

**THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH - A GOOD MODEL**

**--- VOLUME ONE ---**

A Commentary on  
The First Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians

By

Joseph L. Looney II



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### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

**The purpose of this treatise** is to develop an expository and practical commentary on the letter(s) of the Apostle Paul to the church located in Thessalonica. This treatise will emphasize that this church stands as a model church for every generation throughout the church age and will be until Jesus returns. This is stated in the light of the teachings of the New Testament, Revelation chapters 2 and 3, and the statement in 1 Thessalonians 1:7, where Paul asserts, "So that ye were **ensamples** to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

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By

Joseph L. Looney II

April 2001

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## **THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH - A GOOD MODEL**

### (OUTLINE)

#### **I. INTRODUCTION.**

- A. Selection of a Model Church in the New Testament.
  - 1. Nine epistles written to seven churches or groups of churches.
  - 2. Three churches stand as good positive models.
- B. Statement of Purpose.
- C. The Words Ensample (or Model) and Church Defined.
  - 1. Definition of the word ensample or model.
    - a. According to English dictionaries.
    - b. According to the New Testament usage and Greek lexicons.
  - 2. Definition of the word church.
- D. A Model Church Defined and Identified.
  - 1. The New Testament church is not the same as the kingdom or family of God.
  - 2. Definition of a New Testament church.
  - 3. The distinguishing marks of a New Testament church (in brief).
    - a. One that is biblical organized, Mat 4:18-25; Mat 16:18; Acts 8; 13:1-5; 14:23.
    - b. One that believes and practices biblical doctrines, 1 Tim 3:16,17; etc.
    - c. One whose main activity is the obeying of the Great Commission, Mat 28:18-20.
      - (1) The obligation and necessity of mission work,  
Mat 1:20,21; Luke 19:10; John 20:21.
      - (2) The pattern, method, and example of mission work, Acts 13:1-5.
      - (3) The people of missions, Acts 13:1-3; 1 Sam 30:24.
      - (4) The authority and power of mission work, Acts 13:4; Mat 28:18; Luke 24:49.
      - (5) The message of the missionary, Acts 13:5; Acts 17:1-4; 1 Cor 15:1-5.
  - 4. Definition and characteristics of a Model New Testament church.

#### **II. THE CRITERIA FOR MEASURING A MODEL CHURCH.**

(The New Testament and Revelation Chapters 2 and 3)

- A. The Words Criterion and Measure Defined.
  - 1. Definition Of Criterion.
  - 2. Definition Of Measure.
  - 3. Definition Of Criterion In Relationship To Measuring A Model Church.
- B. The Measuring Criteria For A Model Church.
  - 1. Full of good works of faith, Rev 2:2; 1 Thes 1:3.
  - 2. Continues in labors of love, Rev 2:2; 1 Thes 1:3; John 14:15.
  - 3. Exhibits patience of hope, Rev 2:2; 1 Thes 1:3.
  - 4. Accepts and heeds the Word of God, Rev 2:7; 3:8,10; 1 Thes 1:5,6,8; 2:13.
  - 5. Follows the God called pastor, Rev 1:16,20; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; 1 Thes 1:5,6.
  - 6. Is mission minded, Rev 2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15; Acts 19:10; 1 Thes 1:7,8.
  - 7. Repents in order to stay in love with the Lord Jesus Christ,  
Rev 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19; 1 Thes 1:9; 2:9-12; 4:11-12; 5:14,15.
  - 8. Tolerates not evil and false doctrine,  
Rev 2:2,3,9,14,20-25; 3:9; 1 Thess 2:14-16; 5:12-15,22; 2 Thes 3:6,11-14.
  - 9. Hates the things that God hates, Rev 2:6,15,20-23; 1 Thes 2:14-16; 2 Thes 3:2.
  - 10. Considers not the hatred of the world; but rather the glory of God,  
Rev 2:7,9, 11,17,26-28; 3:5,12,21; Heb 11; 1 Thess 1:6,9; 2:14-18; 3:2-6; 5:18;  
2 Thess 1:4-10.

## 1 THESSALONIANS

- III. A MODEL CHURCH: ESTABLISHED.** 1:1-3 with ACTS 17:1-15
- A. Introduction and Background of this Church. Acts 16,17.
    - 1. This study should begin in the book of Acts chapters 16 and 17.
    - 2. The missionaries journeyed from Philippi to Thessalonica, Acts 17:1.
    - 3. The reason Paul did not stay in Amphipolis and Apollonia.
    - 4. The Apostle Paul used a planned strategy in spreading the Gospel.
  - B. The City of Thessalonica, an Interesting Place. Acts 17:1
    - 1. The name of the city had been and has been changed.
    - 2. This city was an important city.
    - 3. The city was a mixture of peoples and morals.
  - C. The Actual Establishing of a New Testament Church and the Message Preached. Acts 17:1-10
    - 1. This church originated with the mission-minded efforts of the Church in Antioch of Syria and the Apostle Paul.
    - 2. The message Paul preached, Acts 17:1-3.
    - 3. The length of the ministry of Paul in Thessalonica is somewhat significant.
    - 4. The preaching of the truth will bring opposition.
  - D. The Occasion, Date, and Purpose of 1 Thessalonians. Acts 17:1-15
    - 1. The occasion that brought about the writing of 1 Thessalonians.
    - 2. The reason for the writing of 1 Thessalonians.
    - 3. The time and place of the writing.
    - 4. The purpose in writing.
  - E. The Doctrine of the Second Coming in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
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- IV. A MODEL CHURCH: APPRECIATED.** 1:1-10
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    - 2. The remembering of your work, labor, and patience, 1:3.
    - 3. The acknowledging of your election or salvation, 1:4.
  - C. The Way and Integrity of the Gospel Presentation. 1:5.
    - 1. The gospel came in a fourfold way as directed by God, 1:5a.
    - 2. The gospel presented by men of high moral standards and actions, 1:5b.
  - D. The Result of this Gospel Presentation. 1:6-8
    - 1. More evidence of their salvation and reasons for thanksgiving, 1:6,7.
    - 2. The word of truth sounded out to the regions beyond, 1:8.
  - E. The Report of this Gospel Presentation. 1:9,10
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    - 2. The kind of reception Paul and his helpers had received, 1:9a.
    - 3. These believers had turned to God from idols to serve God, 1:9b.
    - 4. These saints were waiting for His Son from heaven, 1:10.
- V. A MODEL CHURCH AND THE MISSIONARY OR PREACHER.** 2:1-20
- A. The Defense or Vindication of the Ministry of Paul. 2:1-12

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1. The record speaks for itself, 2: 1-11.
2. The negative side- What Paul did not do! 2:1-6.
3. The positive side- What Paul did do! 2:7-12.
- B. Thanksgiving for and Proof of their Conversion. 2:13,14
  1. Renewed thanksgiving unto God, 2:13.
  2. The conversion of the Thessalonians, 2:13.
  3. Thankfulness for their receiving the message of truth with faith, 2:13.
  4. Two proofs of their conversion, 2:14.
    - a. They became followers, 2:14a.
    - b. They became sufferers, 2:14b.
- C. Denunciation of the Persecutors. 2:15,16
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  2. The dismal evaluation of the opposition, 2:15b-16a.
  3. The disastrous consequence of the opposition, 2:16c.
- D. The Desire of the Missionary to Revisit them. 2:17,18
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  - C. Paul Desired from his Heart to See Them. 3:9,10
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    2. Paul prayed constantly to see them face to face, 3:10.
  - D. Paul Prayed for their Continued Growth in Christ. 3:10-13
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    2. Paul prayed a fourfold prayer for them, 3:10-13.
    3. Jesus shall present all believers before God the Father, 3:13.
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    2. Paul exhorts them to excel, 4:1c.
    3. Paul reminds them of his message, 4:2.
  - B. Be Sanctified, for it is the Will of God. 4:3-8
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    2. Paul names four essentials for living holy lives, 4:3b-6a.
    3. Paul gives three reasons to live holy lives, 4:6b-8.
  - C. Love one Another, a Proof of Discipleship. 4:9,10
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    2. Paul urges them to excel in brotherly love, 4:10b.

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3. Brotherly love is second only to the great commandment, 4:9,10.
- D. Be Industrious, Honest, and Orderly in Living. 4:11,12
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  2. Paul exhorts them to walk honestly; lacking in nothing, 4:12.
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- F. Final Requests, Instructions, and Benediction. 5:25-28
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It is my sincere prayer that God will bless the Ministry of the Gulf Coast Baptist Institute and her sponsoring church, the Unity Missionary Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I am grateful to this church, Gulf Coast Baptist Institute, James Loveless (present President), Joey Lloyd (English Department), and Ron Witcher (former President) for their patience, help, encouragement in this endeavor. I am thankful for the opportunity to write this thesis in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Master's degree program. Also, may the Lord bless Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Gillette, Wyoming, who has been gracious to this writer during the time of the writing of this thesis.

Also, I am grateful for the many pastors, preachers, Bible institute instructors, and others who have been a tremendous help and blessing along the way. They are too numerous to mention here. I thank God for having the opportunity to be taught and helped by each of these people. May God bless the memory of those who have been promoted to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. May He bless the ministry of those who continue to serve Him.

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Most of all, I thank God and His dear Son, Jesus Christ, my personal Savior and Lord. To Him be the glory for all things. May His kingdom increase.

Joseph L. Looney II  
Gillette, Wyoming  
April 2001  
De Kalb, Texas, February, 2017

## **CREDITS AND EXPLANATION**

### **CREDITS FOR SOURCES**

Every reasonable effort has been made by this writer to give credit to all sources and authors where credit is due. However, over many years, this writer has read many comments from various sources in the course of sermon and lesson study and preparation. If any material from some of these many sources has been included in these comments and has not been documented, inadvertently or otherwise, this writer apologizes for the oversight.

### **EXPLANATION**

The original intent was to include 2 Thessalonians in this thesis. This is the reason readers will find references to the inclusion of it. However, under the advisement and with the approval of the President of the school, it was decided (due to the volume of the work on 1 Thessalonians) not to include 2 Thessalonians.

Joseph L. Looney II  
Gillette, Wyoming  
April 2001  
De Kalb, Texas, February, 2017

## **ADDITIONAL REMARKS**

### **CREDITS FOR SOURCES -- ADDED REMARKS**

This writer can not claim any originality for it is God who created him and has given him any ability that he may have, so the glory goes to God and His dear Son, Christ Jesus, who is this writer's Personal Savior and LORD.

Every reasonable effort has been made by this writer to give credit to all sources and authors where credit is due. However, over many years, this writer has read many comments from various sources in the course of sermon and lesson study preparations. If any material from some of these many sources has been included in these comments and has not been documented, inadvertently or otherwise, this writer apologizes for the oversight. It was and is not the intention of this writer not to recognize these sources. Early in the ministry of this writer (over 25 years ago), he prepared and preached sermons from 1 and 2 Thessalonians to the Mountain Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Alma, Arkansas. In the course of the preparation for these particular sermons this writer leaned heavily on the commentaries by the late Albert Barnes. However, there are no formal references to this work in the text of this writer's commentary. Therefore, this writer acknowledges his debt to the work of this particular author.

### **APPRECIATION FOR PASTORS, PREACHERS AND INSTRUCTORS**

Over the years the Holy Spirit of God has used several pastors and others to teach this writer spiritual and practical things from the Word of God. Some of those pastors were Charles Ashcraft in Fayetteville, Arkansas; Eugene Reagan in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Richard Folger in Russellville, Kentucky; Clarence Walker, Carl Sadler, and Edward



## **ADDITIONAL REMARKS**

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May God bless the memory of those on this list who have been promoted to be with the Lord Jesus Christ and may He bless the continued ministry of those still alive and serving Him.

## **CREDITS DUE TO OTHERS**

There have been many others who have been a big help to this writer along the way and especially in the writing of this thesis. First of all, this writer would like to express thanks to Pat, his beloved and faithful wife, of over 43 years. She has helped this writer in many ways. During the process of writing this paper she has proofread many pages and helped in other ways. Also credit is due to this writer's son and a fellow minister of the gospel, Joseph L. Looney, III. He also has proofed many pages etc.

Four other brethren who have been a big help are: Brother Norman W. Pierce of Rapid City, SD, Brother Jim Brasseal of Lakewood, CO, and

## **ADDITIONAL REMARKS**

Brother Chuck Hanes of Belle Fourche, SD. Each of these brethren have helped in various ways. Brother Pierce is a long time Missionary Baptist pastor/missionary. At one time, he was a seminary instructor in the ABA school in Central Florida from which he received a doctorate. Brother Pierce has read this thesis and had made many helpful suggestions and etc. Brother Brasseal is also a long time Missionary Baptist pastor/missionary. He was at one time Vice President of Gulf Coast Baptist Institute from which he received a doctorate. Brother Hanes has been a Missionary Baptist pastor/missionary for many years. He has befriended this writer and been a great encouragement.

### **EXPLANATIONS ABOUT BIBLE QUOTATIONS:**

All Bible quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted by abbreviations of the versions such as: NASB, the New American Standard Bible; NIV, the New International Version; AMP. BIBLE, the Amplified Bible. Quotations from other translations will be formally acknowledged in the chapter end-notes.

### **DISCLAIMER**

Use of other versions of the Bible other than the King James Version does not mean approval of the entire version by this writer. But rather it means that the translation of a particular verse was examined by the writer and found to be true to the Greek text(s) and versions available to him (to the best of his understanding and knowledge).

Joseph L. Looney II  
Gillette, Wyoming  
April 17, 2001 (revised and added to 2/21/2002 and 9/10/2002)  
De Kalb, Texas, February, 2017

# FOREWORD

to Volume 1 of

## **THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH - A GOOD MODEL**

This paper or treatise was originally composed as a thesis submitted to Gulf Coast Baptist Institute of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Theology. It has been over a year since it was completed. With the written permission of the Gulf Coast Baptist Institute this writer now offers to the general public this commentary on The First Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians as *Volume 1* of a two volume set entitled:

### **THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH - A GOOD MODEL.**

It is hoped that *Volume 2* of this series on The Second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians will be completed by either March of 2003 or 2004. (*2 Thessalonians not finished as of February 8, 2017.*)

It is without apology that this writer writes from the viewpoint of a Landmark Missionary Baptist pastor who was saved by the grace of God in June, 1960. God used the ministry of Central Missionary Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and the individual witnessing of Brother John Blake a follow engineering student at the University of Arkansas to bring this sinner to the realization that he needed to repent and trust in the Lord Jesus.

The overall plan of this writer is to write *verse by verse commentaries* on as many books of the 66 books of the Holy Bible as time permits in the time that he has left upon this earth until the Precious Lord Jesus Christ takes him home. The purpose of this is to help people who have the desire to understand the Word of Truth. It is this writer's prayer that God's Spirit will use this treatise and any in the future to help those who desire to know and understand the Bible. No doubt all questions will not be answered and there are human errors in this paper, but to the best of his ability, this writer has tried to get the correct and accurate teaching(s) of The First Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians. To God be the glory for any help and any good that may come from this effort.

In the service of the Master, Jesus Christ My Savior and Lord,  
Joseph L. Looney II  
Gillette, Wyoming  
September 19, 2002 and De Kalb, Texas, February, 2017

**THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH - A GOOD MODEL**

**--- VOLUME ONE ---**

A Commentary on  
The First Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians

By

Joseph L. Looney II



## THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH - A GOOD MODEL

### CHAPTER 1

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# **THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH - A GOOD MODEL**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

What is a model church? To answer this question one must turn to the New Testament of the Holy Bible. Another question that needs to be answered is: does the New Testament set forth one or more churches that could be called model churches? Yes is the proper answer. However, one can learn from all of the things known about all of the churches mentioned in the New Testament.

#### **A. Selection of a Model Church in the New Testament**

While it is true that much can be gleaned and learned from what is said about every New Testament church mentioned in the New Testament, some stand as positive models and some as negative models. In what manner can one choose "The Model Church?" The selection process to some degree is a process of elimination. It also depends on the amount of information given about each particular church. For the purpose of this paper, the selection process will be done, first, by surveying the epistles written to the churches, then, by selecting one church out of the good positive models, and by including other specific information provided in the Bible.

**Nine epistles written to seven churches or groups of churches.** In the New Testament the Apostle Paul wrote at least nine epistles (not including the Epistle to the Hebrews) to seven churches or groups of churches located throughout what would today be called Italy, Greece, and Turkey. Of these letters, two are addressed to groups of churches: the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle to the Galatians. That the Apostle wrote these to groups and not individual churches can be gleaned from the salutation of the Apostle in each epistle. The greetings from Paul to the Galatians is found in Galatians 1:2, where Paul wrote, "And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia." The Epistle to the Romans was most likely addressed not to just one church in Rome, Italy, but rather to a group of churches located throughout the metropolitan city of Rome. Paul addressed the original recipients of his epistle to the Romans as found in Romans 1:6,7a, "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints:...." He also saluted many households according to Romans 16:3-5, 10,11,14,15, and it is possible that a New Testament church met in each household. These things seem to imply that several churches were involved. Of the other churches the church of Corinth is more of a negative example, while the church in Colosse was one with which Paul was not personally acquainted. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, much is written about doctrine and practical Christian living, yet little is mentioned about the practice of the church in Ephesus in the epistle written to them by the Apostle Paul.

**Three churches stand as good positive models.** Of all the churches mentioned at least three stand out as good models. That is, they stand out as good positive examples for New Testament churches to follow in every age. These three, the churches located in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, could be set forth as patterns for churches today. Of these three churches located in Macedonia or Northern Greece, more is known of the churches in Philippi and Thessalonica since Paul wrote letters or epistles to them. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, the



Apostle Paul sets forth the churches of Macedonia as good examples for the church of Corinth to follow in "...the fellowship of the ministering to the saints..." in that they by the grace of God "...first gave their own selves to the Lord,...." Of these two, the church in Thessalonica is specifically called in 1 Thessalonians 1:7 "...ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

### **B. Statement of Purpose**

**The purpose of this treatise** is to develop an expository and practical commentary on the letter(s) of the Apostle Paul to the church located in Thessalonica. This treatise will emphasize that this church stands as a model church for every generation throughout the church age and will be until Jesus returns. This is stated in the light of the teachings of the New Testament, Revelation chapters 2 and 3, and the statement in 1 Thessalonians 1:7, where Paul asserts, "So that ye were **ensamples** to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

### **C. The Words Ensample (or Model) and Church Defined**

To understand what is meant by the term "model church," it is necessary to define the words used. First, the word ensample will be defined according to modern English dictionaries, according to the New Testament usage, and then by definitions from the Greek Lexicon. Second, the English word church as used in the New Testament will be defined using the derivation and the etymology of the word along with the Greek Lexicon definitions.

**Definition of the word ensample or model.** The word ensample (which is spelled example in the English of today) has been defined by the American College Dictionary as "...one of a number of things, or a part of something, taken to show the character of the whole..." and "...something to be imitated; a pattern or model: *to set a good example...*" and other variations (418).<sup>1</sup> To this definition Webster basically agrees and adds the words "instance," and "model" as synonyms (289).<sup>2</sup>

In the New Testament the word ensample is used three times in the singular and three times in the plural. Philippians 3:17 reads, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an **ensample** (τύπος) (tupos)." 2 Thessalonians 3:9 reads, "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an **ensample** (τύπος) unto you to follow us." 2 Peter 2:6 reads, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an **ensample** (ὑπόδειγμα) (hupodeigma) unto those that after should live ungodly." 1 Corinthians 10:11 reads, "Now all these things happened unto them for **ensamples** (τύπος) : and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Thessalonians 1:7 reads, "So that ye were **ensamples** (τύπος) to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." 1 Peter 5:3 reads, "Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being **ensamples** (τύπος) to the flock." In five out of six occurrences of this word, it is a translation of the Greek noun, τύπος (tupos). However, in 2 Peter 2:6, the word used is ὑπόδειγμα (hupodeigma).

The Greek noun ὑπόδειγμα (hupodeigma), translated ensample in 2 Peter 2:6, and used five other times in the New Testament, means an example or a copy (Wigram 889).<sup>3</sup> It is translated ensample, example, or pattern(s). The idea of this word is that of "*a sign suggestive of anything, delineation of a thing, representation, figure, copy: ... an example: for imitation...*" (Thayer 642).<sup>4</sup> The meaning of this word is only slightly different than the meaning of τύπος (tupos), which is the word translated ensamples in 1 Thessalonians 1:7. This word τύπος is also translated: print, figure, fashion, manner, form, example, and pattern. The Greek noun τύπος, according to Thayer, means "*...the mark of a stroke or blow; print, ... a figure formed by a blow or impression, . . . a figure, image ,... form, ... an example, . . . the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made ... an example to be imitated . . . a type . . .*" (Thayer 632).<sup>5</sup> Strong adds that it means "...a die (as struck), i.e. (by impl.) a stamp or scar;... spec. a sampler ("type"), i.e. a model (for

imitation) ..." (73).<sup>6</sup> The idea of the word τύπος (tupos) translated ensamples in 1 Thessalonians 1:7 is that of a standard, a pattern, or an example to follow or to imitate or copy. Thus the word model and ensample mean the same thing and are used as synonyms one for the other. Webster states that the word "model, applies to something taken or proposed as worthy of imitation" (544).<sup>7</sup> However, it is understood that the word imitation as used here does not mean mockery and has nothing to do with a cheap product or reproduction; but rather something to be copied and repeated by others.

**Definition of the word church.** The English word church, as used in 1 Thessalonians 1:1, is a translation of the Greek word ἐκκλησία, or ekklêsia. The word church has been mis-aligned and mis-defined over the centuries. To properly define this word, one must go back to the Koine Greek usage and see how the word ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia) was used among the Greek people. Before and during the time the New Testament was being written, the Greek city employed a town meeting type government whereby the citizens of the city would be brought together by means of a town cryer. The town cryer would walk throughout the city and announce the time and place of the town meeting and the nature of the business. The citizens would then assemble together and discuss and carry out the business at hand. This assembly was called an ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia). It was by nature a visible and local assembly of the town people who were citizens of a particular city. Jesus and the writers of the New Testament have this type of usage in mind.

The word ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia) is actually a combination of two Greek words: that being the preposition ἐκ (ek) and the verb καλέω (kaleô). The word ἐκ is a primary preposition denoting origin (the point whence motion or action proceeds) and among other things may be translated from, out from, away from, by, by means of, by reason of, because, for, on, at, of, or off from (Strong 26).<sup>8</sup> The verb καλέω (kaleô) means to call, call aloud, utter in a loud voice, call out or call

forth, name, address, invite, summon, or call in (Thayer 321).<sup>9</sup> Hence the primary meaning of the noun ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia) is that of ones called out to assemble in a designated place for a particular purpose.

#### **D. A Model Church Defined and Identified.**

In order to define anything it is many times helpful to state the negative as well as the positive, that is, to state what it is not as well as what it is. In defining and identifying a model church, the following factors will be considered: first, the New Testament church is not the same as the kingdom of God or the family of God; second, the definition of a New Testament church; third, the distinguishing marks of a New Testament church (in brief); and fourth, the definition of a model New Testament church.

**The New Testament church is not the same as the kingdom or family of God.** While the Bible speaks of or refers to the family of God and the kingdom of God, these terms should not be confused with the New Testament church or assembly.

True members of a local assembly are part of the family of God, yet nowhere does the Bible state that the family of God is the same as the New Testament church or assembly. And while Dr. John Penn (long time instructor in the Missionary Baptist Seminary of Little Rock, Arkansas) truly states that a New Testament church is a colony of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God and the church are in no way the same entity. What is the family of God? According to Ephesians 3:14,15 and Galatians 3:26, the family of God includes all the born-again, blood-bought believers in every age (this includes all future believers also), whether in heaven or still living on this earth (Taylor 1,3).<sup>10</sup> What is the kingdom of God? While there are different aspects of the kingdom of God (such as what it was in the Old Testament and what it shall be in the millennium and so forth), the following broad definition fits according to the Holy Bible for the present age: "the kingdom of God includes all the saved on earth at any given time" (Taylor 1,3).<sup>11</sup>

This is according to the usage of this expression in John 3:3-5; Matthew 16:19; 11:11; Luke 16:16; Romans 14:17; Colossians 1:13; John 18:36; and many more.

**Definition of a New Testament church.** Based on the definition of the word ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia) as given previously, a New Testament church has been defined as a local congregation of scripturally baptized believers covenanting together to carry out the commands of her head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and specifically His Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:18-20 and other such passages. The words assembly and congregation are synonyms one for the other. By nature the word assembly must be local and visible. While the term ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia) is used in a generic way or in an institutional sense in some instances in the Bible, the Bible never speaks of a church other than local and visible. Even the generic or institutional usage is referring to a local and visible assembly of born-again, blood bought-believers who have come together in order to give glory to God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

**The distinguishing marks of a New Testament church (in brief).** A New Testament church can only be properly identified by going to the source and record of her origin. The record of her origin is found in the New Testament of the Holy Bible. In the New Testament one finds the source of the New Testament church which is God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The New Testament, and the New Testament only, gives distinguishing marks whereby a New Testament church can be identified. These distinctive marks can be summarized in three broad categories: 1) a church that is biblically organized, 2) a church that believes and practices biblical doctrines, and 3) a church whose main activity is the obeying of the Great Commission. It must be understood that these three broad categories overlap. Since it is not under the purview of this treatise to discuss these completely, they will be stated in brief, and a brief discussion and proof will follow. Also only a minimum number of distinctive doctrines will be discussed.

