and *one another* describes all other believers. On the other hand, it seems that the context argues that one another refers to the believer and the leadership. Believers are to love their leaders, and those who lead are to love the ones led.

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO DEFICIENT BELIEVERS 5:14-15

STATED POSITIVELY 5:14

“And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.”

Some have taken these exhortations to be directed to the leadership only. It seems best, however, to keep in mind that while dealing with deficient members is in a special way the duty of leadership, it goes too far to say this duty is confined to them. This being true, the exhortations are to both leaders and members of the Thessalonian congregation.

The first class of deficient believers is the *unruly*. The word means *to be out of order*. Neglect of one's duty lies at the heart of the word. The adverbial form of the word *unruly* is found in II Thessalonians 3:6 (*unruly*) and 3:11 (*undisciplined*).

The second class is termed *fainthearted*. The Greek word is *holigap-suchos* and means *little souled*. The reference is to those who are easily discouraged, despondent, and timid. The King James translation of *feeble-minded* is misleading in that it implies mental deficiency, which is not the case.

The third class is the *weak*. Paul is not speaking of physical weakness, but rather of those who are morally weak and deficient. The verb translated *help* means *to hold oneself against* and connotes the

support of another by keeping oneself opposite the weak one so as to hold them up.

These three types of deficient believers may be identified with the undisciplined believers of 4:11-12, the *fainthearted* with the one's concerned about their departed loved ones in 4:13-18, and the *weak* with those warned of lapsing into immorality in 4:2-8.

The final command to *be patient* refers to a quality needed for dealing with all three classes of deficient believers. Ability to be patient toward those who try us is an ingredient of Christian love (I Corinthians 13:4).

STATED NEGATIVELY 5:15

"See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men."

The imperative verb *see* anticipates the watchfulness that is necessary to prevent a retaliatory spirit from working its way into the church. No vice is more ingrained in the human heart than desire for retaliation—we often call it "sweet revenge." Romans 12:17-21 and I Peter 3:9 teach the same concept.

The strong adversative *but* introduces the action required when wronged. Not only are we to forego revenge, but we are to administer blessing. The command to *seek* this end assumes that such a pursuit will not be easy.

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WILL OF GOD 5:16-22

ATTITUDES TO MAINTAIN 5:16-18

"Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Though these terse commands are not tied together by any connecting words, they do exhibit the theme of mental attitude. Each of the three imperatives is preceded by modifying words. Continuity and completeness are conveyed by each of them. The source of joy is always independent of one's circumstances. The command was appropriate even though Paul's readers were in the midst of great persecution (I Thessalonians 1:6, 2:14, 3:7). The adverb of time, *always*, occurs frequently in this letter (2:16, 3:6, 4:17, and 5:15).

The command to *pray* lays stress on a reverential attitude rather than on the length of time petitions are made. Paul is not saying, "Say prayers all of the time," but rather, "Maintain a reverential and prayerful attitude in the midst of all of your activities." The adverb *without ceasing* does not refer to uninterrupted prayer but to constantly recurring prayer.

In the command to give thanks *in everything*, Paul is saying that a thankful attitude is not dependent upon pleasing or gratifying circumstances. Things that happen to us, pleasant or unpleasant, are not to interrupt an attitude of thanksgiving.

The connective *for* introduces the justification for these commands. We are to obey them because it is the will of God that we do so. The word *will* is without the definite article *the*, showing that this is not an exhaustive statement of the will of God.

RELATIONSHIPS TO SUSTAIN 5:19-21

In Regard to the Holy Spirit 5:19-20

“Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰do not despise prophetic utterances.”

The negative is used in such a way as to prohibit the continuation of an ongoing action. *Stop* quenching and *stop* despising is the meaning. The first command is general; the second is specific. The Holy Spirit was being quenched by their refusal of His word in the form of *prophetic utterances*.

In Regard to All Things 5:21-22

“But examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.”

This verse balances the preceding. They should not despise prophecy on one hand; and yet on the other, they should not be credulous, accepting every claim to have a message from God. Older translations have rendered the word *form* as *appearance*. This is misleading because the evil spoken of here is real, not apparent, as the word *appearance* implies. The ideas of examining and holding fast affirm the importance of Christian judgment guided by Christian truth.

C Conclusion

or “Now May the God of Peace”

I Thessalonians 5:23-28

PAUL’S PRAYER TO GOD 5:23-24

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.”

THE DESIRE 5:23

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. The aorist tense of the verb *sanctify* points to the definite event that will occur at the coming of Christ—the believer’s glorification.