The first distinguishing mark of a New Testament church is that she has been biblically organized. Jesus established and organized the first New Testament church during his earthly ministry. All other true New Testament churches since that time have come from the one He established and bear the marks of the first one. The forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, in fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1, came preaching "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," in order to prepare the way of the Lord. Then for those who repented and believe he baptized (immersed) in water by the authority of heaven or of God according to Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; John 1:6-8,33; and Matthew 21:23-27. Jesus took the material prepared by John the Baptist and organized His ἐκκλησία, (ekklêsia) or local, visible assembly. That Jesus established His own church during His personal earthly ministry can be seen from the following Scriptures: Mark 1:14-20; Matthew 4:18-25; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-51; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; and Ephesians 3:21. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that He was at that very time (during the time of His ministry on earth) in the process of building His church. He added that "...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He called out those prepared by John to come and to follow Him with the purpose of making them His disciples. These disciples were to carry out His command to evangelize the world, to make disciples of those who are saved, and to baptize them and to teach them to observe all things whatsoever He commanded them. This is taught in the Great Commission He gave them in Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:19-21; and Acts 1:8.

The Book of Acts reveals that from the church Jesus established, all other New Testament churches have come. Because of persecution the members of this church spread out "...in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." They assembled and covenanted together in various locations as separate, local, visible bodies of Christ. This process has repeated itself down through the ages. Acts 13:1-4 reveals the correct way to do

mission work. The missionary is to be sent out by a local church as directed by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul and Barnabas were separated and sent forth by the Holy Spirit and were sent out by the church in Antioch of Syria. They were sent forth to preach the gospel of Christ, to baptize the converts, to teach them to observe the Word of God, and to establish New Testament churches, as directed by the Book of Acts. This pattern is to be followed until Jesus returns. For a church to be a true New Testament church, one recognized by God, and one who has the authority to carry out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, her origin, doctrine, and practices must follow the pattern set forth in the Book of Acts and the New Testament. (If a religious group or so-called church has originated from or through human organization(s) or means, it is not recognized by God to be one of His churches.) The Bible states in Psalms 127:1, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain."

There are other items pertinent to the biblical organization of a New Testament church (Carroll 5,8,9).<sup>12</sup> First, Christ is her only head and law-giver as according to Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22; and 5:23. Second, Jesus has sent the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God, from the Father to be the divine Administrator in His churches according to John 14:16,17,26; 15:26; 16:13,14; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5,8; and Acts 2:1-4. Third, Christ placed two offices in a church and these are pastors and deacons. (Refer to 1 Timothy and Titus.) Fourth, all members are equal, and thus her polity is to be democratic; yet she is executive in nature and not legislative. (Refer to Matthew 20:24-28 and 23:5-12.) Fifth, her finances are to be derived from tithes and offerings. (Refer to 1 Corinthians 9.) Sixth, each church is to be completely separate and independent of other New Testament churches; yet each church may associate and cooperate with the others in her endeavor to carry out her mission. Seventh, she is not to be controlled by the state nor is she to control the state. (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-15; Acts 4:19,20; and 5:29.)

The second distinguishing mark of a New Testament church is that she believes and practices biblical doctrines. It has been often and truly said that the Holy Bible is the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice for the New Testament church. The books of the New Testament verify that this is true. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: *17* That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Some of the basic Bible doctrines laid out in the New Testament that a New Testament church must believe and practice are: the inspiration of the whole Bible (1 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:21; Psalms 119:89,140,160); the triune God (Matthew 28:19); salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14,15; Luke 13:3-5; John 3:16-18; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8,9); eternal security of the believer (John 3:36; 5:24; 10:27-30; Romans 8:35-39; Hebrews 10:39; 1 Peter 1:5); the virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; John 10:30; 1:1,14; 2 Corinthians 5:19); the resurrection of the saved to eternal heaven (John 14:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15); the eternal punishment of all unbelievers in a literal hell (2 Thessalonians 2:8,9; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8); that a church is only a visible, local assembly (Acts 9:31; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1) of saved scripturally baptized believers (Mark 1:14-20; Matthew 4:18-25; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-51; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Ephesians 3:21) with Christ as her only head (Colossians 1:1; Ephesians 1:22; and 5:23); that the Lord Jesus gave His church only two ordinances, which are baptism by immersion in water of believers only and the Lord's Supper, a memorial ordinance restricted to members of the local congregation. These ordinances are to be administered by the authority of a New Testament church. Neither of these ordinances saves nor helps to save, and they must meet the requirements of the Word of God (Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:12,38;



Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; and 11:1,2,17-26). For a more complete doctrinal statement with more Scripture references please refer to the inside covers of any of The Adult Sunday School Quarterlies published in Texarkana, Texas, by the Baptist Sunday School Committee of the American Baptist Association from about the year 1994 until at least the year 2000 (Harris).<sup>13</sup> This doctrinal statement is also printed each year in The Yearbook of the American Baptist Association.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Roy M. Reed wrote the booklet, The Glorious Church, which has the subtitle, Nine Positive Ways To Identify the New Testament Church. Dr. Reed states in the "Foreword" that "The purpose of this thesis is to identify the true church of Jesus Christ, by the New Testament Scriptures" (3).<sup>15</sup> In the "Foreword To The Second Edition," he states, "Mark well the identifying marks of a New Testament Church" (5).<sup>16</sup> These nine Bible based identifying marks are given in the "Table of Contents" and at the beginning of Chapter XI, and can be used to identify whether or not a church is a New Testament church. These marks summarize the cardinal doctrines and practices that a New Testament church should and must teach and practice to be a New Testament church and a model for others to follow. These nine identifying marks overlap to some degree with what this writer has already written. Since it is not under the purview of this treatise to discuss these in detail they will be listed as found in this booklet on page 84. Dr. Reed writes:

- ...the nine identifying marks are given in outline form, as follows:
1. The New Testament Church consists only of believers in Christ.
  2. The members of the New Testament Church were all baptized upon profession of their faith in Jesus Christ
  3. The New Testament Church had its beginning during the days of Christ on earth because He was the founder of it.
  4. The New Testament Church recognized the local congregation as the highest authority under God.
  5. The New Testament Church was a local, visible organization that was independent of all others.
  6. The New Testament Church baptized by immersion only.
  7. The New Testament Church practiced the observance of the Lord's Supper as an ordinance of the local church and it was never to be taken except within the membership of each local church.

8. The New Testament Church disciplined its members.
9. The New Testament Church had only one mission in the world and that was to carry out the great commission (1,84).<sup>17</sup>

Please note that these nine identifying marks are also the chapter headings for Chapters 2 through 10 in the booklet by Dr. Reed. This writer has included this information since it is relevant to the distinguishing marks of a New Testament church and sets forth what a church should teach, believe and practice.

The third distinguishing mark of a New Testament church is that her main activity is obeying the Great Commission. Obeying the Great Commission means doing and supporting mission work. A model church is a mission minded church. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 2:5 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The mind of the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed in the Holy Bible. Though He was God come in the flesh, according to Philippians 2:8, "...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." By His suffering, death, and resurrection, He saves whosoever will (from the heart) repent and believe in Him for personal salvation. To have the mind of Christ, His disciples, working through New Testament churches, are to carry out His command of the Great Commission. The Great Commission is stated clearly and plainly by Jesus in Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:19-21; and Acts 1:8. This is the command or charge to do the work of missions.

To understand why the Son of Man came into the world is to understand the obligation and to know the necessity of doing mission work. The angel who announced the coming virgin birth of Jesus to Joseph states in Matthew 1:20-21, "... Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." The fact that Jesus would and did come to "save his people from their sins" reveals the need of mission work. This obligation is also manifested when Jesus

Himself stated in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Men, women, boys and girls are lost and dying because they are sinners by nature and by choice. This is why Jesus told the church in Jerusalem in John 20:21, "...Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Even as Jesus was sent by the Father, even so, Jesus sends born-again, blood bought believers into the world to serve Him in and through New Testament churches to carry out the Great Commission. What a joy and privilege! He came and established His kind of church to continue His ministry that the world might be evangelized.

Doing mission work is the highest praise that an individual and/or a church can give to Jesus. The Apostle Paul speaks not only of the debt of churches and their members to do mission work but also of the cause when he wrote to the Romans in Romans 1:14-16,

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. *15* So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. *16* For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Paul also issues this challenge in Romans 10:14-15,17:

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? *15* And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! . . . *17* So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The New Testament church is obligated not only to do mission work, but she is also obligated to follow the pattern, method, and example of mission work as found in the New Testament. The pattern and method of the practice of mission work is found specifically in the Scripture passages that state the Great Commission. Jesus told the church at Jerusalem that their mission was a worldwide mission starting in Jerusalem and spreading out into the uttermost part of the earth. In Matthew 28:19 He said, "...teach all nations. . . ." In Mark 16:15 He said, "...Go ye into all the world. . . ." In Luke 24:47 He said for them to preach, "...in his

name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." In Acts 1:8 He said "... ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus told them that this work was three-fold:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *19* Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: *20* Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

As they went they were to teach all nations or in other words make disciples of everyone who repented and believed. Next, and part of making disciples, they were to baptize (immerse in water) the believers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And finally, the last part was that they were to teach the disciples to observe all the things that He commanded them. This three-fold command is not be separated into three distinct parts. In other words to do mission work the way Jesus instructed, a church must carry out all three parts. Therefore, mission work is a three-fold work.

The pattern for mission work is not only seen in the giving of the Great Commission, but also it is set forth in the book of Acts. One of the best and clearest examples is found in Acts 13:1-5, where the Holy Spirit instructed the church in Antioch of Syria to "...Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." As a result "...when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they (the church in Antioch) sent *them* away." Verse 4 reports that Paul and Barnabas were "...sent forth by the Holy Ghost. . . ." It is clear from this example that God, the Holy Spirit, works through churches to send forth His missionaries. Therefore, the New Testament church is the only organization upon the earth in which God has chosen to do mission work. Acts 13:1-5 proves that God calls men to the mission field, who are members of New Testament churches. The churches then are responsible to send the missionary to his God chosen field of labor to establish other New Testament churches. From the rest of Acts 13, along with chapters 14 through 20, it is clear

that Paul and his fellow-laborers preached the gospel and established New Testament churches throughout Asia Minor and Greece, thus doing the three-fold work of which Jesus instructed in the Great Commission. Mission work at home and abroad is the main activity of New Testament churches. Furthermore, New Testament churches are the only ones authorized by heaven to do this work. A church also may choose to associate with other churches in the work of missions by helping missionaries sent out by other associating churches.

In brief, the people of missions can be determined from Acts 13:1-3. Concerning the people of missions, one normally thinks of the missionary who is sent and the people of the field whereunto he is sent. However, mission work involves not only the missionaries called of God to go to other places, but also the members of the sending, supporting church or churches who stay on the home front. In fact, churches and members on the home front are to witness and do mission work at home along with praying and financially supporting the missionary or missionaries sent out by them. Regarding the work of missions, a principle is set forth in the Old Testament involving an incident that took place during the life of David before he became king. This principle is carried over into the New Testament era. It is set forth in 1 Samuel 30:24, where David said to his soldiers, "For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part *is* that goeth down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike." This principle is that it takes both the sending church and the missionary to accomplish the work of missions, and they shall both be rewarded accordingly.

What is the authority and power of mission work? This is seen from Acts 13:4. Jesus states in Matthew 28:18 to the church He organized during His earthly ministry, "...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He said unto them in Luke 24:49, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." In these two

passages, Jesus used two different Greek words translated "power" in the King James Version. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus uses the Greek noun ἐξουσία (exousia), which can be translated "authority," meaning "the power of rule or government" (Thayer 225).<sup>18</sup> In Luke 24:49 Jesus uses the Greek noun δύναμις (dunamis). Thayer says this word means "strength, ability, power," and he further says it means "inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature..." (159)<sup>19</sup> The English word dynamite comes from this word δύναμις. Δύναμις and ἐξουσία are synonyms (159,160).<sup>20</sup> Thayer writes that δύναμις has the idea of "power, natural ability, general and inherent;" whereas ἐξουσία has the idea "primarily liberty of action; then, authority... as delegated power...."<sup>20</sup> Thus Jesus has the authority to command His churches to go and to do mission work. He is the authority behind mission work. In Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8, Jesus relates that His church will receive "the promise of my Father upon you..." and that they would "be endued with power from on high." This power was the power of the Holy Spirit, which was received on the day of Pentecost, according to Acts 2:1-4. This can be compared to the time when the tabernacle was completed as recorded in Exodus 40:34, where Moses wrote, "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." Therefore, the church that Jesus built during His earthly ministry was empowered and accredited to do the work that Christ Jesus commanded them to do in giving them the Great Commission. Thus the Holy Spirit is the power behind mission work.

In brief, the message of the missionary is the message of truth, the gospel, and of reconciliation to God. His message is to preach the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation, as seen from Acts 13:5. In John 14:6 Jesus emphasized the message of truth in answer to Thomas and the other disciples, when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Also, Jesus states in His prayer to the Father in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Jesus is the embodiment of truth. He is God the Son come in the flesh

to redeem sinful man. Without Jesus as Savior, each and every person is lost and on their way to hell.

The Gospel message is summarized by the Apostle Paul both in Acts 17:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. Acts 17:3 says, "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." In addition, the apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The message of the missionary is the message of the love, the mercy, and the grace of God to man through Jesus Christ and His Cross. It is the message of the need of the new birth, as seen from John 3:1-21.

Also, the message of the missionary is the message of reconciliation, as seen from 2 Corinthians 5:18, which says, "And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." The message is that God will forgive the lost sinner who believes because of the shed blood of Christ and His resurrection according to Luke 24:46-47 and Acts 10:43. It is the message that salvation is not of works but fully of the grace of God through faith according to Ephesians 2:8-9. It is a message that the saved will be resurrected to heaven and the lost shall be judged and cast into hell. Further, it is the message that the repentant believing sinner is justified by faith in Jesus according to Romans 4:24,25 and 5:1-11. Finally, the missionary is to declare the whole counsel of God as did the Apostle Paul according to Acts 20:25-27.

**Definition and characteristics of a Model New Testament church.** Simply stated, a model New Testament church is a New Testament church that bears the distinguishing marks as mentioned in the previous section, worships and serves God according to truth as revealed in the Word of God, and stands as a good example or model for other New Testament churches to follow. A model church does not mean a perfect church. There can be no such thing this side of heaven since all church

members live in the flesh and still have dual natures, that is, the new man indwelt by the Holy Spirit and the old man which is still totally depraved. (Please refer to 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:15-26; and other passages.) Nevertheless, a model church is a church that is pleasing in the sight of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not what others think, but rather what God judges according to what He has set forth in His Word. A model church follows the commands of Christ in that she obeys Luke 19:13 where "a certain nobleman" instructed, "...Occupy till I come." A model church is a mission minded church.

The church in Thessalonica was a mission minded church, as can be seen from 1 Thessalonians 1:1,2,7-10 and 2:13,14. When the Apostle Paul called the church in Thessalonica "...ensamples to all that believe..." he includes five reasons why they were a model church in 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10. *First, they* "...sounded out the word of the Lord..." to many other places. *Second,* "...in every place..." their "...faith to God-ward..." was "...spread abroad..." *Third,* they followed the pastor, in that Paul and his helper received a good welcome, as demonstrated by verses 5, 6 and the first part of verse 9 where it states, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you." *Fourth,* they "...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." *Fifth,* they were waiting "...for his Son from heaven, ... even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (According to Vines the word "wait" from ἀναμένω (anamenô) suggest "...waiting with patience and confident expectancy" (1206).<sup>21</sup> It does not mean that they sat down and did nothing; but, rather, they were busy doing the work of God).

A model church is also one full of members that are bearing the fruit (not fruits - plural) of the Holy Spirit. Two passages both penned by the Apostle Paul reveal what the fruit of the Spirit is. He wrote in Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no



law." In Ephesians 5:9 he states, "(For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth)." An excellent example of this is again seen in the church in Thessalonica in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 which implies that the Thessalonian church was full of members who yielded themselves to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Paul is writing to the church in Corinth that they would abound in the grace of giving according to 2 Corinthians 8:7,8. He cites the example of the churches in Macedonia as an example of people and churches who first gave themselves to God and thus manifest the fruit of the Spirit. (The church in Thessalonica was one of the churches of Macedonia). According to 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, the Apostle wanted the church in Corinth to know of the grace of God bestowed and subsequently demonstrated by the churches in Macedonia. He says that even though the members of the churches in Macedonia were suffering persecution and deep poverty, they begged Paul to allow them to help in the offering being taken to relieve "...the poor saints of Jerusalem." Paul, further, explains this in Romans 15:25-28. Although afflicted, they abounded with great joy in giving liberally to the relief of the poor saints in Jerusalem. Paul explains that they did more than what he expected in that first they gave themselves to the control of God, the Spirit. This is what it takes for a church to be a model church.

### **Summary of Chapter**

Out of all the churches mentioned in the New Testament, the church in Thessalonica is no doubt a model church. This church stands as a good positive example and pattern for other New Testament churches to follow. This church manifested the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This church had all the distinguishing marks of a true New Testament church and was pleasing in the sight of God. She followed the commands of Christ and was mission minded. Even though she was poor in material things, she gave a liberal offering to help other churches. The reason she did was because by the grace of God, the members "...first gave their own selves to the

Lord," (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Therefore, this treatise will basically be an expository and practical commentary on the epistle(s) to the church in Thessalonica. The Apostle Paul declares that they were ensamples for believers and churches in that day. This has been and will remain true in every generation throughout the church age and even until Jesus returns in His second advent.

Notes

1. The American College Dictionary, edited by Clarence L. Barnhart, (New York: Random House, Copyright, 1950), p. 418.
2. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, (Springfield: Merriam, 1963), p. 289.
3. George V. Wigram, The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon, (1844), Revising Editor: Jay P. Green, Sr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1982),p.889.
4. Joseph H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (1885), (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 642.
5. Ibid., p. 632.
6. James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. (Tulsa: American Christian College Press, n. d.), p. 73 of The Greek Dictionary of the New Testament.
7. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 544.
8. Strong, op. cit., p. 26 of The Greek Dictionary of the New Testament.
9. Thayer, op. cit., p. 321,322.
10. H. B. Taylor, "Difference - Between the Family of God, Kingdom of God - Church of God." (Ashland Avenue Baptist, Editor Ross L. Range, 163 North Ashland Avenue, Lexington, Kentucky 40502. -Vol. 62, January 25, 1985, No. 1), pp. 1, 3.
11. Ibid.
12. J. M. Carroll with introduction by Clarence Walker, The Trail of Blood, or Following the Christians Down Through the Centuries From The Days of Christ to the Present Time. (Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, 163 North Ashland Avenue, Lexington, Kentucky 40502, copyright 1931, 1967 printing). pp. 5, 8, 9. Note: while the information to which this reference refers is in the words of this writer, nevertheless, this writer leaned heavily on the "Marks" as set forth by Walker and Carroll.
13. David Harris, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ - Studies in Revelation 1:1-8:5." Adult-Quarterly (Sunday School) Vol. 87, No. 3 (June 1, 2000): 1-96. (Texarkana: Baptist Sunday School Committee, American Baptist Association). The front and back inside cover pages.
14. American Baptist Association Yearbook, 1999. "Official Directory of The Proceedings, ... of the American Baptist Association ... etc." (Texarkana, Texas: Bogard Press, 1999). pp. 215-217.
15. Roy M. Reed, The Glorious Church, Nine Positive Ways To Identify the New Testament Church. (Texarkana, AR-TX: Copyright 1955, Bogard Press, Third Edition, fourth Printing, 1985). p. 3.
16. Ibid., p. 5.
17. Ibid., p. 84. Please note that there is a slight difference in wording in these nine identifying things as listed on page 84 from that in the "Table of Content" on page 1.
18. Joseph H. Thayer, op. cit., p. 225.
19. Ibid., p. 159.
20. Ibid., p. 159,160.
21. W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984). p.1206.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **The Criteria For Measuring A Model Church**

(From The New Testament and Revelation Chapters 2 and 3)

#### **II. THE CRITERIA FOR MEASURING A MODEL CHURCH.**

(The New Testament and Revelation Chapters 2 and 3)

##### **A. The Words Criterion and Measure Defined.**

1. Definition Of Criterion.
2. Definition Of Measure.
3. Definition Of Criterion In Relationship To Measuring A Model Church.

##### **B. The Measuring Criteria For A Model Church.**

1. Full of good works of faith, Rev 2:2; 1 Thes 1:3.
2. Continues in labors of love, Rev 2:2; 1 Thes 1:3; John 14:15.
3. Exhibits patience of hope, Rev 2:2; 1 Thes 1:3.
4. Accepts and heeds the Word of God, Rev 2:7; 3:8,10; 1 Thes 1:5,6,8; 2:13.
5. Follows the God called pastor,  
Rev 1:16,20; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; 1 Thes 1:5,6.
6. Is mission minded, Rev 2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15; Acts 19:10; 1 Thes 1:7,8.
7. Repents in order to stay in love with the Lord Jesus Christ,  
Rev 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19; 1 Thes 1:9; 2:9-12; 4:11-12; 5:14,15.
8. Tolerates not evil and false doctrine,  
Rev 2:2,3,9,14,20-25; 3:9; 1 Thess 2:14-16; 5:12-15,22; 2 Thes 3:6,11-14.
9. Hates the things that God hates,  
Rev 2:6,15,20-23; 1 Thes 2:14-16; 2 Thes 3:2.
10. Considers not the hatred of the world; but rather the glory of God, Rev 2:7,9,  
Rev 11,17,26-28; 3:5,12,21; Heb 11; 1 Thess 1:6,9; 2:14-18; 3:2-6; 5:18;  
2 Thess 1:4-10.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **The Criteria For Measuring A Model Church**

(From The New Testament and Revelation Chapters 2 and 3)

A New Testament church can be a model church no matter the numerical size, whether she has a handful of members, 10 members, 100 members, or a 1000 or more members. (Matthew 18:18-20). As already stated and explained in chapter 1 of this treatise, under the heading "Definition And Characteristics Of A Model New Testament Church," a model church is not a perfect church. How can a model church be measured? What standard or criteria should be used to determine or measure what a model New Testament church should be or is? For the answers to these questions one must turn to the Holy Bible and also to the definition of certain words. In order to determine the criteria that is according to the New Testament this paper will: first, define the words criterion and measure; second, give the measuring criteria for a model church as found in the New Testament and the book of Revelation chapters 2 and 3. This chapter is to some degree an extension of chapter 1; in that, it gives more information about what a model church is and the characteristics of it.

#### **A. The Words Criterion and Measure Defined**

What is meant by the words "criterion and measure" and how do they relate to a model church? This section will attempt to answer these questions. First, the definition of "criterion" will be discussed. Second, the definition of "measure" will be considered. Both of these terms

are derived from the Greek language. They also can be found in one form or another in the New Testament. Third, the definition of "criterion" in relationship to measuring a model church will be examined.

**Definition of criterion.** "Criteria" is the plural of "criterion." "Criterion" is a transliteration of the Greek noun κριτήριον (kritêrion), which, according to Thayer, means "the instrument or means of trying or judging anything; the rule by which one judges,... the place where judgment is given; the tribunal of a judge; a bench of judge,... in exceptional usage, the matter judged, thing to be decided, suit, case..." (Thayer 362).<sup>1</sup> This Greek word is used in these three places in one form or another in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 6:2,4 and James 2:6.

The English word "criterion" is defined by *The American College Dictionary* as "a standard of judgment or criticism; an established rule or principle for testing anything..." and adds the words "measure, test, law, touchstone" as synonyms (287, 1177).<sup>2</sup> Webster essentially agrees with this definition and refers to the word "standard" for more synonyms (197, 853).<sup>3</sup> Thus "criterion" is a means or standard of determining what a thing should be or a way to judge or measure what a thing should be.

**Definition of measure.** The English word "measure" is derived from the Greek noun μέτρον (metron) and the Greek verb μετρέω (metreo). According to Thayer this Greek verb means "...to measure; to measure out or off..." and metaphorically, Thayer says it means "...to judge according to rule or standard, to estimate... to measure to, mete out to, i. e. give by measure..." (407, 408).<sup>4</sup> This is the idea of these Greek words in Matthew 7:2 and Mark 4:24 where the noun is translated "measure" and the verb is translated "mete" and "shall be measured" which has the idea of to "deal out" (Bushell).<sup>5</sup> In Matthew 7:2 the Amplified Bible uses the word "deal out" instead of "mete" and "will be dealt out" instead of "shall be measured" (9).<sup>6</sup> The New

American Standard Bible translates Matthew 7:2 (NASB) "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."

The noun measure is defined by *The American College Dictionary* as an "act or process of ascertaining the extent, dimensions, quantity, etc., of something, esp. by comparison with a standard... any standard of comparison, estimation, or judgment..." (755).<sup>7</sup> The sixth definition by *Webster* for measure is "...a basis or standard of comparison : criterion..." (524).<sup>8</sup>

**Definition of criterion in relationship to measuring a model church.** In order to determine a standard of measure or comparison for a model church, the criteria for measuring such must be gleaned from throughout the New Testament and especially from Revelation chapters 2 and 3. By comparing this model church criteria as found in the Bible one can determine if his or her church or, for that matter, any church, is what God would have it to be. Once gleaned, this model church criteria may become a basis or standard of comparison. This model church criteria may be called the *measuring criteria* for a model church. Every born again, blood bought believer, who is a member of a particular New Testament church, could and should use this *measuring criteria* in order to work toward making sure the church of his or her membership is a church that others could follow as a pattern and one that would please God and give Him the glory.

### **B. The Measuring Criteria for a Model Church.**

In the last book of the New Testament and the Holy Bible called the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ instructed John, the Apostle, to write to seven churches located in Asia in what is modern day Turkey. These churches are specified in Revelation 1:11 as the primary recipients of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. They are named in this verse as the churches in Ephesus, in Smyrna, in Pergamos, in Thyatira, in Sardis, in Philadelphia, and in Laodicea. Jesus wrote a specific letter

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to each of these seven churches. These were recorded by John in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The basic outline for each letter is the same with the exception of the order of the last four of the seven letters. This basic outline for each letter is as follows: "(1) church addressed, (2) Christ presented, (3) commended activities, (4) constructive rebuke, (5) corrective admonition, (6) call to hear, and (7) challenge and encouragement" (Looney 41).<sup>9</sup>

In studying these seven letters and in combining the activities that Christ Jesus commended and rebuked, along with the corrective admonitions, call to hear and the challenge and encouragements, an expanded definition and the criteria of measurement for a model church can be gleaned. And truly this is a basis or standard of comparison for judging whether or not a church is a model church. **This basis or standard of comparison** becomes the measuring criteria for a model church. **From chapters 2 and 3 of the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ as compared to First and Second Thessalonians** the following ten things could be used **for part of this measuring criteria**. This criteria is that a model church is one that: (1) is full of good works of faith, (2) continues in labors of love because they are in love with Jesus, (3) exhibits patience of hope, (4) accepts and takes heed to the Word of God as from the Spirit of Truth, (5) follows the God called man or the pastor, (6) is mission minded, (7) repents and keeps on repenting in order to stay in love with the Lord Jesus Christ (this implies staying in fellowship with Him), (8) will not and does not tolerate evil, evil workers, false apostles, and false doctrine, (9) hates the things that God hates, such as the Nicolaitanes which represent preacher rule and ecumenism, (10) considers not the dislike and hatred of the world nor the persecution; but rather considers the glory of God and the promise of the reward. The comments in the following paragraphs (for the most part) will be confined to the characteristics of a model church as found in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 since the main part of this thesis will be a commentary on First and (*Second*) Thessalonians.



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More remarks can be found on these criteria in the commentaries in the chapters on First and (*Second*) Thessalonians.

The *first criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that is **full of good works of faith** according to Revelation 2:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:3. It should be noted that "The Greek word for works in these passages is from the plural of ἔργον (ergon) which has to do with the manner of life and conduct or deeds of the believer" (Looney 44)<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that in each letter to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus states, "I know thy works." This criterion is more fully discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis, the chapter on 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.

The *second criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that **continues in labors of love** according to Revelation 2:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:3. This writer made this comment in his unpublished commentary on the book of Revelation, "The word labor is from the Greek κόπος (kopos) which Thayer says can mean,"<sup>10</sup> "...intense labor united with trouble, toil..." (355).<sup>11</sup> "It has the idea of enthusiastic labor in which one pursues his manner of life."<sup>10</sup> This includes a love for the Lord Jesus Christ; loving not the world; but rather loving to glorify God with a love for the lost. This includes then **a church that loves and is in love with Jesus.** Jesus states emphatically in John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments." A church in love with Jesus seeks to give honor and glory to God (in all things). The church in Ephesus was rebuked by the Lord Jesus for leaving her first love. This first love of a New Testament church is supreme devotion to Christ. It is the kind of love which the believer has for Christ at the point of his new birth.

The *third criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that **exhibits patience of hope** according to Revelation 2:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:3. This writer made this comment in his unpublished commentary on the book of Revelation, "The

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word patience is from ὑπομονή (hupomonê) and according to Thayer means,"<sup>10</sup> "...steadfastness,... endurance...; in the New Testament the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest of trials and sufferings.." (644).<sup>12</sup> "The Ephesians suffered persecution and endured trials; yet they continued to serve the Lord."<sup>10</sup> This can also be said of the church in Thessalonica.

The *fourth criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that **accepts and takes heed to the Word of God as from the Spirit of Truth** according to Revelation 2:7; 3:8,10; 1 Thessalonians 1:5,6,8; 2:13. In each of the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia in Revelation in chapters 2 and 3, the Lord Jesus made this statement "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Concerning this statement this writer has written:

Not all people have an ear to hear the message since it is spiritually discerned. Jesus emphasized hearing in John 5:24. What is that which makes one able to hear what the Spirit says to the churches: (1) One must be saved by grace through faith; (2) One must have been scripturally baptized and be a member in good standing of a New Testament Church; and (3) One must study the Word of God (See also 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 2 Timothy 2:15) (Looney 40,41).<sup>13</sup>

Note that in the activities commended in Revelation 3:8,10, the church in Philadelphia is commended by Jesus because they had "...kept my word, and hast not denied my name" and also "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, ...." Also refer to Romans 10:17. This reveals that a model church will stand for truth and sound doctrine at all times just as Jude exhorts believers to do in Jude 3. The Apostle Paul implies in 1 Thessalonians 1:5,6,8 and 2:13 that the members of the church in Thessalonica accepted the Word of God that he preached "...not as the word of men..." but rather as from the Spirit of Truth because it came with power and worked "effectually" in them conviction unto repentance and the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. And because of this they received the Word of God with joy of the

Holy Spirit, became followers of the Apostle Paul and his fellowhelpers and of the Lord, and they also engaged in mission work.

The *fifth criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that **follows the God called man or the pastor** according to Revelation 1:16,20; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; and 1 Thessalonians 1:5,6,8. In the book of Revelation chapters one through three the pastors of the seven churches in Asia are referred to as stars. This writer gives an explanation of this in his comments on Revelation chapter 1:16,20.

Verse 16 says, "He (*that is, Jesus*) had in His right hand seven stars:...." These stars are identified in verse 20 as the angels of the churches. The right hand is the hand of power, authority, and safety. See also Psalms 18:35; 20:6; Acts 5:31. The word angels could be rendered messengers. These are the messengers or faithful pastors to the churches. Jesus has them in His right hand to protect and to control. (False teachers are called wandering stars in Jude 13.) (Looney 33,36)<sup>14</sup>

Further in verse 20 of Revelation chapter One:

...Jesus explains the mystery of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks. A mystery is simply a thing that has not been previously known but is now revealed by God. Christ tells John that the stars are angels. The plural Greek noun ἄγγελοι (aggeloi) rendered angels means messengers. As already mentioned in the comments for verse 16 these are the pastors of the churches since they are the ones called by God to preach the message of God from the Word of God.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. O. R. Baldwin, a Missionary Baptist Pastor and also an instructor in the Missionary Baptist Seminary of Little Rock, Arkansas, for over 25 years (now retired), notes (this is not an exact quote), "And since Christ is in the midst of the churches with the pastors in His hand, the pastors are to follow Him and do His will and teach only His Word" (2).<sup>15</sup> The holy task of the pastor (as an undershepherd of the flock) is to take the Word of God, and teach it (by living it and preaching it) to those who are in need and are placed under his care. The responsibility of each member of the local flock is to listen and take heed and apply the truth to their individual lives so that Christ can be seen in them.

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The *sixth criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that is **mission minded** according to Revelation 2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15; Acts 19:10; and 1 Thessalonians 1:7,8. In each of the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia in Revelation chapters 2 and 3:

...Christ says "I know thy works," indicating that He truly walks in the midst of His churches and He knows what is going on within each one. Ephesians 2:10 states, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And in 2 Thess. 2:17 Paul wrote, "Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." God looks at the works His people are doing. God also knows the stand His churches take (Looney 40).<sup>16</sup>

The **work of the New Testament church is spelled out in the Great Commission** as given in one form or another near the end of each of the four Gospel Records and also in the first chapter of the book of Acts. Although there is no specific reference to mission work being done by the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, yet it is implied by the works they were doing. This is recognized by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when He said, "I know thy works...." However, there is an indication of it in the letter to the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7,8, when Jesus states that He opens and shut doors and that He had set before this church an open door. That the church in Ephesus was a mission-minded church is seen from the statement made concerning the work of Paul and of the church in Ephesus in Acts 19:10, which states, "...all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." The statement by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:7,8 proves that the church in Thessalonica was a mission-minded church.

The *seventh criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that **repents and keeps on repenting in order to stay in love with the Lord Jesus Christ** as demonstrated in Revelation 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19 and in 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2:9-12; 4:11-12; 5:14,15. In Revelation 2:5 the Lord Jesus Christ gives three corrective admonitions to the

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church in Ephesus, that if followed, the first love of a church or individual will be restored and/or maintained.

First, they must remember from what (*and where*) they have fallen and keep on remembering. Second, they must repent - have a change of mind and heart, an about face in their thinking and attitude. Third, they must do the first works and be motivated by supreme love for the Savior who died for a world of lost sinners who deserve to go to hell. Next, Christ warns them that if they do not repent as a church (churches are made up of individuals) that He shall come to them and "...will remove the candlestick out of his place..." (Looney 46)<sup>17</sup>

The *eighth criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that **will not and does not tolerate evil, evil workers, false apostles, and false doctrine** as shown forth from Revelation 2:2,3,9,14,20-25 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16; 5:12-15,22; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,11-14. In Revelation 2:2,3 Christ Jesus

...commends them because they would not tolerate wicked or evil men. This probably has reference to Acts 20:28-30; 1 John 4:1; Titus 2:1; 3:10; and Isaiah 8:20 (*and other like verses*). This could be speaking of those who told evil lies about the church or it could be saying they would not approve evil ones in the church. Jesus noted further that they tried certain men: those who said they were apostles but were really lying. To be an apostle one must meet the qualifications of Acts 1:20-22 or be called in a way like Paul. This church was sound in the faith and tested and tried their teachers according to the scriptures. Verse 3 continues the thought of verse 2. This church had labored and endured unto weariness for the sake of Jesus Christ. They had borne reproach for upholding the gospel in a world in which Jesus Christ was not popular but they had not fainted (Looney 44,45).<sup>18</sup>

The *ninth criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that **hates the things that God hates, such as the Nicolaitanes which represent preacher rule, ecumenism and anything else that would cause her to commit spiritual fornication** as proved according to Revelation 2:6,15, 20-23 and 2 Thessalonians 3:2 and implied from 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16. In Revelation 2:6 Jesus commends the church in Ephesus

...because they hated "...the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate."  
The word Nicolaitanes comes from the combination of two Greek

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words: νικᾶω (nikaō) which means "to conquer" and λαός (laos) meaning "people or laity." These two words together mean people rulers. The Nicolaitanes advocated clergy rule over the church. The deeds in Ephesus were doctrine in Pergamos according to 2:15. The polity of the Lord's church is to be democratic with Christ as the head (Looney 44,45).<sup>18</sup>

Any polity other than that given in the New Testament will cause a church to pull away from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. (Please refer to Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 1:12.) The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:3, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the **simplicity** that is in Christ." Jesus also admonished these churches to be careful not to engage in spiritual fornication as seen from Revelation 2:15,20-23.

The *tenth criterion* that is needed for a church to be a model church is that she is one that **considers not the dislike and hatred of the world nor the persecution; but rather considers the glory of God and the promise of the reward** as shown forth from Revelation 2:7,9,11,17,26-28; 3:5,12;21; Hebrews 11; 1 Thessalonians 1:6,9; 2:14-18; 3:2-6; 5:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10. Each church and each individual member must live in this crooked and perverse world, but that does not mean they condone the evil and wickedness therein. Nevertheless, each church and each believer is to look to Jesus and to the promise of heaven regardless of persecution or anything else. The believer is to be an overcomer by faith in Christ. John wrote in 1 John 5:4-5, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" In each of the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 the Lord Jesus made

...a statement about the overcomer. There are special rewards for faithful service. How can a saved person be an overcomer in the eyes of God? All saved people live in sinful bodies yet the saved can do a perfect work (This is not to say they live perfect lives and are sinless). How can a believer do this? (Looney 41).<sup>19</sup>

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Dr. O. R. Baldwin answers the above question in a positive way by saying (this is not an exact quote),

This means he needs to maintain his faith in God, demonstrating that faith to the lost by faithful testimony of the saving grace of God in his heart, and be faithful in regular attendance at the service of the church (10).<sup>20</sup>

More specifically this involves:

(1) proper baptism and membership in the right church, (2) proper observance of the Lord's Supper, (3) faithful attendance of church services no matter what, (4) being a prayer warrior for God, (5) giving to support the work of the church, (6) being evangelistic; and (7) living before others so as to give glory to the Father in heaven. Those who are overcomers during the church age will, no doubt, be part of the bride of Christ (Looney 41).<sup>19</sup>

Overcomers do not allow the present hatred of the world for true churches and for faithful believers to detract from keeping their eye of faith upon the Lord Jesus. They do not allow the mocking and persecution to be that which would keep them from being faithful to Christ and serving Him. On the other hand, they reckon the glory of God and the promise of the reward to be of greater importance. They can say with the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:18 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Also refer to 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

### Summary of Chapter

For a church to be a model church she must first be a New Testament church. The characteristics of a model church are found not only in the doctrines that she believes and proclaims but also in the way she measures up to the criteria as spelled out in this chapter. The Apostle Paul commended the church in Thessalonica according to 1 Thessalonians 1:3 because of her "...work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ..." According to 1 Thessalonians 2:13 the members of this church "... received the word of God ... not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 that they "...

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became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:" They were mission minded in that according to 1 Thessalonians 1:8 they "...sounded out the word of the Lord..." throughout the Roman province of Greece. Their repentance and love for the Lord Jesus is evident in that the apostle writes in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 that they, "...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." This is also gleaned from her example as expressed in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. That the church in Thessalonica did not tolerate evil, evil workers, false apostles, and false doctrine can be gleaned from the fact that when they were persecuted they did not compromise the truth of the Word of God. No doubt this young church hated the things that God hates, such as anything that would have caused the people of God to commit spiritual fornication. That this is true is implied from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-21 and 2 Thessalonians 3:2 and the fact that they loved the Lord Jesus and His Word. That they did not consider the dislike and hatred of the world nor the persecution, but rather considered the glory of God and the promise of the reward is evident in that they suffered much persecution but continued to serve the Lord according to 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14-18; 3:2-6; 5:18 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4-10.



Notes

1. Joseph H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (1885), (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 362.
2. The American College Dictionary, edited by Clarence L. Barnhart, (New York: Random House, Copyright, 1950), pp. 287, 1177.
3. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, (Springfield: Merriam, 1963), pp. 197, 853.
4. Thayer, op. cit., pp. 407, 408.
5. Michael S. Bushell, BibleWorks for Windows, Windows 3.1 Release, Version 2.3c [Computer Program]. Seattle, WA: (now located in Big Fork, MT) Hermeneutika, 1994.  
Note: this is found under Greek Morphology of the word μετρεῖτε in Matthew 7:2 or Mark 4:24 when μετρεῖτε is clicked with the right mouse button.
6. The Amplified Bible, Containing the Amplified Old Testament and the Amplified New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [The Lockman Foundation], 1965). p. 9 of the New Testament Section.
7. The American College Dictionary, op. cit., p. 755.
8. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, op. cit., p. 524.
9. Joseph L. Looney II, Comments on the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Unpublished, A commentary written and finished in 1991, p. 41
10. Ibid., p. 44
11. Thayer, op. cit., p. 355.
12. Ibid., p. 644.
13. Looney II, op. cit., pp. 40,41.
14. Ibid., pp. 33,36.
15. O. R. Baldwin, "The Book of Revelation," Little Rock: Missionary Baptist Seminary, Photocopy. n.d. p. 2.
16. Looney II, op. cit., p. 40
17. Ibid., p. 46
18. Ibid., pp. 44,45.
19. Ibid., p. 41.
20. O. R. Baldwin, op. cit., p. 10.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A Model Church: Established**

(1 Thessalonians 1:1-3; Acts 17:1-15)

- III. A MODEL CHURCH: ESTABLISHED.** 1:1-3 with ACTS 17:1-15
- A. Introduction and Background of this Church. Acts 16,17.
    - 1. This study should begin in the book of Acts chapters 16 and 17.
    - 2. The missionaries journeyed from Philippi to Thessalonica, Acts 17:1.
    - 3. The reason Paul did not stay in Amphipolis and Apollonia.
    - 4. The Apostle Paul used a planned strategy in spreading the Gospel..
  - B. The City of Thessalonica, an Interesting Place. Acts 17:1
    - 1. The name of the city had been and has been changed.
    - 2. This city was an important city.
    - 3. The city was a mixture of peoples and morals.
  - C. The Actual Establishing of a New Testament Church and the Message Preached. Acts 17:1-10
    - 1. This church originated with the mission-minded efforts of the Church in Antioch of Syria and the Apostle Paul.
    - 2. The message Paul preached, Acts 17:1-3.
    - 3. The length of the ministry of Paul in Thessalonica is somewhat significant.
    - 4. The preaching of the truth will bring opposition.
  - D. The Occasion, Date, and Purpose of 1 Thessalonians. Acts 17:1-15
    - 1. The occasion that brought about the writing of 1 Thessalonians.
    - 2. The reason for the writing of 1 Thessalonians.
    - 3. The time and place of the writing.
    - 4. The purpose in writing.
  - E. The Doctrine of the Second Coming in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
    - 1. The second coming as mentioned in 1 Thessalonians.
    - 2. The second coming as mentioned in 2 Thessalonians.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A Model Church: Established**

(1 Thessalonians 1:1-3; Acts 17:1-15)

As discussed and shown in chapter 1 under the heading of "The Distinguishing Marks Of A New Testament Church" the first distinguishing mark of a New Testament church is that she has been biblically organized. Jesus established His first New Testament church during His earthly ministry and every true church in whatever location has come from that church until this present time. The church in Thessalonica was established by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. As previously shown from Acts 13:1-5, the Apostle Paul was sent out by the church in Antioch of Syria as directed by the Holy Spirit to do mission work. The Apostle Paul and Barnabas and later Silas according to Acts 15:40 were separated and sent forth by the Holy Spirit and were sent out by the church in Antioch of Syria. They were sent forth to preach the gospel of Christ, to baptize the converts, to teach them to observe the Word of God, and to establish New Testament churches. This is the biblical pattern that is to be followed: that an established New Testament church is to be that which plants a new church of like faith and order in a different location. The main points in this chapter will reveal that this pattern was followed. These points also present other relevant information surrounding the establishing of the church in Thessalonica which became a model church. The points to be considered are: first, the introduction and background of this church as gleaned from Acts 16 and 17; second, the city of Thessalonica, an interesting place, Acts 17:1;

third, the actual establishing of a New Testament church and the message preached, Acts 17:1-10; fourth, the occasion, date, and purpose of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, Acts 17:1-15; and fifth, the doctrine of the second coming of Christ in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

**A. Introduction and Background of this Church. Acts 16 and 17**

This study would not be complete without information leading up to and surrounding the establishing of this church. This introductory and background material is intended to help explain the context for the establishing of the Thessalonian church. Therefore, the following sub-divisions will be considered: (1) this study should begin in the book of Acts chapters 16 and 17; (2) the missionaries journeyed from Philippi to Thessalonica, Acts 17:1; (3) the reason Paul did not stay in Amphipolis and Apollonia; and (4) the Apostle Paul used a planned strategy in spreading the gospel..

**Any study concerning the Thessalonians should really begin in the book of Acts chapters 16 and 17.** Doctor Luke records in Acts 16:6-10 that the Apostle Paul and his missionary companions, Silas, Luke, and Timothy, were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia and also Bithynia. While they were in Troas, the westernmost city of Asia Minor, Paul saw a vision of a man in Macedonia of Greece saying, "...Come over into Macedonia, and help us." (Acts 16:9). After seeing this vision, Paul was sure that God was directing him to go into Macedonia and to preach unto those in this northern Greek Province of the Roman Empire.

**The missionaries journeyed from Philippi to Thessalonica, (Acts 17:1).** After a successful mission in the city of Philippi, but one where Paul and Silas were jailed for preaching the gospel of Christ, they were able to establish a New Testament church. Then, they left Philippi to go to the city of Thessalonica about one hundred miles to the west. They traveled on the famous Egnatian Way (which held the same importance as the interstate type

highways do today), which crossed Macedonia from east to west. It was the great military and commercial highway that linked the Aegean Sea with the Adriatic Sea (Pfeiffer 222).<sup>1</sup> Along the way, according to Acts 17:1, they passed through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia and only stayed possibly to spend the night in each place.

**The reason Paul did not stay in Amphipolis and Apollonia.** Why did not Paul stay in these places longer? First, it must be remembered that he was following the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God. Secondly, he was practical in his selection of places to preach and to establish New Testament churches. Possibly, as the Bible Scholar, D. Edmond Hiebert, suggests, it was "...because these cities had no Jewish synagogues..." (13).<sup>2</sup> Hiebert further states, "Also it seems that Paul recognized the strategic importance of Thessalonica as the key to the evangelization of the whole of Macedonia and was eager to begin preaching there" (13).<sup>3</sup>

**The Apostle Paul used a planned strategy in spreading the Gospel.** This is not to be taken that the gospel was not to be preached there, nor that the Apostle Paul was not concerned about the souls of the people of these cities. He believed that in due time through missionary endeavor that churches would be established in places like Amphipolis and Apollonia. Paul was concerned, but he also had a planned strategy to reach as many people as possible as fast as he could. Thus, he sought to establish New Testament churches in the larger metropolitan centers, believing that from these the gospel would be spread to the surrounding towns and countryside. Paul was a wise missionary whose wisdom came down from the throne of God. Should not preachers, pastors and churches be wise in the same way in these modern times? That this strategy worked is proven according to what Paul wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8 "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place...." Paul established a missionary minded

church. It must be kept in mind that the Apostle Paul was a Holy Spirit led, New Testament church sent missionary. He was not a free lance missionary, but rather had been sent out by the church in Antioch of Syria. Refer to Acts 13:1-5 and Acts 16:1-10.

**B. The City of Thessalonica, an Interesting Place. Acts 17:1**

To better understand the work of the Apostle Paul and his co-workers, it helps to know something about the history and the city of Thessalonica. Hence, the following sub-points will be discussed: (1) the name of the city had been and has been changed; (2) this city was an important city in the Roman Province of Macedonia; and (3) the city was a mixture of peoples and morals. These sub-topics are also significant for the correct and proper understanding of the context of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

**The name of the city had been and has been changed.** In its earlier history this city of Thessalonica was called Therma which was derived from the "Hot Mineral Springs" located nearby. In about 315 B. C. the city was renamed by Cassander, the son-in-law of Philip of Macedon, to honor his wife, the half-sister of Alexander the Great. In this modern day the name has been shortened to Saloniki but is officially known as Thessaloniki (Pfeiffer 222).<sup>4</sup>

**This city was an important city.** The city of Thessalonica was not only situated on the Egnatian way, but also on the northern part of the Thermaic Gulf of the Aegean Sea. While this made it the most important seaport and commercial center of Macedonia, it also had served as the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia since 146 B. C (Hiebert 11, 12).<sup>5</sup> In 42 B. C. it had been made a "free city" because of the help given to Anthony and Octavian (later to be named Augustus) in their struggle against Brutus and Cassius (Hiebert 12).<sup>6</sup> Although the Roman proconsul had his residence there, because it was a "free city," it enjoyed self rule in internal affairs (as can be seen from Acts 17:6,8) and consequently no Roman troops were stationed there (Hiebert 12).<sup>7</sup> The citizens had the right of public assembly. They also appointed their own five,

six, or more rulers called "politarchs" much like it is done in America today. The fact that this seaport city was the capital of the rovince of Macedonia combined with the commercial and trading aspect attributed to the reason the Word of God "sounded out" to far away places.