The word *wholly* is *holotelas* and is a compound word made up of the word *whole* plus the word *end*. We could paraphrase for meaning saying *wholly reaching the goal*.

The second half of verse 23 elaborates on the words *sanctify you entirely* 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 tripartite nature of man, it should be noted that he recognizes and assumes this to be so.

THE CONFIDENCE 5:24

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.

PAUL'S PETITION TO THESSALONICA 5:25-28**PRAY 5:25**

"Brethren, pray for us."

The word *brethren* is placed in the emphatic position. This is the only place in I Thessalonians 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.

GREET 5:26

"Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss."

The word *holy* indicates the kiss is an expression of Christian, not romantic, love. A kiss upon the cheek was a common form of greeting among friends.

READ 5:27-28

"I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. ²⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

It is clear that Paul regards his written epistle to bear the same authority as his personal presence. The reading was to be public—in the presence of all the Thessalonian believers. 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 his letters, Paul begins and concludes by referring to God's grace.

Comfort in Affliction

or “Growth Through Adversity”

II Thessalonians 1:1-5

THE GREETING 1:1-2

“Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ²Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul wrote I Thessalonians from the city of Corinth in about A.D. 51. We can be certain of this date because of an inscription found at Delphi, Greece, that dates Gallio’s proconsulship as A.D. 51-52. Acts 17 records the establishing of the church at Thessalonica; and in chapter 18, Paul encounters Gallio (Acts 18:12-17).

II Thessalonians follows the first letter by about six months and is closely linked to the first. It was written because some of the teaching in the first letter had been misunderstood. In particular, there was confusion over I Thessalonians 5:2, which spoke of *the day of the Lord*. Some were insisting that the church was presently in that day. Paul wrote to refute that viewpoint. II Thessalonians was written to correct and clarify. In so doing, it teaches what the day of the Lord is and the order of events that precede it.

Four major themes emerge. First, Paul writes to commend the church’s growing faith and love (1:3). Second, Paul wishes to encourage them to remain steadfast in the midst of persecution (1:4, 11). Third, Paul attempts to correct their misunderstanding concerning the day of the Lord (2:1-17). Finally, Paul issues a rebuke for reprehensible conduct (3:1-18).

The opening greeting is typical of a letter written in the first century. The first item was identification of the writer, followed by the recipient, then a greeting. The greeting found here is similar to that of I Thessalonians but differs in two ways. First, Paul adds *our* with *Father*. When *Father* is used alone, the emphasis is on His person; but here *our* stresses the believer’s relationship to Him and also the relationship of believers to one another. Second, Paul adds the

words from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace are seen as emanating from both the Father and the Son. Both are governed by the preposition *from* and are joined by the conjunction *and*. This places the Father and the Son on a plane of equality. It is interesting to note that with this early epistle, the equality of Jesus with the Father is assumed.

THE COMMENDATION 1:3-4

IT FLOWED FROM OBLIGATION 1:3A

“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting...”

This obligation is expressed by the verb *we ought*, which demonstrates that Paul was not merely conforming to polite custom. Many times we say, “I’m pleased to meet you” as a matter of manners and custom. Paul is not being perfunctory; he is saying that it would be wrong not to commend them. The obligation is further stressed by the word *fitting*. Literally, the word means corresponding, showing that the commendation corresponded to the real state of things.

IT WAS BASED ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH 1:3B

“...because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater...”

The two things for which Paul gives thanks were mentioned in his first letter as subjects for improvement. I Thessalonians 3:10 speaks of *what is lacking in your faith*, and 3:12 anticipates that their love will *increase and abound*. II Thessalonians 1:3 shows that Paul’s prayer for them is seeing fulfillment. The verb *abound* in I Thessalonians 3:12 is the same as the verb translated *grows ever greater* in II Thessalonians 1:3.

Faith and love were vital elements in the church at Thessalonica. Their presence resulted in the word of God being proclaimed in all of Greece and everywhere (I Thessalonians 1:8). Evangelism was not a program but was the result of normal Christian growth. Their faith shows a right response to doctrine; their love shows a right relationship to the Holy Spirit who produces it.

IT WAS PROCLAIMED BY PAUL 1:4

“...therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”

The words *we ourselves* are placed in an emphatic position. Why would this be so? Because one would not expect the founders of a church to boast of the church they established. The words *speak*

proudly translate the Greek word for boasting. It is important to note that Paul does not boast of the work he did among them, but rather boasts of their own spiritual growth.