**The city was a mixture of peoples and morals.** The population of Thessalonica was about 200,000 people during the time of the Apostle Paul (Harrison *quoted by* Heibert 13).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it was the largest city in the Roman Province of Macedonia. Most of the people were native Greeks. Essentially Thessalonica was a Greek city in character. Yet it contained a mixture of Romans (many who were wealthy), people from Asia Minor (present day Turkey), and also a sizable group of Jews who had most probably been attracted there by the great commercial aspect of the city. This mixture of people also caused the Word of God to be "sounded out" to far away places.

Evidently the Jews of Thessalonica maintained an active synagogue (Acts 17:1). They were quite influential in proselyting a good number of Gentiles, who had become dissatisfied with their false gods and pagan worship. Nevertheless, the moral standards of the idolatrous people in Thessalonica were no higher than those of other Greek cities. While they had not acquired the infamous reputation or immorality like the city of Corinth, yet the effects and immorality of paganism and false religion were truly degrading. When people do not believe and practice the truth of the Holy Bible, they are bound to practice sinful things that are damaging to society and dishonoring to the true God. This was true in that day, and it is still true today. It should be emphasized here that what a person really believes down deep in his heart determines what he does and/or does not do. Therefore, it behooves the true believer to be filled with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit (which means to be yielded to Him or to be controlled by Him).

### **C. The Actual Establishing of a New Testament Church in Thessalonica and the Message Preached. Acts 17:1-10**

What was the specific origin of the church in Thessalonica? Who established it, by what authority was it established, and what was the message proclaimed? How much time did Paul spend in the city? Was he able to ground the converts in the sound doctrines of the faith? Did he establish a model mission-minded church? An attempt to answer these and other pertinent questions will be made under the following sub-topics: (1) this church originated with the mission-minded efforts of the church in Antioch of Syria and the Apostle Paul; (2) the message Paul preached; (3) the length of the ministry of Paul in Thessalonica is somewhat significant (How long did Paul remain in Thessalonica?); (4) the preaching of the truth will bring opposition from the adversary, the devil and his crowd.

**This church originated with the mission-minded efforts of the church in Antioch of Syria and the Apostle Paul.** According to Acts 13:1-5 and 14:26-28 Paul (Saul) and Barnabas were **sent forth by the Holy Spirit** and the church of Antioch of Syria. At the beginning of his second missionary journey as recorded in Act 15:36-41 the Apostle Paul chose Silas to go with him. According to Acts 15:40, Silas had been "...recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." The origin of the church in Thessalonica can be gleaned from Acts 17:1-4. After a casual reading of Acts 17:1-10 there can be no doubt that the church in Thessalonica had its origin with the Apostle Paul and his missionary companions during his second missionary journey. (At this time only Silas was with Paul according to the use of the plural third person personal pronoun "they" in Acts 17:1 used by Luke, the beloved physician and human author of the book of Acts. It seems that Luke and Timothy had remained in Philippi to work with the new church just recently established.) Remember, the Apostle Paul is a Spirit led, New Testament church sent missionary. As was his custom, Paul began his ministry in the Jewish synagogue by using the Old



Testament Scriptures to prove that the Messiah had indeed come and fulfilled the prophecies concerning His death, burial, and resurrection.

**The message Paul preached, (Acts 17:1-3).** Paul preached the simple gospel message, which he summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4. He alleged that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Messiah or Christ of the Old Testament prophecies and that He would grant eternal life to all that would repent and believe the gospel. The meaning of the word "alleging" as used by Luke in Acts 17:3 is different from what this word has come to mean today. The dictionary of today states that the word "allege" means "...to declare as if under oath but without proof; to assert without proof or before proving..." (Webster 23).<sup>9</sup> However, this is not the meaning of the Greek word from which this word is translated. The word alleging is from παρατιθέμενος (paratithemenos). This is the present middle participle of the verb παρατίθημι (paratithêmi). According to Thayer, it means "to place beside or near or set before... before (one) in teaching... to set forth (from one's self), to explain" and the middle voice means "...to place down (from one's self or for one's self) with any one... to deposit... to intrust, commit to one's charge..." (486).<sup>10</sup> This word is translated in the following ways in the King James Version of the Bible: set before, commit, commend, put forth, commit the keeping of, allege. The idea of allege in Acts 17:3 is "...to present evidence..." and to bring "...forward the proof passages of Scripture." In addition, the use of "The present participle emphasizes the continuing action and describes the means or methods of Paul's reasoning and argumentation" (Rienecker 306).<sup>11</sup> Thus the apostle used the Old Testament to prove the message that he proclaimed. Acts 17:3 states in summary the message that Paul preached, "...that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

Luke records in Acts 17:2-4 that Paul continued his preaching in the synagogue for at least three weeks. As a result God blessed, in that, some of the Jews believed along with a great multitude of the devout or God-fearing Greeks and many of the chief women (probably wives of the leading citizens of Thessalonica). From this

statement in Acts 17:4 and also 1 Thessalonians 1:9, it seems that the majority of the converts were Gentiles who had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." (People today still need to turn to God from their idols since whatever keeps people from worshipping God and putting God first can be said to be an idol.) 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 is additional proof that the majority of the converts were Gentiles, for it states:

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews: *15* Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: *16* Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

**The length of the ministry of Paul in Thessalonica is somewhat significant.**

How long did Paul remain in Thessalonica? This question is important because an adequate length of time was needed to establish a model mission minded church. Paul probably stayed much longer than his synagogue ministry as indicated in Acts 17:1-3. From the record of Luke in Acts 17:2, it would seem that the answer would simply be that he stayed there three weeks and then because of the opposition of the unbelieving Jews as stated in Acts 17:5-9, Paul moved on to Berea. But when this answer is compared with statements made in the letters of Paul to this church at Thessalonica and other Scriptures it would appear that the ministry of Paul in Thessalonica may have been as Moffatt suggests "two or three months" (3)<sup>12</sup> to six months as allowed by Ramsay (223).<sup>13</sup> There is no conclusive proof that the events between verses three (3) and four (4), and four (4) and five (5) happened in rapid succession. The three weeks of Acts 17:2 are only in reference to the ministry of Paul in the synagogue. As it had been in other cities after the Jews cast him out of the synagogue, he turned directly to the Gentiles. It could have been that it was after his synagogue ministry that he was blessed with the conversion of

the majority of the God-fearing Greeks who turned to Christ Jesus from idols. As more Greeks were converted, the unbelieving Jews became extremely jealous. Hence, they "...set the city on an uproar..." (Acts 17:5). This, in turn, resulted in Paul and Silas being sent away by night for the safety of their lives. From all these actions mentioned and other factors, it is concluded that Paul stayed in Thessalonica from two to six months preaching and teaching the Word of God and establishing the new converts in this new church in the faith once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Other reasons for this conclusion are: *first*, according to 1 Thessalonians 2:9 and 2 Thessalonians 3:8, Paul supported himself by manual labor (tent making) while at Thessalonica, (he did this in order that none could suspect his ministry of being merely a money making activity); and *second*, according to Philippians 4:15,16, the mission-minded church at Philippi sent Paul an offering twice while he was in Thessalonica. (This is a reminder that New Testament churches need to be doing more mission work.) These things would not seem necessary if Paul stayed only a total of three (3) weeks.<sup>14</sup> In any case Paul, being led by the Spirit of God and sent out from the church in Antioch of Syria, taught the believers in Thessalonica a great quantity of relevant, important, sound doctrine (which one can glean from the study of the two epistles written to this church). Consequently, the result was that he established a model mission-minded church in Thessalonica.

**The preaching of the truth will bring opposition. (Leaving the city --Turning the world right side up.)** According to Acts 17:5-10 Paul and Silas had to leave the city of Thessalonica before they planned to do so. As stated in verse 6 they were accused of turning "...the world upside down..." but actually they were "turning the world right side up." Born-again, blood-bought believers can always be sure that the Devil and his crowd are behind any opposition which is against the work of the Lord. The jealousy of the unbelieving Jews had reached a crescendo. The Jews assembled a mob and attacked the house of Jason, no doubt, looking for Paul and Silas. However, since they did not find Paul and Silas, they dragged

Jason and other believers before the "politarchs," rulers of the city, and charged them with two indictments. The first of which believers today should be guilty, for they said, "...they that have turned the world upside down...." The second was a more serious charge. It implied that Paul and Silas were guilty of treason against the Caesar of Rome because, as recorded in verse 7, the accusers stated that Paul and the others said, "...that there is another king, *one* Jesus." In this indictment the Jews were actually perverting the clear teachings of the apostle concerning the second coming of Christ as "the Judge" of all the world and the coming world ruler to set up His Messianic one thousand year reign.

The city rulers seemed to favor the missionaries in their settlement of the case as revealed by Acts 17:8,9. They simply took security of Jason and the rest and then "they let them go." Thus the accused were charged with the responsibility that there would be no further trouble of this nature. Hiebert says that this settlement accomplished three things: first, it "inflicted no injury on the missionaries or their sureties...;" second, "it satisfied the accusers...;" and third, it "safeguarded the magistrates against suspicion of condoning treason..." (Heibert 40).<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, because they and their converts were in great danger, Paul and Silas had to leave by night and journey to Berea some 40 miles to the west. Their ministry in Berea was very effective among the people of that city and the Holy Spirit says in verse 11 that, "They (the Jews) were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Yet, again, they were persecuted by the Jews from Thessalonica according to Acts 17:10-15. This persecution forced Paul to make his way to Athens to preach there. However, Silas and Timothy were able to remain in Berea to continue the ministry of establishing yet another New Testament church. And, notwithstanding, the work of establishing a model New Testament mission minded church in Thessalonica was accomplished to the glory of God and to the saving of many souls.

**D. The Occasion, Date, and Purpose of 1 Thessalonians. Acts 17:1-15**

What brought about the writing of this epistle and why did the Apostle Paul write to this church? These are questions that need to be answered to better understand and interpret properly this or any of the books of the Holy Bible. Also for a better comprehension of the time period and circumstances the approximate date of writing shall be and should be determined. Therefore, this section will be subdivided as follows: (1) the occasion that brought about the writing of 1 Thessalonians; (2) the reason for the writing of this letter; (3) the time and place of the writing; and (4) the purpose in writing.

**The occasion that brought about the writing of 1 Thessalonians.** To understand the occasion for the writing of these epistle(s) the circumstances must be understood. Upon leaving Berea, Paul was conducted by brethren to Athens. After arriving in Athens, Greece, Paul sent word for Silas and Timothy to come to him. What was the reason for this? Paul was concerned for this young church in Thessalonica and the converts from whom he had been prematurely and suddenly separated. While the record in Acts 17:14, 15 is not clear, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 tells us that:

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; 2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.

Timothy was sent to the church in Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage them concerning their faith. Later in Acts 18:5 we are told, "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ.*" Both Silas and Timothy came to Paul in Corinth from Macedonia. It seems then that Silas may have come from Philippi while Timothy came from Thessalonica.

What was the reason for the writing of 1 Thessalonians? According to 1 Thessalonians 3:6,7 Timothy gave Paul a report concerning the church at Thessalonica upon his arrival in Corinth. 1 Thessalonians 3:6-7 states:

But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you: <sup>7</sup> Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith.

This report of Timothy prompted Paul to write 1 Thessalonians since he could not personally revisit them due to the persecutions and the work in Corinth.

**The time and place of the writing.** Hiebert and other Bible scholars have established the time of writing as about A.D. 50 or 51 or at least within 20 years of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus (Hiebert 42, 43).<sup>16</sup> The record of Acts 15:38-19:1-41 implies that Paul wrote this letter during his second missionary journey. This earliest of his epistles was written from the city of Corinth.

**The purpose in writing.** The purpose of Paul in writing this epistle can readily be seen by an examination of the content itself. It seems that the purpose was three-fold. *First*, it gave Paul an opportunity to record and express his rejoicing and thanksgiving for this church (Hiebert 43).<sup>17</sup> This is seen in several verses in the letter: for instances see: 1 Thessalonians 1:2,3,7; 3:4,6-9; 4:9-10. *Next*, according to the report of Timothy, the jealous Jews had made many slanderous and insinuating remarks against the apostle. Therefore, he used this letter to defend against their vicious attacks. No doubt, this defense was rather distasteful to Paul, nevertheless, it was all so necessary (Hiebert 43).<sup>18</sup> However, it was imperative, not so much for his sake, but for the sake of the truth, his converts, and the welfare of this church (Hiebert 43).<sup>19</sup> This defense is given in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20. *Last*, Paul wrote to meet some definite needs in the church. Therefore, he warned them concerning the temptation to practice immoral deeds as did the pagans. An example of this is his warning in chapter 4 verse 3 which states, "abstain from fornication." He also admonished them to continue in brotherly love and in honest work. He corrected some false ideas about the resurrection and urged each one to watch for the Lord's return. Also, he requested that they show proper respect for their leaders.

### **E. The Doctrine of the Second Coming in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.**

The doctrine of the end times prophecy and the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is very apparent in these epistles. Every chapter mentions it in some way or another and links it to some important Bible doctrine (Walvoord 11).<sup>20</sup> These doctrines are as follows: redemption; Christian duty of serving God; sanctification; resurrection; the sure deliverance of the true believer in view of the wrath of God; judgment to come and relief for the saints; the day of the LORD and the revealing of "the man of sin;" and the need to patiently wait for Christ. (It is not in the purview or scope of this treatise to discuss these doctrines in detail. However, some of these will be discussed as the commentary is developed).

**The second coming as mentioned in 1 Thessalonians.** The second coming of Jesus is tied to redemption. This is made clear in chapter 1 verses 5,9,10. This reminds each person to ask, "Am I really, truly saved?" And another question is, "If I am saved, am I concerned about the salvation of others who are lost and on their way to hell?" Yet, another is, "Am I as mission-minded as I should be? A further question should be, "Am I doing mission work by witnessing to the saving grace of God to others?" And even another is, "Am I giving to mission work through the church of my membership?"

Chapter 2 speaks of the second coming of Christ as related to the Christian duty of serving the Master and others. This is implied in verses 19-20. This reminds each child of God to ask at least two questions. *First*, "have I been scripturally baptized since having been saved?" *Second*, "am I serving the Lord Jesus Christ in and through the New Testament church of my membership as I should?" Jesus tells each of His children to be ready, to serve, and to witness until He comes under all circumstances for the day is almost spent.

The third chapter and the first 12 verses of chapter 4 links the second coming to sanctification. This reminds each child of God to ask, "Am I being separated from the

world in my conduct, lifestyle, speech, and dress in order to be the kind of witness Christ Jesus wants me to be?" Each child of God should be separated from the world and from any behavior that would dishonor the Lord Jesus and His church. Abstaining "...from fornication..." (whether physical or spiritual) and being chaste is a command that is to be well received by each child of God. Everyone should remember that his or her Judge will come.

Chapter 4:13-18 reveals the second coming of Christ Jesus as it guarantees the resurrection of loved ones who have died in Christ and the translation of all living saints. Since the resurrection and rapture of the saints is sure, it behooves the born again blood bought believer to "walk worthy," for the saints have a sure hope. The doctrine of the resurrection and rapture is a great source of comfort to all of the children of God in the face of the death of loved ones who die in the Lord. This doctrine helps the true believer to face each day with hope and causes him or her to rejoice with peace and purpose in his or her heart.

The last chapter of 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, speaks of the second coming of the Lord Jesus as connected to the sure deliverance of the true believer in view of the wrath of God. Therefore, the believer should be thankful for the enduring grace of God. Each believer should let his or her light shine to the glory of God, the Father, who sent His Son to die for sinners, that all who repent and believe in Christ Jesus might never perish.

**The second coming as mentioned in 2 Thessalonians.** The second coming of Jesus in chapter 1 verses 5-12 is linked to judgment upon the unsaved and the persecutors of the truth as well as to the glorification of Jesus and His saints. This implies that the truth of the Word of God will be vindicated at that time and also, the saints will receive relief from trouble and tribulations. This enhances the need for all of the saved to live in such a way to be counted worthy of the calling of God.

In the second chapter verses 1-12 the second coming is connected with the time of the day of Christ or of the LORD and to the revealing and destroying of the coming



world dictator, called "the man of sin." This strongly shows the need of all people to receive the truth in love as it is in Christ Jesus, and to be knowledgeable of the Word of God and the proper interpretation of it, in order that none will be deceived by that "Wicked" one. (Refer to 2 Thessalonians 2:8-11.)

In chapter 3 the second coming of Jesus Christ is mentioned in a prayer for the members of the church of Thessalonica and for all saints of this present "church age." In verse 5 the Apostle Paul prays, "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." This is stated in anticipation of the rest of chapter 3, which is a "list of things that should be done by the Christian who is waiting for the Lord (Walvoord 92)."<sup>21</sup>

### **Summary of Chapter**

According to the book of Acts chapter 17 and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul and his helpers established not only a New Testament church in Thessalonica but also a model New Testament church. The church in Thessalonica was ready to go, grow, and glow for the Lord Jesus Christ. The record shows that this is what they did by the power and grace of God. The Apostle Paul was led by the Spirit of God and sent out by the church in Antioch of Syria. According to Acts 17:1-3, Paul preached the simple gospel message of the saving power of Jesus through acceptance of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross by child-like faith. God blessed and many were saved. They became a model mission-minded church and spread the gospel message throughout the region.

However, the preaching of truth stirred some of the people (especially the unbelieving Jews who became jealous because of the many Gentile converts) so that they accused Paul and his helpers of turning "...the world upside down...." This persecution caused Paul and Silas to have to leave town by night due to persecution. Nevertheless, Paul was there long enough to

ground the many converts and members of the church in sound biblical doctrine. Even though Paul had to depart he was still concerned about the welfare of the members of this young church in Thessalonica. Because of the danger to his life, he could not immediately return to help them. Therefore, he sent not only some of his missionary helpers back to them, but he also penned two epistles to encourage them, to further teach them, and to confirm them in the faith once delivered to the saints. Throughout these two epistles the apostle continues to mention the second coming of Jesus Christ, and he relates it to various doctrines presented.

Notes

1. Charles F. Pfeiffer, Baker's Bible Atlas , Consulting Editors. E. Leslie Carlson, Old Testament, Martin H. Scharlemann, New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1961). p. 222.
2. D. Edmond Hiebert, The Thessalonian Epistles, A Call to Readiness, A Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1971, 1982). p. 13.
3. Ibid., p. 13.
4. Pfeiffer, Baker's Bible Atlas. p. 222.
5. Hiebert, The Thessalonian Epistles. pp. 11,12.
6. Ibid., p. 12.
7. Ibid., p. 12. Note: This writer is much indebted to Pfeiffer and Hiebert for their excellent information about the city of Thessalonica.
8. Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 245 quoted by D. Edmond Hiebert in The Thessalonian Epistles, A Call to Readiness, A Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1971, 1982). p. 13.
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13. William Mitchell Ramsey, St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen. 1896, (Grand Rapids: Baker, Reprint, 1949). p. 228.
14. This writer is greatly indebted to Moffat, Ramsay, and Hiebert for this conclusion.
15. D. Edmond Hiebert, An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954, 1963). p. 40.
16. Ibid., pp. 42, 43.
17. Ibid., p. 43.
18. Ibid., p. 43.
19. Ibid., p. 43.
20. John F. Walvoord, The Thessalonian Epistles: Bible Study Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, 1st printing, 1967). p. 11.
21. Ibid., p. 92.

## CHAPTER 4

### A Model Church: Appreciated

(1 Thessalonians Chapter 1:1-10)

- IV. A MODEL CHURCH: APPRECIATED.** 1:1-10
- A. The Greetings to this Mission-Minded Church, 1:1
    - 1. The opening statement, the author, and the writer(s), 1:1a
    - 2. The recipients, the word church explained and the deity of Christ, 1:1b
    - 3. The greetings with a prayer for grace and peace, 1:1c
  - B. The Thanksgiving for this Model Church. 1:2-4
    - 1. The making mention of you in our prayers, 1:2
    - 2. The remembering of your work, labor, and patience, 1:3
    - 3. The acknowledging of your election or salvation, 1:4
  - C. The Way and Integrity of the Gospel Presentation. 1:5
    - 1. The gospel came in a fourfold way as directed by God, 1:5a
    - 2. The gospel presented by men of high moral standards and actions, 1:5b
  - D. The Result of this Gospel Presentation. 1:6-8
    - 1. More evidence of their salvation and reasons for thanksgiving, 1:6,7
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  - E. The Report of this Gospel Presentation. 1:9,10
    - 1. The scenario and immediate context of this report, 1:6-9a
    - 2. The kind of reception Paul and his helpers had received, 1:9a
    - 3. These believers had turned to God from idols to serve God, 1:9b
    - 4. These saints were waiting for His Son from heaven, 1:10

## CHAPTER 4

### **A Model Church: Appreciated**

(1 Thessalonians Chapter 1:1-10)

In most of the epistles that Paul wrote, he expressed his thanksgiving to God for the recipients. He was especially thankful for the church in Thessalonica because she was a model mission-minded church. He expresses this throughout 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10. In order to learn why Paul appreciated this church, how he remembered her, why he wrote to her, and why she can be called a mission-minded model church, the following divisions will be considered: (1) the greetings to this mission-minded church, 1:1; (2) the thanksgiving for this model church, 1:2-4; (3) the way and integrity of the gospel presentation, 1:5; (4) the result of this gospel presentation, 1:6-8; and (5) the report of this gospel presentation, 1:9-10.

#### **A. Greetings to this Mission-Minded Church. 1:1**

The beginning and greetings of this letter to the Thessalonians consist of three segments as found in verse 1. First is the opening statement, the author, and the writer(s), verse 1a. Next is the recipients, the word church explained and the deity of Christ, verse 1b. And the last subdivision is the greetings with a prayer for grace and peace, verse 1c. The purpose and occasion for the letter has been discussed in a previous chapter.

**The opening statement, the author, and the writer(s), (1:1a).** This letter opens the way most of the divinely inspired letters of Paul are opened: he identifies

the writer(s), he reveals to whom the letter is addressed, and he expresses a short proper greeting. The author of this epistle is God the Holy Spirit as proved by the statements in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 1:21, and many other Biblical passages. The Apostle Paul is the main writer as directed by the Spirit of God, but he also recognizes Silvanus and Timotheus, who are called Silas and Timothy in Acts and in other places. Paul mentions them because they had been his helpers in establishing and confirming this church in the gospel.

**The recipients, the word church explained, and the deity of Christ, (1:1b).**

This letter is addressed "unto the church of the Thessalonians." The word "church" comes from the Greek word ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia) which means an assembly called out for a particular purpose. The prepositional phrase "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ," qualifies the type of assembly. This phrase also reveals that it is one like Jesus built during His personal ministry as revealed in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Because of the nature of the word assembly, it is speaking of a local, visible body and not some mystical, invisible, universal body. (Refer also to Philippians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; 4:4; Galatians 1:2; and 1 Corinthians 1:2.) It could not be an assembly in Thessalonica and be invisible and scattered. (The Bible nowhere teaches that the church is a universal visible or invisible body of all believers. This is a false teaching that many groups believe and teach. It is a doctrine that is foreign to the Holy Scriptures. Thus, it comes from the depth of hell.) {For further explanation of the word ἐκκλησία, please refer to chapter 1 under the heading "The Words Ensample (or Model) and Church Defined" and the sub-heading "Definition of the word church."} A closer look at this prepositional phrase, "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ," reveals that the Lord Jesus Christ is put on equal footing with God the Father since the names are tied together with the conjunction "and," which is translated from the Greek word και (kai). This teaches the doctrine of the deity of Christ Jesus. In John 10:30, Jesus

stated, "I and *my* Father are one." Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. He is the Ancient of Days of Daniel. He is the great "I am." Jesus told the Jews in John 8:56-58, Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

**The greetings with a prayer for grace and peace, (1:1c).** The Apostle Paul expresses a short proper salutation when he writes, "Grace be unto you, and peace." These little words have much meaning. John F. Walvoord observes,

Those without grace and peace are in utter poverty though they may possess all the riches of the world. Those with grace and peace are infinitely rich, though enduring persecution and sorrow, like the Thessalonians (12).<sup>1</sup>

The saints at Thessalonica possessed grace and peace. However, the intention of the prayer of Paul was that the grace and peace of God: (1) would be manifested to them and in them; (2) would cause them to mature in Christ; and (3) would cause them to triumph in Christ Jesus. God grants and extends to the repentant believer His grace and peace through His Son. His Son makes this possible by His shed blood and His resurrection. Therefore, every believer should manifest the grace of God and the peace that is possessed in their hearts in their everyday lives. This will glorify God and the believer will grow thereby.