One single article unites *faith* and *perseverance* serving to tie the two closely together. Faith and perseverance are associated closely with *persecutions and affliction*. The word *perseverance* is *hupomona*, which means *load carrying capability*, and is developed in the crucible of suffering. Three things work together: a condition of suffering, the response of faith, and load carrying capability as the result. The association of these things together is demonstrated by Romans 5:3, 15:4, II Corinthians 1:6, 6:4-5, James 1:2-3, and 5:11. The pressures on the Thessalonian church are viewed from two standpoints. The word *all* emphasizes their abundance; and *endure* shows their persistent presence.

THE CONFIRMATION 1:5

“This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.”

With verse 5 Paul transitions from a commendation of the steadfastness of the Thessalonians in persecution to the subject of divine judgment. The italicized words *this is* show that they are supplied by the translators, but there is no matching verb in the Greek. Rather than supply words, it seems best to treat the sentence as elliptical and punctuate with a dash. Thus, we would have “all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure—a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment.”

The righteous judgment spoken of should be understood as future. Since the righteous suffer now and the evil prosper now and injustice reigns, if God is righteous, as He is, there must be a coming judgment. Longsuffering is the theme of the moment; righteous judgment is that of the future.

The futurity of the judgment spoken of here is indicated by three things. First, there is a definite article before the word *judgment*—*the* judgment, not *a* judgment. Second, judgment is singular in number. Finally, the judgment is associated with the return of Christ, which lies in the future.

These opening words of verse 5 show how we are to interpret the believer’s suffering. It is, argues Paul, evidence that God’s judgment is righteous. But how so? To man, the fact of suffering seems to deny, not confirm, the righteousness of God.

We must remember that the New Testament does not look on suffering as most modern people do. To most, it is an evil in itself and is to be avoided at all costs. The word of God, however, views suffering as the means whereby God develops character in His

own people and accomplishes His own good purpose. For the Christian, suffering is not avoidable; it is inevitable. I Thessalonians 3:3 informs us that it is part of the calling of every Christian.

The result of this suffering is given in the last half of verse 5. The words *considered worthy* should not be taken to mean *be worthy*. Their sufferings were not what merited their entry into God's kingdom but are rather evidence of their salvation. Their patient endurance proved them to be saved. It is clear that their saved condition was the cause of their persecution.

NOTES

The Righteous Judgment of God

or “Divine Justice Repays”

II Thessalonians 1:6-12

A DESCRIPTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD 1:6-8

“For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,⁷ and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

ITS OUTCOME 1:6-7A

Verse 6 opens with the principle upon which God’s righteous judgment rests. It is a first class conditional sentence that begins with the word *if*. This type of sentence assumes something to be true—“If, as is truly the case, it is only just for God to repay.” God’s justice is in perfect harmony with His character. God’s justice pays back in kind. The juxtaposition of the words shows this—*to those troubling you—trouble*. A proper and biblical concept of justice demands requital. In the face of present injustices, our conscience tells us there must be a future retribution. A world in which justice does not prevail would not and could not be God’s world. This is the case for a future judgment.

The word *relief* conveys the picture of the loosening of a taut bow-string. It suggests relief and rest, not from toil and labor, but from tension and suffering. This relief is associated with the return of Christ.

The words *to us as well* reveal a Pauline characteristic: Paul frequently unites himself with his readers. II Corinthians 1:7, 4:14; Philippians 1:30; and II Timothy 4:8 show that Paul often writes in terms of *us*, not in terms of *you* and *me*.

ITS REVELATION 1:7B

The preposition translated *when* has two implications. The first is the most obvious. It has temporal implications in that it shows when this judgment will occur. It also has instrumental implications in that His return is also the means of retribution. The revelation marks the time of retribution and the means of retribution.

Three prepositional phrases describe Christ's coming. It will be *from heaven*. The preposition *from* denotes a departure. Hebrews 8:1 teaches us that upon His ascension Jesus took a seat at the Father's right hand where He remains to this day. Paul is teaching that the judgment day will come, and He will depart that throne in heaven to take a throne on earth from which He will judge and reign. Theologians often refer to the period between His ascension and return as His session. His session is marked by patient longsuffering but will someday abruptly end.

His coming will be *with His mighty angels*. Jesus predicted this in places such as Matthew 16:27 and 25:31. The power will be His, and the angels will be His agents. At the moment, the power belongs to the persecutors; but we are to be encouraged by knowing that one day the power will be all His.

Christ will return *in flaming fire*. Literally the text says *in a fire of flame*. The theophanies of the Old Testament were often marked by fire (Exodus 3:2, 19:18, 24:17; Psalm 18:12; Isaiah 30:27-30; and Daniel 7:9-10). Fire portrays both majesty and indignation.