### **B. The Thanksgiving for this Model Church. 1:2-4**

While the summary of the thanksgiving by the Apostle Paul is given in verses 2-4, the Apostle Paul actually expresses his appreciation for this church starting with verse 2 and extending through verse 10. First, in verse 2 he says, "We give thanks to God always for you." Next, in verses 2b-4 Paul uses three participial phrases showing his love, concern, and knowledge of them. He, also, gives the reason why he praised God for them. In verse 5 he proclaims that God by His own power sent the gospel to them and accompanied it by the Holy Spirit. In verses 6-9 Paul mentions the proofs of their election or salvation (which he

mentioned in verse 4) and also the fact that they had become a model church. Verse 10 expresses the hope of all believers, which is the second coming of Christ.

As previously stated, the summary of the thanksgiving by the Apostle Paul to God for this model mission-minded church is given in verses 2-4. In expressing his appreciation for them he uses three participial phrases which constitutes the subdivisions for this passage. These subdivisions are as follows: (1) the making mention of you in our prayers, verse 2; (2) the remembering of your work, labor, and patience in our Lord Jesus Christ, verse 3; and (3) the acknowledging of your election or salvation, verse 4.

**The making mention of you in our prayers, (1:2).** In the first part of this verse Paul writes, "We give thanks to God always for you." In expressing his thanks to God for them, Paul uses the editorial "we," as he also does in 2:18 and 3:1. Notwithstanding, in this verse he could have had Silas and Timothy in mind. Nevertheless, he thanks God for them always. This is something that people of God need to practice, that is, to thank God for other saved people and to abstain from criticizing. This example of thanksgiving should be followed by pastors, deacons, Sunday School teachers, and all born-again blood-bought believers. Paul could give thanks for them for the reasons given here in chapter 1, but more specifically for the reasons found in verses 3 and 4. Each believer should ask themselves the question: "Am I the kind of person and church member for which my pastor and other members can truly give thanks?" Each saint should resolve to let it be so: to pray for others even in the face of circumstances that might otherwise cause the believer to be critical of other brothers and sisters. The way love acts according to 1 Corinthians 13 should be the rule of practice in all such circumstances. In the last part of verse 2 Paul continues his statement by saying that he was "...making mention of you in our prayers." The Apostle appreciated this church, and he thanked God for them continuously. They were giving God the glory and honor, and he wants them to continue to do so. No doubt, Paul was concerned for their physical well-being but



most of all he was concerned for their spiritual well-being.

**The remembering of your work, labor, and patience in our Lord Jesus Christ, (1:3).** In making mention of them in his prayers, Paul always remembered or kept in mind three things concerning them as he states in verse 3, their "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope...." What is the difference in the terms "work" and "labor"? The term "work" comes from the Greek word ἔργον (ergon). According to Thayer, ἔργον means primarily "work, business employment, that with which any one is occupied" (248).<sup>2</sup> In this context it refers to the service one renders to God that springs from the faith he or she has in the one and only God and Savior. (James speaks of this in James 2:14-23, which does not contradict what Paul teaches in Romans 4:1-8. Faith in Jesus and His blood justifies the believer before God, while works, which are a result of faith, justifies the believer before his fellowman.) This should cause each believer to ask himself the question: "Am I rendering proper service to God as a result of my faith in Him and because of what He has done for me?" Another question a believer should ask is: "Am I committed to Him first and foremost?" The term "labor" comes from the Greek word κόπος (kopos). Thayer says this means "a beating, labor, trouble, intense labor united with trouble, toil..." (355)<sup>3</sup> In this context the expression "labor of love" speaks of "the labor to which love prompts, and which voluntarily assumes and endures trouble and pains for the salvation of others" (355).<sup>4</sup> The first phrase, "work of faith," is speaking of that service that is rendered to God because the believer has faith in God, has been born again, and has the desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The second phrase, "labor of love," speaks of the labor expended because the believer has a love for God, His church, and the lost. Hence, no matter what the cost, he spends himself for the advancement of the work of the kingdom of God.

Furthermore, the Apostle remembers their "patience of hope." The word "patience" is the rendering of the Greek noun ὑπομονη (hupomonê). This noun

means "steadfastness, constancy, endurance," (644)<sup>5</sup> with the idea of patient endurance and perseverance under all circumstances. Thayer states that ὑπομονη in the New Testament is used of "the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings" (644).<sup>6</sup> Rienecker puts it on a positive note when he explains,

It is the spirit which bears things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope. It is the spirit which bears things because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory (586).<sup>7</sup>

Actually, their hope was in Christ Jesus, and it was a sure expectation that one day He would take them to heaven to be with Him. This sure hope caused them to have this patience, steadfastness, or patient endurance even in the face of severe persecution. The same Greek word for patience is used in Romans 8:24,25, where the Bible explains,

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

They had seen these things (work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope), and learned them from the example of the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was a model missionary or pastor. Therefore, the Thessalonian church had become a model mission-minded church.

The words faith, love, and hope, which is the logical order, reminds one of the fact that these are the enduring spiritual gifts that Paul mentions not only in 1 Corinthians 13, but also in Romans 5:1-5 and Colossians 1:4-5. Peter mentions these in 1 Peter 1:21,22. Concerning these, one commentator has said something like this:

Faith looks *back* to... [the] Crucified Saviour. Love looks *up* to... [the] crowned Saviour. Hope looks *on* [forward] to... [the] coming Saviour (Wood qtd by Heibert 47).<sup>8</sup>

Another commentator has characterized it similar to this: faith... [looks backs to]... the past; love works [with the brethren] in the present; and hope looks to the future (Lightfoot qtd by Heibert 47).<sup>9</sup> No doubt, Paul is speaking of the fact that this work is produced by faith in Christ Jesus as clearly taught in Ephesians 2:8-10. This labor is prompted by the love of the believer for his Savior who suffered and died for him. And this patience or steadfastness or endurance is inspired by the

blessed hope of the return of King Jesus, about which Paul wrote in Titus 2:13-14. This is why Paul wrote that their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope..." was "in our Lord Jesus Christ...." Paul added that these things were also "in the sight of God and our Father." The Apostle Paul witnessed the evidence of their faith, love, and hope, but God saw it in their hearts. It is recorded in 1 Samuel 16:7, "...for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Paul and others could only observe the outward manifestation of faith which is seen in how people live their lives for their Savior.

**The acknowledging of your election or salvation, (1:4).** The Apostle Paul addresses them as "brethren beloved" in this verse because he considered them his brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. The term "beloved" is a term of endearment. They were beloved of God and of Paul. This recalls and relates to what the Lord Jesus said in John 13:1, 34, 35:

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.... 34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Next, in verse 4, Paul gives yet another reason for his thanksgiving for this church when he states, "Knowing ... your election of God." It is because he knew and continued to know of their divine election. In other words, Paul is saying that he is thanking God because of the evidence he observed in their lives which manifested that they had been born again. In the New Testament the saved are many times referred to as the elect of God. An example of this is seen in Colossians 3:12. The noun "election" is from the Greek noun ἐκλογή (eklogê) which according to Thayer means "the act of picking out, choosing..." (197).<sup>10</sup> The verb form is ἐκλέγομαι (eklegomai) or ἐκλέγω (eklegô) and means "to pick out, choose..." (196)<sup>11</sup> The idea of this verb as used in Ephesians 1:4 is that of "so that the ground of the choice lies in Christ and his merit" (197).<sup>12</sup> It is not that God in eternity past chose some to condemnation and others to

salvation, but rather that God chose the means whereby all might receive salvation in Christ Jesus. His choice is based on what Jesus Christ would do and has done and the "whosoever will" sinner trusting in Him. His election excludes no one that will repent and believe and receive the salvation provided in Christ Jesus. The invitation to be saved is to all and the Bible teaches that Jesus died for all and that whosoever will may come. (Please refer to Hebrews 2:9; John 3:16; and Revelation 22:17.) Because of sin all men are lost, condemned, and deserve to go to hell. Notwithstanding, God in His love, mercy, and grace chose to save sinful man through the suffering, death, burial and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Moreover, He chose to save only those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Please refer to 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10. These verses make at least three things very clear: first, God is "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" and second, He would have all men be saved; and third, even though Jesus "...is the Saviour of all men,..." only those who believe in Jesus from the heart are actually saved and/or born again. How did Paul know of the election of the Thessalonian believers, these beloved of God? Paul gives several reasons in the next few verses. But primarily it was because of their trust in Jesus Christ.

### **C. The Way and Integrity of the Gospel Presentation. 1:5**

Verse 5 reveals additional reasons Paul was sure of their election or salvation. It was because of the powerful way and manner of integrity or character in which the gospel was presented. God wants the gospel of Jesus Christ presented in a straight forward, understandable fashion by men who are living for Him and honoring Him. First, the gospel came to the Thessalonians in a fourfold way as directed by God. Second, the gospel was presented by preachers of high moral standards and actions.

**The gospel came in a fourfold way as directed by God, (1:5a).** The gospel of

salvation came to the Thessalonians in word, in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance. *First*, Paul and the other missionaries presented the word or the facts of the gospel according to Acts 17:1-3. These facts are also summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. These verses state in part "... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...." These verses further recount the many infallible appearances of Jesus between His resurrection and His ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of the heavenly Father. Luke states in Acts 1:2-3,

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

What does Paul mean by writing, "For our gospel came not unto you in word **only, but also in...**"? He is simply indicating that while the truth of the gospel must be preached in order for anyone to be saved, there is more involved than preaching. This is why he added the last three things. These involve the divine work of God in convicting the human heart of the need of salvation, in order that the sinner may repent and place his or her trust in Christ Jesus as personal Savior.

*Second*, the gospel was presented in power since according to Romans 1:16, "...it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...." The word "power" used both in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 and in Romans 1:16 is from the Greek noun δύναμις (dunamis). The modern English word dynamite is derived from this word. The primary definition that Thayer gives for δύναμις is "strength, ability, power; ... inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature..." (159).<sup>13</sup> The gospel or good and correct news of Jesus Christ has power within itself because it is the message of salvation that the depraved human heart and soul needs to hear. It meets the need and desire burning within the sinful heart and soul of man for reconciliation with his Maker, Creator, and the Judge of the entire universe.

*Third*, Paul states that the gospel came to them in the Holy Spirit. John 16:7-11 teaches that the Holy Spirit convicts men of their need of salvation. He is the One who operates on the heart to bring about the new birth. 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; and Romans 8:9 teach that at the point of faith the Spirit indwells the believer. (The titles, Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit, who is the third person in the Godhead, are one and the same. Both words, Ghost and Spirit, are a rendering of the root Greek word πνεῦμα (pneuma). For places where the word πνεῦμα is rendered Spirit refer to Luke 11:13; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:8).

*Fourth*, the gospel came to them with full assurance. In other words, they received it into their hearts and were born again. Also, they received it with thanksgiving to God for personal, eternal salvation. The word translated "assurance" comes from the Greek word πληροφορία (plêrophoria) which can be rendered "full assurance, conviction, certainty." The verb form of this word, which is πληροφορέω (plêrophoreô) includes the idea of "to make one certain, to persuade, to convince" (Thayer 517).<sup>14</sup> They were fully convicted that Paul was preaching the truth. Paul, as he preached to them, was filled with the power of God to bring the message, and this was reinforced by the Holy Spirit. Paul had confidence in the message as being the truth and that it would accomplish the purpose of God. Preachers need to be confident in the sense that they know that what they are preaching is right and correct and that God will use it and bless it regardless of visible results. God honors His Word, for He says in Isaiah 55:11, "...it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it." The preacher has the responsibility to preach the truth and live the truth and the people have the responsibility to hear it, accept it, and live it. If people reject it, they are hurting themselves. Therefore, what people need to do is to accept it for what it is, the Word of the all knowing, all wise, and all powerful God. Refer to 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

**The gospel was presented by men of high moral standards and actions, (1:5b).** Paul says just "...as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." This could be paraphrased as follows, "just as you all know what type or sort of men we demonstrated ourselves to be among you for your sake." Paul and his missionary helpers were not hucksters, tricksters, nor con men. They knew how God wanted them to present the gospel, and this they did. They proved to be true men - men above and beyond reproach, and Paul tells the saints at Thessalonica that they knew this to be the case. What the Bible says of Barnabas in Acts 11:24 can be said of Paul and his fellowlaborers. Acts 11:24 reports that Barnabas "... was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord." They were full of the grace and love of God and yielded to the control of the Holy Spirit. They were preachers and/or witnesses who were men of true integrity, of the highest moral excellence and ethical character. Therefore, the gospel was presented to the people of Thessalonica in the character it should be presented everywhere by faithful, sincere, honest, and truthful men. Paul expounds on this in more detail in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-20.

#### **D. The Result of this Gospel Presentation. 1:6-8**

In verses 6-8 the Apostle Paul continues to give reasons for his thanksgiving for this model mission-minded church and it is because of the result of the gospel message. In speaking of this result (1) he gives more evidence of their salvation and reasons for his thanksgiving in verses 6-7; and (2) he reveals the main reason they became a model church was that the word of truth sounded out to the regions beyond as seen in verse 8.

#### **More evidence of their salvation and reasons for thanksgiving, (1:6,7).**

In these verses Paul presents and/or lists five things as proof of their election or salvation as it is in Christ Jesus. *First*, they welcomed the message and were converted. This, in part, is what Paul was speaking about when he wrote

in verse 6, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord...." The word "followers" is from the word μιμητής (mimêtês) which means "imitator." Many times in this modern society the words imitator and imitation have an undesirable connotation, but this is not the case of the Greek word μιμητής in this context. Rienecker has the correct idea when he says that this word has the idea of "one who imitates another particularly by following one's example or one's teaching" (587).<sup>15</sup> Even though this Greek word is not the same Greek word from which the word disciple is translated, it has the same basic meaning. This word μιμητής is found in at least five other passages in the New Testament and in each case it is rendered "followers" with a positive connotation. It is found in 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; and Hebrews 6:12. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul exhorts, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." And in Ephesians 5:1 he exhorts, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children." The idea is not that of becoming a cheap imitation but rather that of becoming one who is a good disciple of Christ Jesus. Therefore, another reason the church in Thessalonica became, was, and stands as a model church is that they followed Paul as he followed the Lord.

*Second*, they were converted in spite of severe suffering "...having received the word in much affliction,...." The word affliction is a translation of the Greek word θλίψις (thlipsis) which has the meaning of "a pressing, pressing together, pressure;... metaph., oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits" (Thayer 291).<sup>16</sup> As previously discussed the church in Thessalonica was under persecution from the unbelieving Jews as well as others. Nevertheless, when they heard the correct and good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, they turned to Him and trusted in Him as their Savior. *Third*, they received the message "...with the joy of the Holy Ghost" even in difficult circumstances. This was "the joy" that only those who have the indwelling Spirit of God could and would manifest.

*Fourth*, they became followers of Paul and the Lord not only in having trusted



the Lord for salvation, but also, they gave their lives in service as is gleaned from verses 3, 5, 6-8. *Fifth*, as revealed in verse 7, they grew to the point of becoming a model church and thus "...were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." (For a discussion on the word ensample or τύπος (tupos), please refer to the introductory chapter of this commentary. It will suffice to say here that the Greek word τύπος means type, an example or model to be followed.) This church in Thessalonica has been a wonderful model for New Testament churches throughout the church age. She still stands as a good model in these modern ages. New Testament churches today would do well to follow her fine example in the work of evangelism, mission endeavor and support, and in all facets of the Great Commission.

**The word of truth sounded out to the regions beyond, (1:8).** Paul now gives further reason for his thanksgiving to God for them, in that from them, the word of truth sounded out or spread out from the church in Thessalonica not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, their native homeland, but also to the many regions beyond. This explains the reason Paul passed through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia possibly only staying to spend the night in each place. (Refer to Acts 17:1.) The expression "sounded out" or ἐξήχηται (exêchêtai) which is the perfect passive indicative of ἐξηχέομαι (exêcheomai) has the idea of "...an echoing like thunder or sounding out as a trumpet..." (Rienecker 587)<sup>17</sup> and further "...the word indicates that a sound is made and it is heard spreading out from a center over an area."<sup>17</sup> Use of the perfect tense indicates "...the continuing activity."<sup>17</sup> The reports that Paul heard from some he met in Corinth must have been most satisfying and encouraging. People from many nations and countries told him that they had heard the gospel by way of the church in Thessalonica. Paul is referring to this in verse 8 when he states, "so that we need not to speak anything." Thus, he writes to the church in Thessalonica and tells them that their reputation has already preceded them and that their faith in Christ is very well known. They were a model church and a mission

minded church. They were carrying out the orders of their Lord and Savior according to Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8.

Why was the gospel spread so far from Thessalonica when communications were so poor compared to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? It was because of the planned strategy of Paul as he was directed by the Lord. Paul selected the right mission point to do his mission work. Paul wanted the word of truth to reach the most people in the quickest way possible. Therefore, he selected this city because it was on the Egnatian Way and it was a major seaport. Also, the born-again believers in Thessalonica truly took their salvation in Christ seriously; they believed in sounding forth the message so that others could be saved. (Should not believers in this age do likewise?) Churches today could and should learn some valuable lessons from this early New Testament church on how to carry out the Great Commission.

#### **E. The Report of this Gospel Presentation, 1:9,10**

According to verses 9 and 10, at least three things were reported besides what is mentioned in verse 8 by those called "they themselves." However, to gain the proper understanding and to appreciate properly verses 9 and 10, the scenario, setting, and immediate context of this report must be considered. Therefore, the first element to be discussed will be the scenario and immediate context of this report, verses 6-9a. (Along with these verses, it is necessary to consider Acts 17 and 18.) Second, they related to the Apostle the kind or sort of reception that Paul and his helpers had received from the people who believed in Thessalonica, verse 9a. Third, they reported how the believers in Thessalonica had "...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God," verse 9b. Fourth, they recounted how the saints of Thessalonica were waiting "...for His Son from heaven,..." verse 10.

**The scenario and immediate context of this report, (1:6-9a).** To understand verses 9, 10 it must be remembered that Paul wrote this epistle while he was in

Corinth. It also must be recalled that according to Acts 18 Paul had traveled to Corinth alone, and later Silas and Timotheus had come to him from Macedonia. Evidently business traders, merchants and others traveled from the seaport of Thessalonica in Macedonia to the great commercial center of Corinth (the capital of the Roman province of Achaia or the Southern part of Greece). And some of these travelers were among the believers to which Paul refers in verses 7 and 8 when he speaks of "...all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia..." The expression "all that believe" is the antecedent to the pronominal phrase "they themselves" in verse 9. Some of these "all that believe" believers reported or related to the Apostle the things they had heard from the church in Thessalonica. The verb "shew" is from the Greek present active indicative of ἀπαγγέλλω (apaggellô) which means "to bring tidings (from a person or a thing), bring word, report: ... to proclaim,... to make known openly, declare..." (Thayer 53).<sup>18</sup> The word ἀπαγγέλλω is variously rendered in the King James Version as follows: tell, show, declare, report, bring word, bring word again, show again. The idea behind the present tense of ἀπαγγέλλω is that these believers reported the things of verses 9-10 continuously and repeatedly to Paul (Rienecker 587).<sup>19</sup>

**The kind of reception Paul and his helpers had received, (1:9a).** The *first part of verse 9* states, "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you,...." For the proper interpretation and meaning of this statement some word studies are in order. The preposition "of" in the first instance in the first part of this verse is the translation of the Greek περι (peri) which has the root meaning of "around, about" (Thayer 501).<sup>20</sup> And "with the genitive [case] it denotes that around which an act or state revolves..."<sup>20</sup> and can be rendered: "about, concerning, as touching (or respects)... with regard to, in reference to..."<sup>20</sup> as well as "around"<sup>20</sup> and etc. In this case the pronoun ἡμῶν (hêmôn) rendered "us" is in the genitive case and thus the "of us" can be translated "in reference to us." The words "what manner of" is the translation from the Greek correlative pronoun ὅποῖαν (hopoian) [the accusative

singular feminine form of ὁποῖος (hopoios )] and can be rendered "of what sort or quality, what manner of...[such as]" (Thayer 449).<sup>21</sup> It is used a total of five times in the King James Version of the Bible and is translated: "what manner of, such as, of what sort, whatsoever, what manner of man" (Wigram 613).<sup>22</sup> In this passage it could be rendered "what kind of or what sort of." Next, the words "entering in" come from the Greek noun εἴσοδος (eisodos) and according to The Analytical Greek Lexicon means "a place of entrance, the act of entrance, admission, reception, a coming, approach, access, entrance" (121)<sup>23</sup> and by extension means "welcome" (Bushell).<sup>24</sup> Finally, the preposition "unto" from πρὸς (pros) has several different renderings according to the way it is used in the sentence. In the *first part of verse 9* it is used with the accusative case. When used with the accusative case, Dana and Mantey give the following resultant meanings: "To, towards.... Beside.... Against.... With.... At" (Dana 110).<sup>25</sup> Then they add the following "Remote meanings:... With reference to, pertaining to..." (Dana 110).<sup>26</sup> With these meanings in mind the first part of this verse can be paraphrased as follows: "For they themselves report or relate in reference to us what kind of reception we had when we came unto and with reference to you...."

Evidently the ones who reported the faith of the believers in Christ Jesus in Thessalonica also recounted to Paul about the kind of reception that he and his helpers had received when they proclaimed the gospel in Thessalonica. What kind of reception or welcome did Paul and his helpers have in Thessalonian? Acts 17:4 implies that the missionaries had a very good reception among those who believed upon Jesus Christ and that "a great multitude" of the people were converted to Jesus Christ. This is also implied by verses 5-8 as well as verses 9b-10. In the previous discussion of verse 5 it was brought out that the gospel had been presented by faithful, sincere, honest, and truthful men. As has already been stated the last part of verse 5 could be paraphrased as follows, "just as you all know what type or sort of men we demonstrated ourselves to be among you for your sake."

Paul and his helpers had been open and above board in all their dealings with them. They had not only preached the truth, but also had lived the truth and thus were and are good examples for people in every age to follow. This demonstrates what preachers, pastors, and all members of New Testament churches must be and do who would witness to the lost in this modern age. Thus from the human standpoint the first part of verse nine explains the reason why the born-again blood bought believers in Thessalonica "...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

**These believers had "...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God," (1:9b).** The *last part of verse 9* indicates that most of the members of the church at Thessalonica had been idol worshippers. These people were no different from other people in Greece in that day. Luke records in Acts 17:16 "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." For the most part this was true of those in Thessalonica. However, when Paul had preached the good and correct news of the Gospel, "a great multitude" of them turned to God, not only for salvation of the soul, but also for salvation of the life since they were now serving the living and true God. The word "turned" is from the aorist tense of the Greek word ἐπιστρέφω (epistrephô), which means that they turned once for all (Walvoord 16).<sup>27</sup> This turning or repentance was not only a "turning from" but a "turning to." They "turned from" that which is false "to" the living and true God. They "turned from" that which causes harm and leads people to eternal destruction "to" the God who gives life evermore. They "turned from" depraved lustful degradation "to" a true spiritual life of service to God and others. They knew they were saved by grace, and because they were saved, they served the Lord. This example should cause every one who claims to be saved to ask themselves, "Do I truly know that I am saved by the blood of Jesus Christ?" This "turning" of these people in Thessalonica is a good and notable model for all.

The words that Paul used to describe God are quite significant. The use of the Greek definite article τὸν (ton) before the word "God," points to the fact that in contrast to the dead idols this One is the one and only living God. The word "living" is from the Greek present active participle ζῶντι (zônti), which is from the word ζάω (zaô). In further contrast, Rienecker quotes Best and states, "The living God is not merely one who is alive but one who gives life, both the life of creation and the new life of redemption" (Best *qtd. by* Rienecker 588).<sup>28</sup> The adjective "true" from ἀληθινός (alêthinos) not only has the meaning of true but also of "real,... genuine" and speaks of that which is "...opposite to what is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated or pretended..."(Thayer 27).<sup>29</sup> Rienecker quotes Trench and states that this word is used "...to distinguish the true God from idols and all other false gods" (Trench *qtd. by* Rienecker 588).<sup>30</sup>

**The saints of Thessalonica were waiting "...for His Son from heaven..."**  
**(1:10).** The third thing these believers (from "...Macedonia and Achaia...") reported was how that the saints of Thessalonica were waiting "...for His Son from heaven...." His Son who is coming "from heaven" is identified as "even Jesus" in this verse. *Verses 9 and 10* teach that salvation is not just for "the here and now," salvation is forever. Therefore, they not only turned to God from idols in faith and served the living and true God, but they also had a sure positive hope of future redemption of the body and to be with Jesus. Henceforth, they were waiting for the return of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. The Apostle Paul gives two reasons why believers have this steadfast hope and can be so sure of it. First, it is because God has raised Jesus from the dead to justify "...all that believe... from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:39; also refer to Romans 4:24,25; 5:1). Since death could not hold the sinless Jesus, the effect of His death was substitutionary on the part of the believer. This is the reason He can deliver the born again believer from the wrath to come. The innocent and the guiltless One took the part of the guilty and thus delivers each and every

guilty one who will accept it by faith. (Please refer to 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21.) Hence, the second reason why believers have this steadfast hope and can be so sure of it is found in the last part of verse 10 which says, "which (*or who - referring to Jesus*) delivered us from the wrath to come." The phrase "the wrath to come" speaks of the fact that judgment is coming and that all should be prepared. The wrath of God is that "*settled indignation* of God which by nature rests on the [lost] sinner" (Hendriksen 57).<sup>31</sup> This is what is taught by the words of Jesus in John 3:18, and of John the Baptist in John 3:36. This expression "which (or who) delivered us from the wrath to come," is in apposition to the name Jesus according to the Greek New Testament. The following is the last part of verse 10 from the Greek Text copied from the "Textus Receptus" (376)<sup>32</sup> and the next line is a literal rendering by this writer:

Ἰησοῦν, τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης.  
 [Iêsoun, ton hruomenon hêmas apo tês orgas tês erchomenês]  
 "Jesus the {One} rescuing {or delivering} us away from the wrath the coming."

Thus Jesus is the one who has delivered and who continues to deliver the believer. And again because of the definite article τὸν before the participle ῥυόμενον (which is rendered rescuing (Thayer 564)<sup>33</sup> or delivering in the literal translation above), it has the force of a substantive and is timeless, and thus means Jesus is our deliverer (now and He always will be).

### Summary of Chapter

The Apostle Paul deeply appreciated this church in Thessalonica and expressed his thanksgiving to God in prayer for her. That she was an appreciated model church can be seen from the thanksgiving of Paul for her "...work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ..." These things plus the things that follow are the evidences of the salvation of the individual members and also of this church being a model church.

(Actually other evidences that the church in Thessalonica stands as a model church will be seen throughout this commentary).

Verse 5 shows the manner of reception to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by Paul and his fellowlaborers. They accepted the message and received Jesus as personal Savior, followed the Lord in scriptural baptism (immersion), and when the missionaries were forced to leave the city due to persecution, a thriving New Testament church was in place. Further, this church in Thessalonica stands as a good model because her members became followers, not only of Paul, but, also more importantly, of God since they were converted to Christ even in the face of much trouble and persecution and received the truth "...with joy of the Holy Ghost." And in addition, to this she became a model church to believers throughout Macedonia and Achaia and down through the present day because she "sounded out the word of the Lord ... in every place...."

Moreover, they turned to God from idols and now were serving God and waiting for His Son to return. They knew their future was secure in Christ Jesus, their deliverer and eternal Savior, of whom God raised from the dead. (This refers indirectly to salvation for what it really is, a three-fold work of the grace of God in three tenses: past, present, and future.) Every New Testament church ought to be a mission minded church serving the Lord Jesus Christ out of hearts of love.



Notes

1. John F. Walvoord, The Thessalonian Epistles: Bible Study Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, 1st printing, 1967). p. 12.
2. Joseph H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (1885), (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 248.
3. Ibid., p. 355.
4. Ibid., p. 355.
5. Ibid., p. 644.
6. Ibid., p. 644.
7. Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, Ed. Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., (Grand Rapids, Regency Reference Library From Zondervan, 1976). , p. 586.
8. G. R. Harding Wood, St. Paul's First Letter, p. 19, Wood's italics, quoted by D. Edmond Hiebert in The Thessalonian Epistles, A Call to Readiness, A Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1971, 1982). p. 47. [This quote adapted by adding the words in brackets].
9. J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, p. 132 quoted by D. Edmond Hiebert in The Thessalonian Epistles, A Call to Readiness, A Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1971, 1982). p. 47. [This quote adapted by adding the words in brackets ].
10. Thayer, op. cit., p. 197.
11. Ibid., p. 196.
12. Ibid., p. 197.
13. Ibid., p. 159.
14. Ibid., p. 517.
15. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 587.
16. Thayer, op. cit., p. 291.
17. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 587. Note: Rienecker quotes or refers to many sources.
18. Thayer, op. cit., p. 53.
19. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 587.
20. Thayer, op. cit., p. 501
21. Ibid., p. 449.
22. George V. Wigram, The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon, (1844), Revising Editor: Jay P. Green, Sr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1982), p. 613.
23. The Analytical Greek Lexicon. New York: Harper-Row, n.d., p. 121.
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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **A Model Church And The Missionary Or Preacher**

(1 Thessalonians 2:1-20)

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **A Model Church And The Missionary Or Preacher**

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In order for a New Testament church to become and/or be a model church she must be led by a model missionary or preacher. (As stated previously, a model church is not a perfect church, likewise a model preacher is not a perfect preacher). A Biblical preacher is one who is called of God to proclaim the message of God. He is to do the job that God has called him to do, for he is a servant of the Most High God. The task of the preacher is to preach the Word of God and to live the Word of God. This is according to Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:1-11. Is there a difference to be made between a Biblical missionary and a Biblical preacher or pastor? There really is not a whole lot of difference in the task of a Biblical missionary and Biblical preacher or Biblical pastor. And if there is, it is mainly in the particular emphasis of the work itself. The Apostle Paul was a God-called, church-sent preacher sent out on a mission in order to establish New Testament churches. Therefore, he is called a missionary. As discussed in chapter 3, "A Model Church: Established," the Holy Spirit of God used Paul and his helpers to establish the New Testament church in Thessalonica which had become a model mission-minded church for which Paul expressed his thankfulness as seen in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1.

In reading 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 it is apparent that Paul and his ministry has been attacked. The attackers tried to destroy the faith of the believers in Thessalonica by undermining the integrity of Paul and his missionary helpers, Silas

and Timothy. Satan still uses this tactic today. Thus it behooves preachers and really all born again blood bought believers to be careful about what they do and say. Why? So that Satan will not have an occasion against believers to destroy the message of the gospel of Christ of which they witness and represent. Satan wants to destroy the reputation of anyone who bears and proclaims the message of God. Paul later wrote how to avoid this in this very epistle, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Nonetheless, there were those who were attacking the character, integrity, and honesty of Paul. Because of this attack it became necessary for Paul to defend himself and his helpers in order to exonerate the gospel and the truth of the Biblical message. No doubt, this was rather distasteful to Paul, but necessary, not only for his own sake, but also for the sake of the converts in Thessalonica and the very message of truth and salvation. This attack on his ministry was a real mockery, a real travesty of justice, and it was hurting or would hurt the cause of Christ. According to the record of Luke in Acts 17:1-10, the Jews had accused Paul of treason. Why? In that he preached another king, other than the Caesar of Rome. Of course, this was not true. It was nothing but a perversion of the truth on the part of the jealous, rebellious Jews in Thessalonica. Yes, Paul preached that Christ Jesus was coming again and that He would sit upon the throne of David and be the King of kings and Lord of lords as seen from 1 Timothy 6:15. Paul also taught that, even now in this life, Jesus is to be King-ruler over the hearts of each born again blood bought believer.

Paul begins the defense of his ministry in verses 1-12, and in so doing, he rehearses the manner and method in which the Gospel was delivered to them. Next, in the latter part of the chapter to continue his defense, he recounts to them how they received the gospel message, how they became followers of the Lord and His churches, and how they even suffered because of it. Finally, Paul reveals his desire to return to them and his affection for them. Therefore, the title of this chapter is "A

Model Church And The Missionary Or Preacher." The following divisions will be considered: (1) the defense or vindication of the ministry of Paul while in Thessalonica, 2:1-12; (2) thanksgiving for and proof of their conversion, 2:13,14; (3) denunciation of the persecutors, 2:15,16; (4) the desire of the missionary to revisit them, 2:17,18; and (5) the hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, 2:19,20.

### **A. The Defense or Vindication of the Ministry of Paul. 2:1-12**

In *verses 1-12* Paul sets forth the defense or vindication of his ministry and that of his fellowlaborers. In so doing he relates their conduct while they were among the Thessalonians. Paul approaches this defense by first insisting throughout verses 1-11 that the record speaks for itself. Next, in verses 1-6 he gives the negative side - what they did not do! Then, in verses 7-12 he gives the positive side - what they did do! As will be seen, these overlap.

**The record speaks for itself, (2:1-11).** In *verse 1* Paul uses the expression "For yourselves, brethren, know...." This could be translated "For brothers, you yourselves know, ...." Similar expressions are found in verses 2, 5, 9, 10, and 11; such as: "...as ye know..." (which is used thrice); "for ye remember..."; "ye are witnesses ... ;" These could be rendered: "as you all know;" "for you all recall;" "all of you are witnesses;" "just as all of you know." What is Paul trying to get across? **Apparently, he is declaring that he will let the record stand and speak for itself.** Each born again believer needs to understand that his or her actions or lack of actions speak much louder than words or for that matter the words of others. Just here an application is due. The believer needs to ask himself or herself a couple of challenging questions. "What does my actions tell those around me?" "What is the message of my actions?" Paul was saying that their actions would vindicate them.

Who were adversaries of Paul? According to the record in Acts 17 the unbelieving Jews were. They not only rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Savior; but they also were jealous of the success of Paul and they were rebellious

against God. They had rejected the only Savior, and they wanted everyone else to reject Him also and to depend on their perversion of the law. In other words, they were depending on their self-righteousness and they wanted others to do the same. But to do this is to depend on what God calls filthy, dirty rags according to Isaiah 64:6. No one, no one, can work his or her way into heaven. In order to be saved and go to heaven, every human being, every sinner, must (through faith) come by the way of the cross of Christ through the grace of God. The way of the cross leads home to God, and thus to heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

**The negative side of this defense - What Paul and his helpers did not do!**

**(2:1-6).** Paul states in *verse 1* that "... our entrance in unto you (the Thessalonians)... was not in vain" or without a very important purpose. The words "entrance in" are from the Greek εἰσοδος (eisodos). This same word was translated "entering in" in 1:9. In his comments on 1:9, Rienecker states, "...the word (εἰσοδος) indicates here the 'act of entering' rather than the 'means of entering' and points to the nature of the entrance, how happy and successful it was (Milligan) (Rienecker 588)."<sup>1</sup> The word "vain" is from the word κενός (kenos) which means "...empty; vain; devoid of truth... empty-handed... destitute of spiritual wealth... vain, fruitless, without effect... to no purpose..." (Thayer 343).<sup>2</sup> The verb "was" is from the perfect active indicative of γίνομαι (ginomai) and thus can be rendered "has been." The meaning of the perfect tense in this case implies that the action is complete and has a continuing consequence. The idea is that the act of "entering in" of the missionaries had a definite spiritual value since their message was of eternal value. The purpose of the preaching of Paul was of the highest order of all. Consequently, the action of Paul and his helpers in coming to them to preach the gospel was in the best interest, spiritually and eternally speaking for the Thessalonians. In addition to this, God blessed the preaching of His Word, in that, they were converted to Christ and this, too, was the

proof of good intentions. Believers need to understand that there is nothing better that one can do for someone else than to tell them about Christ Jesus and that He saves the lost by faith in Him.

In the first part of *verse 2* Paul states, "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated,...." He is reminding these believers that when he and his helpers had first come to Thessalonica, that they had just come from Philippi, where they had been treated very cruelly. In other words, Paul and his helpers could have given up. Nevertheless, according to the *last part of verse 2*, they spoke the gospel of Jesus Christ with boldness to them amid much opposition. This was further proof that he did not do it for personal gain. No true preacher preaches for personal gain; but that does not mean that the ministry of the gospel is not to be supported. In fact, Paul addresses this very issue in 1 Corinthians 9, and there, the Bible teaches that the preacher who preaches the Word of God faithfully is to be supported. The manner of the exhortation of Paul and his helpers to them was further proof that their motives were pure.

He continues with the negative defense by telling them in *verse 3* that "...our exhortation..." had come in three ways. *First*, their exhorting appeal and encouragement had not come out of deceit or error but of truth. Is that not what is really needed? The truth of the Word of God is what the world needs. Jesus said it is the truth that sets one free. Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 10:17 declares, "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." *Second*, it had not come out of unclean or impure motives but out of pure motives (the pure motive of the love of God and of the love of Paul and his helper for them). In other words, it was pure in its content and in its intent. Truth was not mixed with error. *Third*, it had not come by way of guile or baiting. The word "guile" comes from the Greek noun δόλος (dolos) and is



derived from the verb form which is δελεάζω (deleazô) in the New Testament. Δελεάζω means "to bait or catch by a bait;... to ... allure, entice deceive..." (Thayer 128,155).<sup>3</sup> (Δελεάζω is found only in 2 Peter 2:14, 18, and in James 1:14). The idea is that of using trickery and/or to speak deceitful.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Paul and his helpers did not try to trick them in any way. He did not use programs and gimmicks or any other type of fleshy attractions.

On the other hand, on a positive note and according to *verse 4*, Paul and his helpers had been entrusted by God with the highest honor of preaching the blessed gospel. Therefore, he preached it not to please men but to please God. The word "allowed" comes from the Greek verb δεδοκιμάσμεθα (dedokimasmetha) which is the perfect passive indicative of δοκιμάζω (dokimazo) and means "to test, examine, prove, scrutinize, .... approve" (Thayer 154).<sup>4</sup> Rienecker says this:

...word was used in classical Greek with the technical sense to describe the passing as fit for election to a public office. . . . The perfect tense indicates a lasting approval and not something over and done with (589).<sup>5</sup>

In this connection what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:12-15 is very significant,

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; *13* Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. *14* And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. *15* This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Paul realized that to preach the gospel was a great privilege and also that it was God Almighty who would be the judge of how he handled the truth since it is God "...which trieth [δοκιμάζω (dokimazo)] our hearts" and could be paraphrased "*it is God who examines our hearts.*" Almighty God is the One to whom each person will have to answer. Pastors and preachers today need to take heed to this, that they please God rather than men. The test of a good message and for that matter the test of every life is: "What does God think about it?" (Walvoord 21)<sup>6</sup> The Apostle Paul gives the following charge, not only for Timothy, but for all who are called of God to preach, in 2 Timothy 4:1-5:

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; *2* Preach

the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

That Paul was set on pleasing God and not men can be seen from even a casual reading of Acts 17:1-8. Some church members in some churches get very upset when they are not stroked the right way. Nevertheless, the pastor is to please God and is not to be walked upon even if it means losing the church he pastors or losing disobedient church members.

In *verses 5 and 6* Paul proceeds to remind the church in Thessalonica of the conduct of the missionaries while they had been among them. In these verses the Apostle Paul points out four things they did not do and he also reminds them that they were aware of this when he says in *verse 5*, "...as you know..." *First*, Paul said that they did not use flattering speech. He did not tell a whole lot of stories and jokes. Paul did not soft soap the message nor did he use honey-coated words. He was plain spoken as evidenced by what he wrote to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 2:1-2,4,

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.... 4 And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

*Second*, Paul and His fellow-laborers in the Gospel did not come preaching for money or personal gain for he wrote "...nor a cloak of covetousness;..." and he said as proof "God *is* our witness." God knew the heart of Paul and He knows the heart of each and every human being. God knows all about each person that has ever lived or that ever shall live as manifested by Psalm 139. Later, Paul implies that he engaged in his craft of tent-making to support himself while he was preaching among them. (Refer to Acts 18:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9.)

*Third*, Paul declares in *verse 6* that he nor his helpers sought the approval of men. The missionaries were not glory seekers. They had a sincere serious message concerning the sad condition of lost men, the penalty of sin, and the remedy for sin. They had a desire to see the lost converted to Christ and to have the hope of glory. *Fourth*, even though Paul was an apostle appointed by Christ Himself, he did not use his apostolic authority in any way so as to teach them the idea of restraint. Paul was referring to this in saying, "...when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." Paul believed in teaching the Word of God and letting the Spirit of God guide the people into doing what was right as Jesus said the Spirit would do in John 14:26; 16:13,14. He trusted the born again blood bought believer to do the right thing according to the Bible and the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This was the kind of example Paul and the other missionaries were to the Thessalonians as well as to churches and to pastors and preachers of this day and time. Preachers should not use flattering speech; nor tell a whole lot of stories and jokes; nor soft soap the message; nor use honey-coated words. While the Bible teaches in 1 Corinthians 9 and other places that the gospel ministry is to be supported as were those who ministered "about holy things" and waited "at the altar" in the Old Testament dispensation, preachers should not come preaching for money and personal material gain. Preachers should not seek the approval of men; nor be glory-seekers; but rather seek to please God. Preachers need to remember and heed the words of Richard Baxter (as quoted by Wiersbe) when he declared: "I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men" (6).<sup>7</sup> According to 1 Peter 5:1-3 preachers are not to be "...lords over *God's* heritage..." rather they are to be "...ensamples to the flock..." and are to "...feed the flock of God..." over the which God has appointed them to be the spiritual overseer.

**The positive side of this defense - What Paul and his helpers did do! (2:7-12).** By the use of a simile in *verse 7*, Paul begins to tell them what he and his helpers did for them and that they did this to show and prove how much they really

cared for these believers in Thessalonica. Paul says in *verse 7*, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." The word "nurse" actually speaks of a mother nursing her child. A loving mother is gentle with her baby child. Thus, Paul asked them to recall how a mother tenderly cares for her own child. He says this is how the missionaries cared for them.

Further, in *verses 8 through 12*, Paul recounts seven motives shown forth in the conduct of the missionaries to prove their God-given love for these members in the church in Thessalonica. These seven motives are enumerated within the context of *verse 7* when Paul says, "But we were gentle among you." *First*, He tells them in *verse 8* that the missionaries were and continued to be "...affectionately desirous of you..." or, in other words Paul and his helpers were saying we have "...a fond affection for you..." Paul and his helpers truly loved them with a godly love and they wanted them above all else to understand this. A true godly pastor loves his people with pure love as it is in Christ. He may not like some of the things his people do, nevertheless he loves them. For the Biblical definition of this God type love, the highest kind, read 1 Corinthians 13. It is the kind of love that rejoices in the truth. *Second*, *verse 8* reveals that because he loved them, he was pleased to impart the gospel of saving grace to them because this was and is the only way they could learn how to have their sins forgiven, go to heaven, and avoid the burning depths of hell. *Third*, *verse 8* says that because he loved them, he was pleased also to impart his own soul or life to them in order that they might have every opportunity to know, accept, and live the truth. A preacher or pastor worth his salt will do the same today.

*Fourth*, in *verse 9* Paul asks them to remember or recall how that while he was among them he worked night and day so as not to be a problem to them as to financial support. This did not mean that Paul did not believe in the truth that the church should support the pastor for he teaches this in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. The Lord Himself said in Luke 10:7, "for the laborer is worthy of his hire." It was just that Paul and the other missionaries did not want

anyone to have the occasion to call their ministry a money-making operation. Paul would work as a tent-maker by day and then he would preach by night or vice-versa. That was very difficult to do. Many a preacher who pastors a church has had the same kind of experience. Yet the pastor and his family should be examples or models in giving. He should tithe and more. He should teach that the gospel ministry should be supported both at home and abroad. If a pastor wants to pastor a mission-minded model church, he must be mission-minded and a good model in all his ways.

*Fifth, in verse 10* Paul writes that the believers in Thessalonica, as well as God, were witnesses of the manner of behavior with which the missionaries conducted themselves and also of their attitude toward the Thessalonians while in their presence. In this verse Paul names three things which characterized the actions of the missionaries while they were among them. *To begin with*, the missionaries acted "holily" or in other words they were devout. The Holy Spirit led the Apostle Peter to write in 1 Peter 1:15,16,

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; *16* Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

This is a quote from Leviticus 11:44,45. The Apostle Paul and his helpers acted like saints of God. So should each believer for all believers are saints. Worldliness should not be part of the believers lifestyle. *Next*, Paul acted "justly" or, he was upright in his actions. He did nothing in an underhanded way. *Also*, he lived "unblameably" among them, that is, he behaved in such a way that no charge could be brought against him. What an example Paul and his helpers were, not only for those at Thessalonica, but also for all generations afterwards until Jesus comes. For what else could these believers in Thessalonica have asked of Paul? For what else can a New Testament church ask of her pastor?

*Sixth, in verse 11* Paul tells them that he had instructed them as a godly father would instruct his own precious children, in that, he exhorted or urged them, he comforted or encouraged them, and he charged or beseeched every one of them in the

things of the Lord. *Seventh, or last, in verse 12* he gives his heart felt desire for them when he says so "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." The Bible compares the life of the born again believer to a walk in many places. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:1 that the born again blood bought believer should "...walk worthy of the vocation where with ye are called." "Walk" comes from the Greek word περιπατέω (peripateô) and means "to tread all around, i.e. walk at large ... and fig. to live, deport oneself, follow ... -go, be occupied with, walk (about)" (Strong 57).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the word "walk" speaks of how one conducts his life. In this present day it speaks of the lifestyle of an individual. In Ephesians 4:1, Paul admonishes believers to conduct their lives in a manner worthy of the vocation or worthy of having answered the call of God to be saved. The Apostle Paul and the other writers of the New Testament speak of various aspects of the walk of the believer. Some of these are that the believer is to: walk by faith, 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:6; walk in the light, Ephesians 5:8; walk in love, Ephesians 5:1,2; walk in the Spirit, Galatians 5:16; walk in truth, 3 John 4; walk in good works, Ephesians 2:10; walk in wisdom, Colossians 4:5; walk circumspectly, Ephesians 5:17. Truly if the members of a New Testament church walk in the above mentioned ways the church where they are members will be a model church.

### **B. Thanksgiving for and Proof of their Conversion. 2:13,14**

In this section Paul returns to some themes of which he wrote in 1 Thessalonians 1. Namely, he expands on his "thanksgiving for this model church," their reception of the message of the gospel, and the manifestations of their having been saved. The divisions for this section will be: (1) renewed thanksgiving unto God, 2:13; (2) the conversion of the Thessalonians, 2:13; (3) thankfulness for their receiving the message of truth with faith, 2:13; and (4) two proofs of their conversion, 2:14.

**Renewed thanksgiving unto God, (2:13).** Paul had already stated that he was thanking God for their faithful, loving service to God in the church as seen in 1:2,3. He now renews his thanksgiving unto God. Paul begins *verse 13* "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing,...." What does he mean by the expression "For this cause ..."? For what cause or reason is Paul thankful to God? This refers to what he just said as well as what he was going to say. He refers to *verse 12*. Paul was thankful that they had been "...called ... unto his kingdom (*the kingdom of God*) and glory." Also he was thankful according to *verse 13* that they had received the Word of God into their hearts unto the salvation of their souls. His thanksgiving is directed to God without ceasing. It is by the loving grace of God that anyone is saved according to Ephesians 2:8,9. Thus, every believer should give thanks without ceasing to God for the salvation of precious souls as did Paul. And so it is, that every true pastor is thankful that lost people have been saved and are being saved.

**The conversion of the Thessalonians, (2:13).** To understand this renewed thanksgiving for them one must learn how they were converted to Christ. Paul is now going to expand on what he wrote in chapter 1:5. Why were these people converted? It was because the Word of God performed its mighty work in them when they believed. Why do men listen to the gospel? What is their reason? It is because it is the truth, and it is because of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. And also because it is that which saves their soul if only they receive it into their hearts by repentance and faith. It is truly pitiful when many let their selfish pride get in the way and they reject the truth, and thus are not converted and continue on their way to a burning hell prepared for the devil and his angels. When anyone rejects the Word of God, they become the instruments of Satan as did the unbelieving Jews. Paul states in *verse 13* that these people "...received the word of God which ye heard of us, ...not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Another reason they received the Word of God as from God Himself and not as

from mere men was because the men who delivered it acted as Paul explains in verses 1-11. Paul and his helpers conducted themselves like Jesus truly lived within them because He did.

**Thankfulness for their receiving the message of truth with faith, (2:13).**

Paul was thankful for the born again believers who received their message of truth with faith in their hearts. They could have rejected it. But they did not do so. They accepted the message for what it really was and is. It is the Word of God! It is not the message of men! Paul said of them that they received his message "...not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God..." This is a challenge to the lost sinners in this present day to receive the message of truth in the same manner. It is even a challenge to people who are saved to receive all of the truths of the Bible as the very Word of God and not as if it were of men.