ITS SUBJECTS 1:8

The gender of the participle *dealing out* connects it to *the Lord Jesus*, not *flaming fire*. In the Old Testament, the rendering of vengeance is asserted to be the prerogative of Yahweh (Deuteronomy 32:35, Psalm 94:1). The action of vengeance taken here by Christ is compatible with His words in John 5:22, "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son."

The description of the subjects of the judgment is made in two parallel statements. Williams translation brings out this idea, saying "those who do not know God, that is, those who will not listen to the good news." The present tense of *obey* marks their persistent condition. Those judged refuse both the content of the message and the response it demands.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD 1:9-10

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LOST 1:9

"And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

These is a plural qualitative pronoun that tells what kind of people he is speaking of. Their fate is in harmony with their nature.

The adjective *eternal* is *aion* and refers to *an age, a period of undefined duration*. It occurs seventy times in the New Testament but in only three places is it an epoch that is not endless (Romans 16:25, II Timothy 1:9, and Titus 1:2). This is the most express statement in Paul's writings concerning the eternity of future punishment.

THE GLORIFICATION OF THE SAVED 1:10

"...when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed."

The believer's entire identity is found in his relationship to Christ. The aorist tense of the participle and verb *believed* looks back to that decisive moment on earth when one came to faith in Christ. The words *on that day* are last and therefore emphatic.

THE PRAYER IN LIGHT OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD 1:11-12

THE CONTENT OF THE PRAYER 1:11

"To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power..."

The prospects of the righteous judgment of God have been used to encourage the Thessalonian believers, and now it is found to be motivation to pray for them. Paul often turns his teaching into prayer. Paul had thanked God for them (1:3); had boasted about them (1:4); had assured them (1:7, 10); and now he prays for them (1:11-12).

When God calls men, they are completely unworthy (Galatians 1:13-15); but He does not wish them to remain in that state. As the Christian life progresses, they are to increasingly walk worthy of their calling (Ephesians 4:1). The word *desire* carries, not merely the idea of a wish, but the idea of a resolve. The verb *fulfill* contains the idea that human power is inadequate to do this, and thus the action of God is required to produce it.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PRAYER 1:12

"...in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

In the Bible, a name is far more than a means of distinguishing a person. It is used to sum up the whole character of the person. A name is almost equivalent to character, nature, or personality of the

one spoken of. The glorification is reciprocal—it is of both Him and us. As is always true with Paul, the success of the work of God in the believer is attributed to the grace of God. The words *according to* introduce both the norm and the source of this mutual glorification. There is one article with the words *our God and the Lord Jesus Christ*. This makes feasible the translation *of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ*.

NOTES

The Day of the Lord

or “The Epoch of God”

II Thessalonians 2:1-12

THE REBUTTAL TEACHING 2:1-2

THE SUBJECT INTRODUCED 2:1

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him...”

The concept of His *coming* and *our gathering* are governed by one article. This shows that Paul is referring to one event with two aspects. The noun translated *gathering together* is used only one other time in the New Testament. In Hebrews 10:25 it is used of the gathering of believers together in a local assembly. In II Thessalonians 2:1 it is used of our gathering to Christ at His return. This gives great significance to the meeting of the local church on earth. That gathering foreshadows and anticipates the day in which Christ will return to take His church to be with Him forever.

The preposition *to* before *Him* is significant in that it marks the point to which the gathering is aimed. Christ is the convening center of the church on earth now; Christ is the convening center for the church in heaven at His return.

THE ERROR EXPOSED 2:2

“...that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come ”

Its Effect

In Terms of Mental Turmoil

The word *composure* is literally a word meaning *mind*. Wycliffe colorfully translates “from your wits.” The infinitive *shaken* is used both literally and figuratively. The literal sense is found in Luke

6:48, which speaks of flood waters battering a house that it could not shake. Here it is used metaphorically of a shaken mind. The aorist tense shows Paul is thinking of a definite and devastating event.

In Terms of Emotional Turmoil

The infinitive *be disturbed* is a present tense showing the ongoing condition caused by the initial onslaught of erroneous teaching. It was a continuous inner emotion of fear and “jumpiness.”

What is the *day of the Lord*? This expression occurs in the Old Testament in the following passages: Isaiah 2:12, 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11, 31, 3:14; Amos 5:18 (twice), 20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14 (twice); Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5. In addition to these, the words *that day* or *the day* or *the great day* occur more than seventy-five times. The New Testament speaks of the *day of the Lord* in Acts 2:20; I Thessalonians 5:2; II Thessalonians 2:2; II Peter 3:10.

The idea of judgment is paramount in all passages. Zephaniah 1:14-18 is a good example. The judgment is seen as upon the nation of Israel and the entire world. The historical judgments of Israel recorded in the Old Testament cannot exhaust the judgments announced in connection with the *day of the Lord*.

If one reads all of the *day of the Lord* prophecies and notes what is involved, it becomes obvious that it includes what we call the tribulation period, the return of Christ, and His reign over the earth. The day of the Lord is a significant period of time. The New Testament always views it as a future episode in the dealing of God.

Its Perpetrators

The preposition *by* is repeated with the three nouns *spirit*, *message*, and *letter*. This serves to “itemize” each one as possibilities for the source of deception that had so destabilized the church. Deception *by spirit* could refer to some utterance professedly given under the operation of the Holy Spirit, while *by message* would refer to any oral communication as over against a written message. The words *as if from us* point to a possible forgery of Paul’s name in order to give their message credence.

Its Message

The deceivers had claimed that the day of the Lord was present, and the church was therefore in that period of time. There are many events connected with the day of the Lord. This may be concluded by noting the many passages that speak of that day and the events associated with it.

THE REVIEW TEACHING 2:3-5

THE WARNING 2:3A

“Let no one in any way deceive you...”

Paul always assumes that false teaching is either present or on the way. Acts 20:25-32 provides a good example. Paul reminds the Ephesian church of the fullness and completeness of his ministry among them (20:25-27) and warns them that, in time, false teachers will arrive (20:28-30). In order to prepare them, he gives the command that reveals what their line of defense is to be. They are to *be on guard* (20:28) and to *be alert* (20:31), meaning to *turn one’s mind to, to pay careful attention*. Mental alertness and constant awareness of the danger of false teaching must be in the forefront of their mentality.

THE FACTS 2:3B-4

“...for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”

The Departure Must Come Before the Day of the Lord 2:3b

The word *apostasy* is specific, not general—not *an* apostasy, but *the* apostasy. The word was used outside of the New Testament to describe military or political revolt. In Acts 21:21 it is used in a religious context in an accusation that Paul was causing the Jews to *forsake* Moses.

While defection from the truth began early in church history and continues to this day, Paul is speaking of the climactic apostasy. Translators have tried to convey this idea by translating *the great apostasy*, or the New English Bible has *the final rebellion*.

The Man of Lawlessness Must Come Before the Day of the Lord 2:3c-4

His Titles

The designation *man of lawlessness* is not a personal name but a characterization of the man. The word *lawlessness* points to refusal to operate within laws as they exist—probably rejection of moral absolutes. The other designation, *son of destruction*, assures of his final destiny. This expression was also applied to Judas Iscariot.

His Revelation

The importance of this revelation is seen by the repetition of the verb *revealed* in 2:3, 6, and 8. The verb in verse 3 is an aorist tense, which points to a definite anticipated event. That he is *revealed* implies his presence on earth before his manifestation.

His Work

The *man of lawlessness* will be the personification of pride and ego. He will seek to destroy all forms of worship, both Christian and non-Christian. He is not only anti-Christian, he is anti-theistic, except for how he views himself. He will seek to abolish all forms of worship by replacing them with himself. Everything within the sphere of man's religious activity will be banned. He will blasphemously take his seat *in the temple of God*. This implies the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The words *as being God* contain a verb. A literal translation would be, *he is God*.

THE REMINDER 2:5

"Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?"

Had they remembered the sound doctrine they had been taught, they would not have been disturbed by this new and novel teaching. Old truth is often forgotten when faced with an effective teacher who has "revolutionary" ideas and persuasive ability.

THE PREDICTIVE TEACHING 2:6-12**CONCERNING THE PRESENT 2:6-7**

"And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way."

The word *now* occurs first in the sentence and gives an emphatic focus on the present. With verse 8, the word *then* moves us to the future.

The neuter participle *what restrains* becomes the masculine participle *he who restrains* in verse 7. The first focuses on the force that restrains; the second on the person that restrains. Some have taken this to be a reference to the Roman Empire and the Roman emperor. This view is inadequate because both Rome and its emperor have passed, and the events of which Paul speaks did not occur.

It is evident that the restrainer must have supernatural powers to hold back the supernatural powers of evil. Attributing the restraining power to the Holy Spirit is favored because of His harmony with God's purpose and God's timetable.