The message of the gospel is the good news of Christ and salvation. It is the relieving message that Christ has paid in full the sin debt of every person who has ever lived or shall live in the future. It is the wonderful message when anyone receives Christ Jesus into his or her heart by simple child like faith, for he or she receives the full forgiveness of all his or her sin and sins. It is the message that now through faith in Jesus, the born again blood bought believer stands justified before the holy God of the entire universe, and therefore, he or she has peace with God. It is the assuring message that on the resurrection day the believer will be raised from the grave and will receive a glorified body, and that heaven is sure. Praise the Lord! The lost sinners in Thessalonica who believed from their hearts welcomed this message of Christ and Him crucified. They were glad. Every one should welcome this message of God and rejoice in it. Any time the message is presented, although it is presented by a man, if it is the Word of God, then it will accomplish the purpose of God. The Bible states clearly in Isaiah 55:11, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it." Consequently, the Apostle Paul and



his helpers thanked "...God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Mark well the words "... in you that believe." If one hears the message of the gospel but does not believe it, it will do them no good, for the Bible teaches in 1 Timothy 4:10, "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

**Two proofs of their conversion, (2:14).** In *verse 14* Paul gives two proofs or evidences of the conversion to Christ of those who believed in Thessalonica for which he was thankful. They became followers and sufferers. (This is not to say that they were saved or kept saved by doing or experiencing these things). The first part of *verse 14* states, "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus:..." This expresses the first evidence of the fact that they truly had been saved. Paul addresses them as "brethren" which is a term of affection and closeness and of identifying with them. He then said they became "followers." The word "followers" from the Greek word μιμητής (mimêtês) could be translated "imitators." It comes from the same Greek word used in 1:6 and from which the English language gets the word "mimic." But one should not get the idea that it means a cheap imitation. That is not the idea as it is used in this passage. Rather, "mimic" means "imitator, one who imitates another particularly by following one's example or one's teaching" (Rienecker 587, 592).<sup>9</sup> Actually, the idea of the word "followers" is that one follows the example or model of another and becomes just like them in attitudes, thoughts, and actions. One may well ask of whom did they become followers? The answer is two-fold. In 1:6 Paul says they "became followers of" him and of the Lord. They did this because they received the Word of God and they did so in much affliction or with suffering as they lived for God. Yet, they received the Word with joy of the Holy Spirit. In 2:14 Paul declares they followed "the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus."

One may well ask what kind of churches were these churches. Paul identifies these churches in three ways. *First*, he calls them "churches of God." [The noun rendered "churches" is the genitive plural ἐκκλησιῶν (ekklêsiôn) from ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia)]. They were true churches. The term "churches of God" indicates that Paul was speaking of local assemblies of believers and not some universal church organization. The Bible no where speaks of such a thing. Therefore, biblically speaking there is no such thing as the universal invisible church except in the false theology of Protestants and so-called Baptists who are in error. Now if Paul had meant something like that he would have said "*church of God.*" But the Bible speaks only of local congregations. (Even the generic or institutional use of ἐκκλησία is referring to local congregations). The universal church idea is foreign to the Bible. Please refer to the discussion of the church question in chapter 1 entitled "Introduction." These church members all believed the same things. They were of God and had only one rule of faith or doctrine and practice and that was the Word of God. And they were alike in doctrine and practice. If they were not, they ceased to be a local New Testament church of God. A church can only be recognized as a New Testament church if she bears the "Distinguishing Marks" as discussed in chapter 1 entitled "Introduction."

*Second*, Paul identified these churches as being located in Judaea, that is, in the area of Palestine. Paul wanted the church in Thessalonica to know that the persecution of these churches had not brought the work of God to an end, and so persecution would not bring the work of God to an end in Thessalonica.

The *third* way that Paul identifies these churches was that they were "...in Christ Jesus..." Paul uses this to distinguish them from the Jewish synagogues of that day. The Jewish synagogues, for the most part, rejected Jesus as Messiah and thus as Savior. They were like a lot of groups today who claim they believe in God and the Bible and so forth. Notwithstanding, they teach salvation by works and other false doctrines, and they pervert and

twist the Bible to suit themselves. It needs to be emphasized again that all groups must be tested by the standard of the Word of God. True followers of the Lord Jesus not only believe in and contend for the faith (system of doctrine) once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), but they also practice what the Bible teaches for New Testament churches to practice. A true and model church should never compromise the truth, nor be unionizers, joining in with and thus condoning false groups.

The second proof of the conversion of these members of the church in Thessalonica was that they became sufferers. Paul wrote in the second part of *verse 14* "...for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:" This was yet another evidence of their conversion and another reason for the thankfulness of Paul to God and further vindication of his ministry. Why was Paul thankful? It was not that he wanted them to suffer; but the fact, that they did, was genuine proof that they were true believers in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Paul was thankful that they passed the testing of their faith. The people of this church had not only been born again and had become followers of the Lord Jesus, but they, like the churches in Judaea and really the Lord Himself, also endured sufferings at the hands of their own countrymen. The churches of God in Judaea had suffered much persecution at the hands of the rebellious, Christ rejecting Jews, and now these believers in the church at Thessalonica also suffered at the hands of their own people and became just like the churches in Judaea in this. This was proof positive that they meant business as far as their conversion was concerned. Their reaction to this persecution was also further proof of the genuineness of their conversion to Christ Jesus. In James 1:22 the Bible exhorts, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." These members of the church in Thessalonica did not quit serving the Lord, and they did not quit attending the services of the church of the Lord Jesus. They remained faithful.

They were not superficial or stony ground hearers of the Word of God. They stand as a good model for all churches and members of churches to follow. Many times people today are led to believe that all their troubles will be over when they are saved. However, this is simply not the case as evidenced by the experience of Paul and his converts in Thessalonica. The Bible declares in 2 Timothy 3:12 "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It was Jesus who said in John 15:20, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." Jesus suffered and those that serve Him can expect to suffer also. (Refer also to John 13:16.) Jesus warned that there would be divisions within a household and a family according to Luke 12:51,52, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three." Why? John 7:43 explains, "So there was a division among the people because of him (*i.e.*, *Jesus*)."

### **C. Denunciation of the Persecutors. 2:15,16**

In *verses 15,16* the Apostle digresses and denounces the Jewish persecutors. (This passage is not only additional vindication of the ministry of Paul and his helpers, but also of every biblical ministry that has been opposed by the Christ rejecting Jews and others.) The reason the Thessalonian believers suffered was because of opposition to the message of truth and the gospel. Paul relates several things of which the Christ rejecters were guilty and in so doing reveals the nature of the opposition to the gospel message of Jesus Christ and of God our Savior. In his denunciation of the persecutors Paul exposes three things about the opposition. *First*, he tells of their vicious and ferocious demonstrations. *Second*, he gives their dismal evaluation. *Third*, He declares their disastrous consequence.

**The vicious and ferocious demonstrations of the opposition, (2:15a).** In the

first part of *verse 15*, Paul recites three demonstrations of the vicious and ferocious nature of the Jewish persecutors. To top the list and in the face of the mercy and grace of God the Jews were guilty of killing the Lord Jesus (of course, they are not the only ones who killed the Lord Jesus and were guilty of persecution). The idea is, they led out in it. Next, they were guilty of killing their own prophets or men called of God from the Israelite Nation to preach and warn of coming judgment. Christ Himself said the Jews did this according to Matthew 23:31,37 and Luke 11:47,48. And also, they were guilty of persecuting Paul which means he was driven out of the synagogues. This shows that they were still doing the same things. For a list of things that happened to Paul at the hands of the Jews and others please refer to 2 Corinthians 11:23-33.

**The dismal evaluation of the opposition, (2:15b-16a).** In the last part of *verse 15* and the first part of *verse 16*, Paul expresses a three-fold dismal evaluation of the persecutors. These persecutors pleased "...not God..." This is a deliberate understatement. Next, they were "...contrary to all men." The word "contrary" is from the adjective ἐναντίος (enantios) and means "over against, opposite... contrary..." and metaphorically means "opposed as an adversary, hostile, antagonistic in feeling or act..." (Thayer 213).<sup>10</sup> The Amplified Bible renders "contrary" as "foes" (317).<sup>11</sup> These persecutors were real and active enemies of anyone who preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, they did not want others to be saved. Paul wrote in *verse 16* that these opposers went about "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved..." Being from a present tense participle, "forbidding" brings with it the idea of continual action. Why were they like this? They were envious and jealous. It seems that they believed that to be saved one must first become a Jew. They believed in works for salvation; yet the Old Testament along with the New Testament is clear that works will not save anyone. Further, Paul said that in their being opposed to Christ and the gospel message that they filled "...up

their sins away:..." In other words, God would tolerate just so much and when the cup of sin was filled He would allow His wrath to fall upon them. (For a related passage, refer to Genesis 15:16.) This thought should cause each and every one to ask themselves, "Just how full is my cup of sin before God?" In Acts 17:30 as Paul preached to the Athenians he declared, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

**The disastrous consequence of the opposition, (2:16c).** The Bible says "...the wages of sin is death..." and "the soul that sinneth, it shall die..." in Romans 6:23 and Ezekiel 18:20 respectively. Sin always brings about an undesirable consequence. Certainly, this is true with those who try to thwart the plan and purpose of the holy and righteous God who in mercy and grace sent His Son to redeem. The Jews were displeasing and dishonoring the very God they thought they were trying to honor and please. They were zealously frustrating the work of God and in so doing bringing the wrath of God upon themselves. Jesus warned them about this in Matthew 23:37 when He exclaims in agony, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!" God in His love wants to redeem the very ones who work against His plan of redemption. Paul himself is proof of that. The Jews had rejected the love, mercy, and grace of God. They had rejected their Redeemer and Messiah and so they must pay the price. This is about what the Apostle Paul was speaking when he declares, "...for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." God's wrath will be settled upon them to the full extent of punishment. The word "wrath" comes from the Greek noun ὄργη (*orgê*) and means "desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. ... violent passion (ire, or [justifiable] abhorrence); by impl.(*-ication*) punishment: --anger, indignation, vengeance, wrath" (Strong 52).<sup>12</sup> Paul implies that this is the wrath of God, His indignation and punishment. Paul is announcing and cautioning in an

emphatic way that the persecutors will get what is coming to them. This is a dire warning to those who persist in rejecting Christ as personal Savior. John the Baptist declared in John 3:36 "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." It is in the very best interest of every human being to repent and to believe the saving gospel message of Jesus Christ and to do it today.

#### **D. The Desire of the Missionary to Revisit them. 2:17,18**

After the blistering denunciation of the persecutors Paul turns to the theme of his relationship to the Thessalonians and his desire to revisit them. The Apostle loved this church and the members of it with the highest kind of love; he loved them in the Lord Jesus. To understand the kind of love He had for them, one must read and apply 1 Corinthians 13. It greatly grieved him not to stay and instruct them further in the Word of God. His love for these people exemplifies the kind of love a pastor should have for the church and members of the church over which God has placed him as the undershepherd. These verses reveal at least two things: (1) Paul longed to go to Thessalonica and minister to the church there, (2:17), and (2) Paul wanted to revisit them but could not, (2:18).

**Paul longed to go to Thessalonica and minister to the church there, (2:17).** The language in this verse shows that Paul longed to return to them. This desire was further evidence of his love for them. First, note what he said in the first half of this verse: "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart..." The verb "being taken" is one word in the Greek. It is from the Greek participle ἀπορφανισθεντες (aporphanisthentes) from the verb ἀπορφανίζομαι (aporphanizopmai) and/or ἀπορφανίζω. Thayer says it means "to bereave of a parent or parents" (Thayer 67).<sup>13</sup> Hiebert says this verb literally means "to be orphaned" (Heibert 123).<sup>14</sup> It describes how parents feel when one of their sons or daughters are serving in the military far away from home. Since ἀπορφανισθεντες (aporphanisthentes) is

aorist passive participle, it could be rendered "having been bereft." Rienecker explains, "The passive voice points out that the situation was forced (von Dobschutz) and aorist tense implies a single action and not a continued state (Best)" (593).<sup>15</sup> It literally means "being bereaved." The idea behind the use of the word bereft means to deprive of and forcefully, especially of hope, joy, and so forth. This expressed the deep desire of Paul to see them and soon. To Paul this situation of being separated from the brethren in Thessalonica was like a child who had lost his parents or parents who had lost their child. Paul says we are separated "...from you for a short time in presence, not in heart..." His heart was in the work of the church in Thessalonica and with the people he loved dearly of whom he had to leave behind. Thus he writes in the last part of *verse 17* we "...endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire." In The Amplified Bible this is rendered, "...we endeavored the more eagerly and with great longing to see you face to face" (317).<sup>16</sup>

**Paul wanted to revisit them but could not, (2:18).** In the first part of *verse 18* Paul reinforces his message that he had a strong emotional desire to revisit them by writing, "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again..." In that Paul uses his name emphasizes his own personal desire to revisit them. The use of the plural pronoun "we" throughout this epistle implies that Paul included Timothy and Silas (Heibert 126).<sup>17</sup> Paul expressing his deep longing, said I would have come to you, "...once and again..." This could be paraphrased as follows: "there have been many times that I would have like to have returned to see you all." The last part of *verse 18* reveals why he could not do so, "but Satan hindered us." The word "hindered" means "thwarted." This word comes from the Greek verb ἐνέκοψεν (enekopsen) of which the root form is ἐγκόπτω (egkoptô) which means "to cut into, to impede one's course by cutting off his way" (Thayer 166).<sup>18</sup> The word has the idea of "breaking up a road to render it impassable..." (Rienecker 593).<sup>19</sup> This is like what is done to some of the timber roads in



Western Arkansas and Southeastern Oklahoma. If the timber concerns do not want a road to be used by the general public, they will put a big pile of dirt at the entrance so that regular road vehicles can not enter. So Paul is saying that because of the work of Satan, the way back to Thessalonica was for him impassable. If Paul had gone back at that time, he would have been a martyr for the faith of Christ and this would have cut short his ministry. Was this the will of God for Paul? Apparently not. It was not that Paul was afraid to face danger. This is seen by noting all the things that happened to him during His ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ. (Refer to 2 Corinthians 11:23-33.)

This shows how strong Satan really is. He hinders believers as they try to live the Christian life. But thanks be to God, he can only do what God allows. Take for example the case of Job, God allowed Satan to persecute Job for a higher purpose. God only let Satan go so far. Nevertheless, Satan hinders many from being saved. He hinders many from serving God as they should. If the believer is not serving God as he should, then he or she will be serving Satan. The question the believer needs to ask is, "Who am I serving - God or Satan?"

#### **E. The Hope, or Joy, or Crown of Rejoicing. 2:19,20**

In these verses the Apostle Paul gives further evidence of his concern and love for the believers in Thessalonica. In effect, he is telling them that the relationship that they established is a relationship that will last into eternity and throughout eternity. In verse 17 he had again addressed them as "brethren" which implies that in the Lord Jesus they were his brothers and sisters since they had been born again and had become part of the family of God. Paul assures them that they will share in the reality when the hope of glory becomes the reality of glory. In the *first part of verse 19* Paul asks them the question, what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? In *verse 19b and 20* he tells them that they are the hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing for the missionary.

**What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? (2:19a).** Paul now puts to rest any charges from the enemy that he was not concerned about the people of this church. In these verses Paul manifest his deep abiding affection for them. He wants the best for them now and in the eternal ages to come. He assures them of this by asking the question, "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" He answers his own question by asking another question for their assurance, "Are not even ye (*you all yourselves*)...?" The word "not" is from the Greek οὐχὶ (ouchi) which is a strengthened form of the negative particle οὐ (ou). Dana and Mantey state that "When οὐ (or οὐχὶ) is used in a *question* its use always implies that the expected answer is "yes" (264).<sup>20</sup> So it is that the believers in Thessalonica are the "...hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing..." for the missionary(ies). The word crown in *verse 19* is from the Greek noun στέφανος (stephanos) and means "wreath, crown; prize, reward, gift; reason for pride or boasting" (Bushell).<sup>21</sup> Στέφανος (Stephanos) was the word used for the crown of the victors in the Greek games. Paul uses it to speak "of the reward for faithful service" (Wigram 801).<sup>22</sup> Paul wants the converts at Thessalonica to live well and give glory to Jesus Christ. In this life one of the greatest and most joyful experiences is to be used of the Lord Jesus to lead someone to accept Christ as personal Savior. In the life to come it will be a great joy to see those in heaven who have found Christ Jesus precious to their hearts because a believer has witnessed to him or her.

**They are the hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing for the Missionary, (2:19b,20).** No doubt, the Jews and others had tried to convince the members of this church that Paul was really not concerned for them or else he would have come back. They did this only to try to draw Paul back to Thessalonica so that they could fulfill their lustful desires to kill him. Paul silences these charges by saying that the members of the church in Thessalonica are his "...hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing..." or exaltation in the present world and they would be in the world to come or "...in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." The word

"presence" is from παρουσία or *parousia*. This refers to the bodily coming of Christ Jesus the second time - the sure hope. Paul wrote in Romans 8:24-25,

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*."

Yet by faith we know the hope of glory will be realized according to the timetable of God - in His own time and right on time. Actually, the hope of any believer is Christ Jesus at His coming. But the joy and crown of exaltation will be to those who have been effective witnesses to the saving grace of God when they see those to whom they have witnessed safe in the presence of the Almighty Savior in glory.

Paul reassures them of his answer because what he said in a negative way in *verse 19* he now says in a positive way in *verse 20*. The Amplified Bible puts it this way, "For you are [indeed] our glory and our joy!" This expresses the high regard, admiration, and care that Paul and his helpers had for this model mission minded church.

### **Summary of Chapter**

As stated in the opening comments of this chapter, in order for a New Testament church to become and/or be a model church she must be led by a model missionary or preacher. The Apostle Paul with his helpers established the New Testament church in Thessalonica which became a model mission-minded church. The Apostle had to vindicate his ministry when it came under attack for the very sake of the message of truth and salvation. In so doing he reveals his character, integrity, and honesty along with that of Silas and Timothy. *In this defense Paul reveals the characteristics of a model missionary or preacher.*

Paul said let the record speak for itself; the model preacher must realize that actions speak louder than words. What can be gleaned from the record? *First*, the purpose of preaching must be of the highest order, and that is, to honor God, and in so doing, witness to

the saving grace of God in order that precious souls will be delivered from sin and hell and receive eternal life by faith in Jesus. *Second*, the model preacher should preach with boldness even in the face of much opposition. *Third*, his exhortations should be without deceit, impure motives, and guile or trickery. The truth should be presented in simplicity and not mixed with error since faith comes by hearing the Word of God. *Fourth*, since the preacher has been entrusted with the most precious message for time and eternity, he should speak not so as to please men, but to please the One who called him and who examines his heart. *Fifth*, his conduct should be blameless. Thus, he should not use flattering speech, nor preach for personal gain, nor be a glory seeker; but rather use the office of pastor with restraint. *Sixth*, the preachers should be gentle with his people as a nurse that cherishes her children.

In view of these characteristics Paul and his helpers manifested seven motives that should be manifested in the conduct of a model preacher to prove his God-given love for his flock. *First*, the preacher should love his people with pure love as it is in Christ; the kind of love that rejoices in the truth. *Second*, he should be pleased to impart the gospel of saving grace because this is the only way anyone can learn how to have their sins forgiven, go to heaven, and avoid the burning depths of hell. *Third*, he should be pleased to impart his own life to them, in order that they might have every opportunity to know, accept, and live the truth in order to give honor to God. *Fourth*, the pastor should teach that the gospel ministry should be supported both at home and abroad; yet, he should be willing to engage in secular work to support himself and his family. At the same time the pastor and his family should be examples or models in giving. If a pastor wants to pastor a mission-minded model church, he must be mission-minded. *Fifth*, his manner of behavior should be above and beyond reproach. He should behave in a devout way and not engage in worldliness; he should be upright in his actions; he should behave in such a way that no charge can be brought against him. *Sixth*, he should instruct, exhort, comfort, and encourage his flock as a godly father would his own

precious children; yet charge them in the things of the Lord. *Seventh*, the heart felt desire of the pastor for his flock should be that they would walk worthy of God, thus conducting their lives in a manner worthy of the One who has called them unto His kingdom and glory. The desire of the pastor should be that his people would grow and mature in Christ Jesus. For this to happen, he needs to be a model in all things. For what else can a New Testament church ask of her pastor? It should be so that if the members of a New Testament church walk after the example set by a model pastor then the church will be a model church. God calls upon His people to walk in this present world during this life time in such a way that it is in keeping with their destiny so that others may be led to a saving knowledge of Christ. Another reason to walk in the way God wants His children to walk is in order that they should receive a full reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

After the vindication of their ministry Paul and his helpers express their thanksgiving that these Thessalonians believers had received by faith the message they preached as in indeed the Word of God and not of mere men. Paul also states that the message effectually worked in them such that they not only were converted to Christ but became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. They became followers to the extent that they suffered persecution by their own countrymen. Paul reveals these to be manifestations of their having been saved. Every true and model pastor should be the thankful to God that lost souls are saved and that the saved follow the Word, the Way, and the Will of God, not regarding the consequences.

Next, the Apostle digresses and denounces the Jewish persecutors which is additional vindication of their ministry. The reason the Thessalonian believers suffered was because of opposition to the message of truth and the gospel. The Christ rejecters were guilty of the opposition to the gospel message of Jesus Christ and of God our Savior. Three things the persecutors did demonstrated their ferocious opposition. They killed the Lord Jesus. They had

killed the prophets of God. They violently opposed Paul and His helpers. They did these things because they cared not to please God; they were contrary to all men; and they did not want anyone to hear the message of salvation by the grace of God so that they might be saved. But God would have all men to be saved by faith in Christ and His shed blood. The persecutors who persist and repent not will one day reap the disastrous consequence which is the wrath of God upon them to the uttermost.

After castigating of the persecutors Paul assures the members of the church in Thessalonica that he loves them (with the highest kind of love) and desires greatly to revisit them. He was bereaved over the forced separation. He desired to see them face to face and also to instruct them further in the Word of God. This love of the apostle for them exemplifies the kind of love a pastor should have for the church and members of the church over which God has placed him as the undershepherd. Nevertheless, Satan made the way impassable in such a way that Paul could not return at that time. Satan is very active in thwarting the work and Word of God.

In the last two verses the Apostle Paul announces that these of Thessalonica would be his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing at the coming of Jesus. This testifies to his concern and love for the believers in Thessalonica. He is telling them that the relationship that they established is a relationship that will last into and throughout eternity. They were his brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus since they had been born again and had become part of the family of God. Paul reassures them that they will share in the reality when the hope of glory becomes the reality of glory. In this life one of the greatest and most joyful experiences is to be used of the Lord Jesus to lead someone to accept Christ as personal Savior. In the life to come the joy and crown of exaltation will be to those who have been effective witnesses to the saving grace of God when they see those to whom they have witnessed safe in the presence of the Almighty Savior in glory.

In conclusion there are certain questions the reader needs to ask himself/herself. "Have I received the gospel message with faith in my heart?" "Have I become a follower of the Lord and His churches?" "Am I willing to suffer for Him?" "Have I given proof of my salvation?" "Do I love the Lord Jesus and His church as I should?" "Will I be ready when Jesus returns again?"

## Notes

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## **CHAPTER 6**

### **A Model Church: The Heart Of The Missionary**

(1 Thessalonians Chapter 3:1-13)

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## CHAPTER 6

### **A Model Church: The Heart Of The Missionary**

(1 Thessalonians Chapter 3:1-13)

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 Paul unfolds the great doctrine of salvation by grace through faith along with the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. In that chapter Paul reveals his thanksgiving and prayers to God for the mission minded church in Thessalonica. He thanked God for her missionary enterprises and endeavors. She had become a model church. In chapter 2 the apostle reveals the practical doctrine of service to the Master at any cost. In the forced defense of his ministry, Paul reveals what the model missionary or pastor should be in regard to his service and his conduct. Paul was a living example for this church. He is a model for true churches of every age. In chapter 3 and verses 1-12 of chapter 4, Paul presents the practical teaching of sanctification in relationship to the second coming of Christ. Along with this, he reveals that all believers will be presented by the Son unto and before the Father. (Even though the words sanctify and sanctification are not found in chapter 3, the idea is certainly present.) Actually, chapter 3 continues the thought of chapter 2. Because Paul was highly conscious that Jesus would return, every section of this epistle mentions it. In this chapter Paul reveals his heart and in so doing gives a good of example of what the true heart of a model missionary or pastor should be. Paul was a walking example of sanctification in practice. The divisions for this chapter overlap somewhat, but they are: (1) Paul manifested his concern in sending Timothy, 3:1-5; (2) Paul encouraged by the report of Timothy, 3:6-9;

(3) Paul desired from his heart to see them, 3:9,10; and (4) Paul prayed for their continued growth in Christ, 3:10-13.

### **A. Paul Manifested his Concern in Sending Timothy, 3:1-5**

Paul loved the people and the church in Thessalonica. His heart went out to them. Some had charged that Paul did not care for their welfare, but he did. He had the heart of a true pastor and/or missionary. He loved these people and was concerned for their welfare. He was especially concerned for their spiritual welfare - which is the most important aspect. How does one show his concern and his love? One of the best ways is personal visitation. But, as discussed previously, Paul was hindered from returning to Thessalonica. Since Paul was hindered, he used the next best means available to him, and that was to send one of his right hand men to visit them and bring back a report of their welfare. Therefore, he sent Timothy to them, and in doing so, he manifested his deep abiding concern and love for them. His burdened interest and care is expressed in the following verses: *first*, Paul had a great love and concern for this church, 3:1,2; *second*, Paul warned that afflictions would come, 3: 3-5a; and *third*, Paul feared, because of the Tempter, his labor was in vain, 3:5b.