If one has doubts about the neuter and masculine gender both used of the Holy Spirit, the upper room discourse should be considered. Either gender may be used of the Holy Spirit, depending upon whether the writer wishes to emphasize natural agreement (masculine) or strict grammatical agreement (neuter).

The restraining work of the Holy Spirit will end with the *parousia* of Christ. His function of restraining sin through the body of Christ

will cease much like His striving did in the days of Noah. At this point, the final Satanically led rebellion will begin.

CONCERNING THE FUTURE 2:8-12

The Revelation of the Man of Lawlessness 2:8-10

His Certain Destruction 2:8

“And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming...”

After the removal of the restrainer, the revelation (verse 8) and coming (verse 9) of the lawless one occurs. The lawless one who is now frustrated by the restrainer is finally given an interval in which to work.

When this interval is over, Christ will return to *slay* and *bring to an end* the activities of the lawless one. Passages such as Exodus 15:8, II Samuel 22:16, Job 4:9, and Psalm 33:6 all picture the breath of the Lord as a fierce weapon. The *appearance* spoken of here ends the period of tribulation and differs from the *gathering* spoken of in verse 1.

His Satanic Working 2:9

“...that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders...”

The word *activity* (*energeia*) is reserved for supernatural activity in the New Testament. It is normally applied to God, but only here in the New Testament is it applied to Satan. *Power and signs and wonders* is a comprehensive expression for miracles. The word *all* goes with each of the three words and means *every kind of*. Miracles had been used effectively in the laying of the foundation of the church (Acts 2:22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12). They will be used by this lawless one to produce false impressions. There is no indication that they will be counterfeit.

The distinctive aspect of these miracles, signs, and wonders is indicated by the word *false*, which is a genitive case description of all three words. It is not the reality of the miracles but the use of the miracles that is distinctly Satanic—he utilizes them to deceive.

His Evil Success 2:10

“...and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

Paul leaves his description of the man of lawlessness abruptly right in the middle of a sentence and turns to his followers. The definite article with the participle *perish* points to a particular class of people. The word translated *because* carries the idea of correspondence. Deception is the requital for failing to love the truth.

The deception is self-imposed because love of the truth was abandoned. Antagonism toward truth is not as serious as a disposition that refuses truth. Had they made the right choice, the deception could have been avoided.

The Delusion 2:11-12

“And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false,¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

The connective *and* introduces the connection between their guilt and their judgment. The words *for this reason* show that the judgment is not capricious but is part of a cause and effect relationship between rejection of truth and judgment. Because of the supernatural character of the delusion, men who have refused truth will be unable to accept it. To be devoid of truth is to be defenseless toward error.

The phrase *what is false* is literally *the lie*. The noun *lie* has the definite article showing that it is “the lie par excellence—the lie of all lies.” The crowning deception of Satan is to pass off the man of lawlessness as God.

The Satanic lie that deceived Eve will find end-time fulfillment, for men will mistake Satan, with his lying error, for God and His eternal truth. The double designation of those judged shows that those who do not embrace the truth ultimately find their delight in unrighteousness.

Transition

or “From Instruction to Exhortation”

II Thessalonians 2:13-17

THE THANKSGIVING 2:13-14

THE CHARACTER OF THE THANKSGIVING 2:13A

“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord...”

As he did in 1:3, Paul stresses that the giving of thanks is not an option but an obligation. The word *always* shows that the Christian living of the Thessalonian believers was consistent. There was no time in which Paul could not be thankful for them.

The participle *beloved* is designed to encourage them. They were hated and persecuted by men; they were loved and chosen by God.

THE GROUNDS FOR THE THANKSGIVING 2:13B-14

“...because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.”¹⁴ And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This short statement may be called “salvation from start to finish.” It reaches from eternity to eternity. The grounds for Paul’s thanksgiving are two-fold.

He Is Thankful Because of the Divine Choice 2:13b

God is the subject of the entire statement and is placed in the emphatic position. The verb *has chosen* is middle voice, which emphasizes personal interest—“God chose you, in His own interest, for Himself.” The aorist tense points to a definite act. Salvation rests on divine choice, not human effort.

What is the meaning of the phrase *from the beginning*? Some interpreters take it to refer to the day Paul first preached the gospel to them. This misses an important distinction present in these verses.

The divine choice takes place in eternity; the divine call takes place in time. The words *from the beginning* are equivalent to *from eternity*.

The trinity is present in these words. God the Father chose them for salvation; God the Son loved them; and God the Holy Spirit sanctifies them.

The action coming from man's side is described by the words *faith in the truth*. God's sovereign choice neither mitigates human guilt nor lessens human responsibility.

He Is Thankful Because of Divine Call 2:14

The call of God is the historical fulfillment of His eternal choice. The preaching of the gospel was God's means for realizing in time what he had planned in eternity. *That you may* translates the preposition *eis*, which means *with a view to* and points to the ultimate goal of salvation. The word *gain* denotes the idea of taking possession of something; and *glory* indicates the thing to be obtained.

THE EXHORTATION 2:15

"So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us."

The words *so then* lead us to a logical conclusion drawn from what has just been said. Both of the commands are present imperatives, indicating never ceasing duty.

The word *traditions* means *things handed down* and points to truth passed from teacher to student. The New Testament refers to three kinds of tradition. First, it refers to rabbinical tradition (Mark 7:3-9. Matthew 15:2-6), which is the oral teaching of the Pharisees. Second, Colossians 2:8 refers to human tradition—teaching that rose no higher than the mind of man. Finally, I Corinthians 11:23 speaks of scriptural tradition concerning the Lord's table. The Thessalonians possessed apostolic tradition in both oral and written form. Today we possess only the written apostolic tradition.

THE PRAYER 2:16-17

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."

Paul knew that if his teaching and exhortation was to be effective, it had to be accompanied by divine working. The word *Himself* stands first in the sentence as the emphatic word. Further specification of *every good work and word* follows in chapter 3.

Finally Brethren

or “Prayer and Discipline”

II Thessalonians 3:1-18

The word *finally* has special significance in the writings of Paul. It does not mean the letter is being concluded, even though it is found near the end of Paul’s letter. It does not mean that what follows is merely a “wrap up” of what went before. Literally, it means *as to the rest*. *Finally* introduces the hortatory part of Paul’s letter—it is his “Introduction to Duty.”

THE REQUEST FOR PRAYER 3:1-5

ITS STATEMENT 3:1A

“*Finally, brethren, pray for us...*”

The present tense shows Paul is asking them to engage in an ongoing practice, and the imperative mood is an appeal to their volition. Verse 4 makes it clear that this is more than a request; it is a command. The plural number means prayer for Paul is a duty of Christians everywhere.

It is characteristic of Paul to request prayer for himself. This reveals two things about the way Paul thinks. First, it demonstrates that Paul had a sense of personal need. Second, it shows he believed in the effectiveness of prayer.

Paul requests prayer for himself in Romans 15:30-31, Ephesians 6:18-19, Colossians 4:2-3, and Philippians 1:19. An examination of these passages shows Paul desired their prayers for his boldness, for open doors, and for ability to make the message clear.

ITS CONTENT 3:1B-2

“*...that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; ²and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.*”

Concerning the Message

The verb *spread rapidly* has several ideas in it. First, its literal meaning is *to run*. Second, associated with this is the idea of speed and freedom. Paul desires the speedy and unhindered progress of the word of God. If one reviews I Thessalonians 2:14-18, it will be recalled that the progress of the word had been a problem in Thessalonica. The “roadblocks” had been erected by recalcitrant Jews, untoward circumstances, and ultimately, Satan himself.

For the word to *be glorified* means it is recognized for its true nature and worth. The Thessalonians were a magnificent example of glorifying the word, as indicated by the words of I Thessalonians 2:13.

Concerning the Messengers

The first request is for the success of the gospel; the second is for the safety of the messengers. What are *perverse and evil men*? The last words of verse 2 tell us they are those who do not *have faith*. The Greek New Testament places a definite article with the noun *faith*. This means the reference is not to subjective personal faith, but rather the body of faith—the corpus of Christian doctrine. Absence of Christian doctrine makes a *perverse and evil* man.

ITS ATTITUDE 3:3-5

“But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. ⁴And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. ⁵And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.”

Its Root 3:3a

The faithfulness of the Lord is the attitude that should be central in prayer. The faithfulness of God means He is always true to His character and His word.

Its Direction 3:3b

The faithfulness of God works on behalf of His own in two ways. First, its positive manifestation is found in His strengthening power. What was seen as a prayer in 2:17 is now seen as an assurance in 3:3—*may...strengthen* and *He will strengthen*. Second, God’s faithfulness has a protective manifestation. The word *protect* is *phulasso*, a military term for the activity of a guard.

The word *evil* may be neuter gender and thus mean *all that is evil*. It may also be taken as masculine gender and mean *the evil one*. Both are involved since Satan is the producer and supporter of all that is evil—evil things proceed from the evil one.

Its Result 3:4

The perfect tense of the words *have confidence* shows a settled and firm conviction. Paul is confident that the faithfulness of God will be manifested in present and future obedience of the Thessalonian believers.

Its Anticipation 3:5

Paul's spontaneous prayer shows that he recognizes that the high demands of obedience can be met only by divine enablement. This is the third prayer made directly for them in this letter (1:11-12, 2:16-17). The verb *direct* means *to make straight* and anticipates difficulty along the way. Paul sees many things stand in the way of growth.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE DISORDERLY 3:6-15

THE COMMAND GIVEN 3:6

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us."

Apparently the admonition of I Thessalonians 5:14 has gone unheeded. This being the case, sterner measures are needed. The *unruly* person is clearly a believer. The present tense of the verb *leads* points to a persistent practice, not an occasional one. The persistency also points to a blatant attitude that refuses to be corrected.

The command in regard to the *unruly* in I Thessalonians 5:14 was to *admonish* them. Since admonition had apparently failed, the command becomes *keep aloof*. This action is not meant to be punitive but is intended to make it clear that such conduct is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMAND 3:7-10**The Apostolic Example 3:7-9**

"For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, ⁸nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; ⁹not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example."

The Knowledge of the Example

The words *you yourselves* are emphatic. No one can plead ignorance; the teaching and example have been clear. Paul fre-

quently reminds the Thessalonians of what they already know, as in I Thessalonians 2:1, 3:3, and 5:2.

The Nature of the Example

The word *because* introduces the historical example of the model that Paul desires them to emulate. The intent is to establish a contrast between the conduct of Paul and his fellow workers and that of the unruly. Paul took nothing without paying for it.

The Purpose of the Example

Negatively, they did not wish to be a burden to anyone. The words *not because we do not have a right to this* prevent a misunderstanding of the principle that Christian servants have a right to pay, for that is a just principle (I Corinthians 9:3-14, I Timothy 5:18). Paul does not want his example to be used to deny that right of pay to other workers. Positively, Paul brings the example before them *that you might follow our example*.

The Apostolic Teaching 3:10

“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.”

Paul is referring to his entire stay in Thessalonica. He is moving from the apostolic practice to the apostolic precept. *Those who will not work* are not those who lack ability but those who are unwilling to work—it is beneath or beyond them to do such. This would include both idle rich and idle poor. The imperative verb *neither let him eat* is not passive; he is not to be allowed to eat.

THE INFORMATION REQUIRING THE COMMAND 3:11

“For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.”

The connective *for* introduces the actual situation that precipitated the whole discussion of work and pay. The reference to busybodies is not so much a reference to being meddlesome as it is to the devotion of oneself to superfluous activities.

THE CORRECTION 3:12-15

Directed to the Unruly 3:12

“Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.”

Paul words his command in such a way as to call for self-examination on the part of his readers. He does not say, “Now hear this, you busybodies!” He addresses them indirectly so their own conscience will be activated. He wants to change, not condemn. Quiet work was an exhortation in I Thessalonians 4:11; now it is a bind-

ing command. The words *in the Lord Jesus Christ* elevate daily work to the level of Christian service. The word *own* is emphatic and stresses independent effort as against communal beneficence.

Directed to the Disciplined 3:13-15

“But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. ¹⁴And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. ¹⁵And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

With the emphatic pronoun *you*, Paul turns from the blameworthy to the blameless. The command does not mean that they had become weary but that they should be on guard against such a thing happening. The encouragement concerning well doing is doubtless intended to ensure a balance. Everyone is to earn his own way, but this should not discourage charitable acts.

Those who obviously disobey Paul’s commands are to be socially avoided. At the same time, attitude is important, for the one avoided is not to be regarded as an enemy, but rather one to be brought to obedience to Pauline teaching.

THE CONCLUSION 3:16-18

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! ¹⁷I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

This is the fourth and final prayer of Paul for his readers (1:11-12, 2:16-17, 3:5, 3:16-18). The pronoun *Himself* lies emphatically at the beginning of the sentence giving it intensive force. This is the only place in the writings of Paul where the one addressed is called the *Lord of peace*. Elsewhere it is the *God of peace*, as in Romans 15:33, 16:20; II Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; and I Thessalonians 5:23.

The definite article is found with the noun *peace* marking it off as *the peace*, that is, the only true and genuine peace. The prepositional phrase *in every circumstance* shows the comprehensive nature of the peace desired—it is undisturbed and unmitigated by circumstances. The words *the Lord be with you all* underscore the inseparability of the blessings of Christ and the person of Christ.

NOTES