**Paul had a great love and concern for this church, (3:1-2).** Paul had already given proof of his love and concern for this church by what he states in chapter 2:17-20. Further evidence that he was concerned is manifested in *verse 1* where he wrote, "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone." After Paul had been forced to leave Thessalonica and later Berea because of the persecution by rebellious unbelieving Jews, he traveled to Athens. According to Acts 17:15 when he arrived, he sent word for Timothy to come to him. Timothy had remained in Berea along with Silas. The reason Paul sent for Timothy was so he could send Timothy to Thessalonica since he could not go himself. What did Paul mean by his statement in *verse 1*? He meant that if it had to

be, he was well-pleased to be forsaken by those whose company he valued and needed (Rienecker 594).<sup>1</sup> The apostle had a burden for the welfare of the people and of this church. *Verse 2* gives more evidence of this when Paul writes, "And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith." At that time Paul really needed the help of Timothy in Athens and later in Corinth. But because of his love and concern for those in Thessalonica, he sent one of his right-hand men to help, comfort, and establish them in the faith.

In *verse 2* Paul commends Timothy unto them by calling him: "...our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ...." Note that Paul identifies Timothy in three ways. *First*, he calls him our brother. "Brother" comes from ἀδελφός (adelphos), which, in this context, implies a brother in the Lord Jesus. Among other things, ἀδελφός may be defined as "...belonging to the same people, countryman;... any fellow-man, --- as having the one and the same father with others,... fellow believer, united to another by the bond of affection; so most frequently of Christians... (of) ...a single family..." (Thayer 10, 11).<sup>2</sup> Paul meant that Timothy was saved and was his and their brother in the Lord Jesus. Luke calls him a disciple who was well reported by the brethren according to Acts 16:1,2. Paul speaks of his unfeigned or genuine faith in 2 Timothy 1:5. The first requirement for being called into the service of the Lord is that one is saved. It must be understood that Timothy was saved just like anyone else is saved: not by his service, but by and through the blood of Christ and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Second*, Paul calls Timothy a minister of God. The word minister comes from διάκονος<sup>3</sup> (diakonos) (as found in the Textus Receptus, The Greek Text... 377)<sup>4</sup> and means "...one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master; a servant; attendant, minister;... deacon..." (Thayer 138).<sup>5</sup> Paul did not mean here that Timothy was an ordained deacon in the sense of 1 Timothy 3:8-13, but that he was

a servant of God in a different sense. (If anyone would please God, they must humble themselves and be a servant of the Master.) Timothy was called of God to preach the word of God as evidenced by the two epistles, First and Second Timothy. The call to preach is the highest of all callings. God is still in the business of calling men to preach the Word of God. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:1,11,12:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, ... *11* And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and (*or even*) teachers; *12* For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

*Third*, Paul calls Timothy our fellowlaborer or fellow-worker. Paul was a missionary. Timothy was also a missionary. Thus, Paul calls Timothy our brother, a minister of God, and our fellowlaborer. This is all "in the gospel of Christ." There is no greater work on earth than the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the reason there is no greater or higher calling than the call to preach the gospel message of salvation by grace. This is why Jesus established His church and purchased it with His own blood. Therefore, it should be declared that it is not just the job of the preacher to witness and to invite others to come to Christ and to be saved. Every believer should be actively engaged in evangelism.

According to *verse 2* the two-fold purpose of Paul in sending Timothy to Thessalonica was to strengthen and to encourage these persecuted saints in the faith. *First*, he states it was "...to establish you... concerning your faith." The word "establish" is from the Greek verb *στηρίζαι* (*stêrixai*), which is the infinitive form of *στηρίζω* (*stêrizô*). This word means "...to make stable, ... to strengthen, make firm;... to render constant, confirm, one's mind..." (Thayer 588).<sup>6</sup> The infinitive is used to express purpose. The apostle wanted to support these afflicted saints and help them to have a firm resolve in the faith. *Second*, he says it was "to comfort you concerning your faith." The word "comfort" is from the infinitive *παρακαλέσαι* (*parakalesai*). Thayer says that *παρακαλέω* (*parakaleô*) has the basic meaning of "...to call to one's

side...." and further it means "...to exhort,... console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort..." and "...it combines the ideas of exhorting and comforting and encouraging... in ... 1 Th. 3:2" (Thayer 482, 483).<sup>7</sup> Every believer needs to be admonished and encouraged from time to time.

**Paul warned that afflictions would come, 3:3-5a.** The apostle begins *verse 3* by stating the reason "...to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith." He declares this was in order "that no man should be moved by these afflictions:...." Many people have the idea or notion that when a person is saved their troubles will end. But in this verse and those that follow, Paul teaches that this is not necessarily true. The word "moved" is from the Greek present passive infinitive of the verb σαίνωμαι (sainomai). It means to be disturbed or upset. Rienecker says it has the idea "...to shake or wag, used especially of a dog wagging the tail to allure, to fascinate, to flatter, to beguile, to draw one aside from the right path..." (594).<sup>8</sup> Paul did not want the saints in Thessalonica to be shaken into thinking that they had embraced the wrong thing. Thus he ends *verse 3* by saying, "...for yourselves know that we are appointed (*or destined*) thereunto." If a person lives for God properly, trouble will begin. The believer must remember that Jesus said that the servant is not better than his master. Jesus alerted his disciples to this and to the suffering of afflictions in several passages:

Matthew 10:24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

Matthew 20:27-28 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

John 13:16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. John 16:2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

Believers should be reminded also of what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Just as Jesus suffered,

so have believers down through the centuries. And this shall continue until Jesus returns. Hence, believers are encouraged not to draw back from their faith because of afflictions, sufferings, and persecutions. The saints should not be moved (disturbed, shaken, or upset); rather, they should be steadfast in their faith. The saints shall receive the victory someday. The Bible states clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:57-58:

But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

This passage (1 Thessalonians 3:3-5) is a great manifestation of the love of Paul. Since he was alone at Athens and later at Corinth, he felt forsaken and abandoned. (This is implied by the language of verse 1 etc.) Nevertheless, he was willing to send Timothy to them and to be alone if it would further the cause of Christ and help the church in Thessalonica. In this he allows Christ to live in him. He was being selfless and not selfish. This is an example of Galatians 2:20 where Paul wrote, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Each believer needs to ask these questions: "Am I allowing Christ to live in me as Paul did?" "Am I selfless or selfish?"

In *verse 4* Paul specifically reminds them that when he was with them, he had warned that to "suffer tribulation" would be part of living for the Lord. The words "suffer tribulation" are from one word in the Greek, which is the present passive infinitive of  $\theta\lambda\acute{\iota}\beta\omega$  (thlibô). In this context the use of the passive infinitive implies durative action (Rienecker 594).<sup>9</sup> This word means "...to press,... to press hard upon,... metaph. to trouble, afflict, distress..." (Thayer 291).<sup>10</sup> Paul had told them that the children of God would be persecuted. He certainly did not want them to suffer, but he realized that God would see them through it, just as He had been with him in his own afflictions. This truth (the presence of God) brings comfort to believers in every age.

However, according to the first part of *verse 5*, Paul was so concerned that he wanted to know about their welfare and faith. Mark well, that for emphasis he uses wording similar to what he used in verses 1,2 when he writes, "...when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith...." By using the expression "For this cause" he is referring to the suffering and tribulation that he spoke of in verse 4. He also reveals that he was beside himself and could no longer forbear. Therefore, he sent Timothy to know the condition of their faith. Some of the concerns he may have had in mind were: (1) Had they passed the test? (2) Had they given up? (3) Were they strong in the faith? (4) Were they still contending for the faith? (5) Were they in business for the Lord? Paul is a great example to missionaries and pastors in his great concern for them as any real and true pastor or missionary should be.

**Paul feared, because of the Tempter, his labor was in vain, (3:5b).** In the last half of *verse 5* Paul states the reason he wanted to know about their faith. It was "... lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain." Who is this one called "the tempter?" The tempter is speaking of Satan, the Devil. This can be determined by comparing 1 Thessalonians 3:5 with Matthew 4:3. Matthew 4:3 states, "And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." The tempter is the same one who tempted Jesus in the wilderness after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights. The tempter is clearly identified as the Devil or Satan in Matthew 4:1-11. In both of these passages the Greek construction is ὁ πειράζων (ho peirazôn). This is the present active participle of πειράζω with the definite article and can be literally rendered "the [one] tempting" or "the tempting one." Πειράζω may be used in a good sense and in a bad sense. In general this verb means to "...test, put to the test; tempt; try, attempt" (Bushell).<sup>11</sup> When this word is used in a bad sense, Thayer says it means, "to test one maliciously... to try or test one's faith... (hence), ὁ πειράζων..." (has been rendered) "the tempter" (498).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Paul



is concerned that the Devil is working overtime to defeat the born again ones in Thessalonica and thus put the church there out of business.

If Satan cannot deceive and keep a person from being saved, then he will try to keep the saved person from serving God. He will try intently to kill the influence of the saved person. Satan will see to it that believers are persecuted when things are going great. He will put the pleasures and things of the world before believers so that they will be persuaded to pursue them (at the very time they should be in the house of God). His purpose is to keep them from becoming involved in the service of God and attending the house of God. The child of God must realize that Satan works through people just like God does. Satan will work on the child of God through his or her friends as well as his or her enemies. The demon spirits or evil angels (which are part of the forces of Satan) very likely reveal things to psychics. Horoscopes and fortune telling are Satanic in nature. Believers should avoid these things at all cost and should depend on God for the future. In times of persecution and affliction Satan tries to make believers ineffective in the service of God. He is the one that influences Christians to ask, when some little loved one has died, "Why did God let it happen?" -- instead of thanking God for letting them enjoy the little one that God gave them for a season. Children of God need to remember the example of Job. When he had lost all he had (his children, his livestock and much more), he said in Job 1:21, "...naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In Matthew 6:33-34 Jesus told his followers:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

How did Jesus defeat Satan? By depending on His heavenly Father and on the Scriptures. When Satan attacks the child of God, he or she must go to God in prayer, mediate upon the Word of God, and depend on God and His inspired Word.

Due to the work of the Devil, Paul was fearful that his labors of preaching Christ and establishing a New Testament church in Thessalonica were in vain. Note again His words in the last part of *verse 5* "...and our labour be in vain" or without purpose or to no avail. In chapter 1 Paul said, he was sure of their election, but he had not established them as he had purposed, because he had not had enough time with them. This is why he sent to Timothy to determine their state of affairs. His questions may have been as follows: "Were they still strong in the faith?" "Were they contending for the faith?" The answers to these questions can be seen in what Paul wrote in chapter 1:6-8. This had been reported to him by Timothy.

### **B. Paul Encouraged by the Report of Timothy, 3:6-9**

When Timothy returned from the church of Thessalonica, he reported to Paul the good news of their faith, love, and hope. Hence, Paul was very encouraged, relieved, and comforted. He had been extremely distressed, but now he was glad to hear that these brothers and sisters in Christ loved him as much as he loved them. Further, he was overjoyed to hear that they were not only serving the Lord, but that they were also sounding out the word of the Lord throughout the land. This brought so much gratitude to the heart of the apostle that he could not thank God enough. That the apostle was much encouraged by the report of Timothy can be seen in the following subdivisions of these verses: (1) Timothy rejoins and reports to Paul on the condition of this church, 3:6a; (2) Paul was consoled greatly by this report, 3:6b,7; (3) Paul was truly loved and respected by these people, 3:6,7; and (4) Paul manifested overflowing joy, 3:8,9.

#### **Timothy rejoins and reports to Paul on the condition of this church, (3:6a).**

In the first part of *verse 6* Paul says, "But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity...." When did this take place? Evidently this is the same time as recorded in Acts 18:1,5, where it states that Paul had left Athens and had arrived

in Corinth and Silas and Timothy had rejoined Paul in Corinth. The record that Luke gives in the book of Acts is as follows:

Acts 18:1, 5 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; . . . 5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

(Please note that both Thessalonica and Berea were in the Roman Province of Macedonia). Thus Timothy rejoins Paul who is now in Corinth and reports on the condition of the church in Thessalonica. Timothy brought the "good tidings" of the "faith and charity" of the church in Thessalonica. The expression "brought us good tidings" is the translation of the aorist middle participle εὐαγγελισαμένου (euaggelisamenou), which is from εὐαγγελίζω (euaggelizō). The basic meaning of this word is "to bring good news, to announce glad tidings..." (Thayer 256).<sup>13</sup> It is used 55 times in the New Testament and is rendered "preach" 23 times and "preach the Gospel" 22 times. In most cases this word is used to refer to the gospel of Jesus Christ, but in this case it is used to refer to the good news of the "faith and charity" of the church in Thessalonica. The word "faith" is from πίστις (pistis), and the primary rendering is "faith; i. e... conviction of the truth of anything, belief..." It can also refer to the biblical system of doctrine that is believed and proclaimed (Thayer 512-514).<sup>14</sup> The first use that comes to mind is that of believing in Christ Jesus as personal Savior. However, in verse 6 the apostle is referring to both their trusting in Jesus for personal salvation and also to the soundness of their faith. The word "charity" is from ἀγάπη (agapê), which means love. Ἀγάπη speaks of the highest kind of love. Both of these terms have the definite article in the Greek New Testament. Hence, they refer to two separate and different aspects of this good report.

Howbeit, both aspects go together. Concerning this, Hiebert explains:

Faith speaks of their characteristic attitude Godward, while love is their characteristic attitude manward. Their faith had its most significant exhibition in love toward others, especially their Christian brethren. If their faith separated them from the world, their love united them more closely to each other. The two terms summarize their religious and ethical excellence. The two must always go together (146).<sup>15</sup>

**Paul was consoled greatly by this report, (3:6b, 7).** Timothy also reported to Paul in *verse 6* that the Thessalonians had "...good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you." This report of the condition of the church in Thessalonica was a great comfort and source of consolation to the Apostle Paul. He truly had the heart of a model pastor or missionary. He was glad to hear of their faithfulness and mission mindedness in spite of their suffering. (As mentioned previously, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 is further proof of this.) Paul knew the suffering they were enduring would actually cause them to grow stronger. This church, even though afflicted, was strong in the faith. The Lord allows churches to be afflicted so that they will grow stronger just as he allowed Job to be tried so that he would be stronger after going through his trial. This is not according to human reasoning, but by divine reasoning. The Thessalonians seemed to understand that Paul could not come back unless God allowed it. They did not blame him for it. But that did not stop them from having a desire to see and fellowship with him. According to *verse 6* he was glad to hear of their great desire to see him just as he desired to see them. This was mutual love and respect, and that is the way it should be between a pastor and his people. This is a good example for churches and pastors today. The members of a New Testament church need to get to know their pastor and they need to try to understand him as he tries to understand them. It is a two way street.

**Paul was truly loved and respected by these people, (3:6,7).** Another thing that can be gleaned from these verses is that Paul was truly loved and respected by these people. That this was true can be seen from three more details of these glad tidings. *First*, they had "good remembrance of" the missionaries "always." (This probably refers back to 2:1-12). *Second*, just as Paul desired to see them they greatly desired to see Him. *Third*, their faith was steadfast, in other words, they continued to believe the truth of the message that the

missionaries brought to them. The love and respect that these people had for Paul, as well as for the others, is something that is or should be desired by each and every pastor. If a pastor is the man of God doing the work of God in the place appointed by God, the people of God need to love and respect him in spite of his deficiencies and mistakes. Of course, the pastor must live the right kind of life and be the right kind of example before the membership of the church he pastors as well as in the community where he lives.

On the other hand, the pastor must love and respect his people in the face of every circumstance and situation. But just as Jesus loved the people unto whom He ministered, that did not mean he condoned any wrong doings or false doctrines. Remember that while He did not condemn the woman taken in adultery, He did say to her, "Go, and sin no more." Jesus did not need to condemn her, because she was condemned already; but now, she is forgiven. Jesus loves His children in spite of their sin nature and their sins. Nevertheless, He wants the born again ones to stay in fellowship with the Father and with Him by confessing their sins to Him and by forsaking them as seen in 1 John 1. In cases where the sin is blatant as named in 1 Corinthians 5 and in other New Testament passages, Jesus would have the church member and the church to follow His instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 and other passages that address church discipline. This should be done because Jesus said to do it and for the good of the offender. This should be done to clear the air, so that the world and the community around the church will know that the church does not approve of sinful shameful living.

**Paul manifested overflowing joy, (3:8,9).** *In verse 8 Paul writes, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." What does he mean by this? Paul is saying, life is really worth living now that I know that you are leading Christ-like lives. Even though Paul was greatly afflicted and distressed himself, he was truly comforted by hearing of their faith and steadfastness in the Lord. It is a joy for a pastor to know that he is being used of God. It is a joy to know that people are standing firm for the*

truth and are being mission minded, because God has used the life of the pastor. Certainly it is a great encouragement to any preacher of the Gospel to hear of the faith and holy living of those unto whom he ministers, past and present. The spiritual joy and happiness of Paul was linked to the victory in Christ experienced by the church in Thessalonica. This is why he wrote 1 Thessalonians 2:19,20. *Verse 9* refers back to 2:13,14. It reveals that Paul is overwhelmed with joy and thanksgiving because of the way God had worked in their lives. Paul could not thank God enough for the grace manifested in them even in the face of their severe persecution and affliction. All these things manifested what was in the heart of Paul as a model missionary and pastor.

### **C. Paul Desired from his Heart to See Them, 3:9,10**

Paul wrote in *verse 6* that he had a great desire to see them. Now he explains himself and expands on that desire in *verses 9, 10*. As previously mentioned, Paul had the heart of a true and model pastor. The desire of his heart was to see them and to continue his teaching ministry. This section will be divided into two subdivisions. His heartfelt desire is *first* seen, in that, Paul expressed his thanksgiving with a compassionate and joyful heart, 3:9,10. His desire is *then* seen, in that, Paul prayed constantly to see them face to face, 3:10.

**Paul expressed his thanksgiving with a compassionate heart , (3:9,10).** In verses 9,10 Paul is asking a rhetorical question. "Rhetorical question" is defined as "a question designed to produce an effect and not draw an answer" (American College Dictionary 1041).<sup>16</sup> Many times the rhetorical question is used by a writer or public speaker to ask a question for which he does not expect an answer and does not give the answer because the answer is obvious. Paul uses this to express the overwhelming emotions of the love and the compassion of his heart, while conveying thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians. The English translation "For what thanks can we render to God again for you..." in *verse 9* needs some further explanation. "We render ...

again" comes from the Greek verb ἀνταποδίδωμι (antapodidōmi), which is used only 7 times in the New Testament. This compound verb is a combination of three Greek words, two prepositions and one verb. The first is the preposition ἀντὶ (anti) which has the root meaning of "face to face;" but "...the dominant meaning... in the first century was instead of;..." and it can also mean "...in exchange for..." (Dana 99,100).<sup>17</sup> As a prefix Thayer says, "it denotes ... opposite, over against..." (49, 50).<sup>18</sup> The second is the preposition ἀπο (apo) which has the root meaning of "off, away from;" and in composition means "off, back." and "implies separation" (Dana 101).<sup>19</sup> The third is δίδωμι (didōmi) which has the basic meaning of "to give" (Thayer 145).<sup>20</sup> Thus, the idea of this compound verb ἀνταποδίδωμι is "to give back something in exchange." Hence, the first part of verse 9 could be paraphrased, "For what thanks can we give back or return to God in exchange for all that God had done in upholding you in and throughout your afflictions and persecutions." As far as Paul was concerned he could not express enough gratitude unto God "for all the joy" God had given him because of the steadfastness of the Thessalonians who in turn were enabled by God. *Verse 9* shows that he is filled with thanksgiving to God and with joy for them because by the grace of God they are doing what New Testament church members are supposed to do. Even so, this was being accomplished in the midst of persecution. Their example is a good example for churches in every age. This church was a model mission-minded church.

**Paul prayed constantly to see them face to face, (3:10).** In *verse 10*, once again, Paul expresses that along with his thanksgiving he is praying [δεόμενοι (deomenoi from δέομαι) could be rendered petitioning]<sup>21</sup> to God that he might be able to see them face to face. He describes his praying in two ways: (1) he prayed "night and day;" and (2) he prayed "exceedingly." The first is a good example of what Paul exhorted them to do in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." The second way, described by the adverb "exceedingly" shows how earnestly he wanted to see their face, more now than ever. This adverb is from the compound

word ὑπερεκπερισσού (huperekperissou), which is actually made up of three Greek words. (It is only used 2 other times in the Greek New Testament: in Ephesians 3:20 and with a variant spelling in 1 Thessalonians 5:13.) The first word is the preposition ὑπὲρ (huper) which has the root meaning of "over," but can also be rendered according to its usage "for, for the sake of, in behalf of... above... beyond... more than..." (Dana 111,112).<sup>22</sup> The second is the preposition ἐκ (ek) which has the root meanings of "out of, from within," but can be translated "on, by means of, because of" (Dana 102,114).<sup>23</sup> The third word is the adjective περισσός (perissos) which means "exceeding some number or measure or rank or need; over and above, more than is necessary, superadded... beyond measure... more abundantly..." (Thayer 505,506).<sup>24</sup> Hence Paul prayed over and beyond and to an exceeding measure out of a heart filled with love and deep concern. This exhibits the intense desire of his heart and proves his love for them. He had the heart of a concerned pastor. He was and is a great example. Oh! How much more pastors and churches could accomplish if they followed the model of the Apostle Paul and this church! Each believer should ask the question of himself: "Do I pray like Paul did; like I know I should?" In the last part of *verse 10* Paul reveals why he wanted to see them. He wanted to help them even more. He desired to teach them further the things of God. This will be discussed more in the next division. That he wanted to see them face to face is evident from the facts of his giving of thanks and of his constant praying.

#### **D. Paul Prayed for their Continued Growth in Christ, 3:10-13**

In the introductory paragraph at the beginning of this chapter, it was stated that Paul presents the practical teaching of sanctification in relationship to the second coming of Christ. Along with this, he reveals that all believers will be presented by the Son unto and before the Father. At the end of 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, Paul prays that the members of the church of Thessalonica would continue to grow and mature in Christ Jesus. This growth in Christ is



part of the sanctification process. Paul, himself, was a good example of this for these and for all believers. This section continues to make known the heart of this missionary. His heart is exhibited in his prayer for their growth. The elements of this section will be: (1) Paul proved his love and affection for them by his praying, 3:10; (2) Paul prayed a fourfold prayer for them, 3:10-13; and (3) Jesus shall present all believers before God the Father, 3:13.

**Paul proved his love and affection for them by his praying, (3:10).** The enemies of the gospel and the truth would like nothing better than to destroy the relationship and fellowship that Paul and his helpers had established with the members of the church in Thessalonica. By doing so the enemies of the gospel could hurt the cause of Christ. Yet, Paul manifested his love and concern for them by constantly praying for them. Also, he manifested his love by his desire to see them, to once again become their loving teacher, and to enlighten them in spiritual things from the Word of God. If the children of God truly love one another, they will pray for one another. Paul proved his love when he was with them. Now he wants to assure them of his continued love and concern for them. No doubt, he prayed that God might send him again to them by removing all hindrances, as mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

**Paul prayed a fourfold prayer for them, (3:10-13).** *Verses 10-13* reveals that Paul prayed in a fourfold manner for this church. According to *verse 11* this prayer is directed to "...God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ..." The fact that Paul connected the names God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ with the Greek connective conjunction *καὶ* (*kai*), which is rendered "and," teaches that the Father and the Son are co-equal and really one. Jesus said in John 10:30, "I and *my* Father are one." The use of the pronoun "our" identifies Paul with the recipients of this epistle as being brothers and sisters in Christ. This prayer has four parts beginning in the last part of *verse 10*. *First*, he prayed that he might be able to

see them in order that he "...might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" The words "might perfect" comes from the Greek verb *καταρτίζω* (*katartizô*) and means "to render... i.e. to fit, sound, complete... to mend (what has been broken or rent)... to complete... ethically: to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be..." (Thayer 336).<sup>25</sup> It was not that they lacked faith unto salvation, but that they needed to be brought to perfection or completion in Christ. This simply means they needed to mature or grow up in Christ. Both apostles, Peter and Paul, teach this in the New Testament. Two of the places they teach this is found in Ephesians 4:15 and in 2 Peter 3:18. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:15, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." Peter and Paul want believers to have more knowledge of the Word of God. No matter how much one knows about God, Christ Jesus, the Scriptures, and so forth, he or she can always learn, apply, and grow more. This is the way the child of God renews his mind. This is taught in Romans 12:2 and Colossians 3:10.

*Second, in verse 11* Paul prayed that his way might be directed unto them. Again, he is expressing his desire to see them. But this is even stronger, for he is asking "God himself" to do this. In this verse the verb "direct" is the rendering of the Greek aorist active optative of *κατευθύνω* (*kateuthunô*). Dana and Mantey states that "the optative mood is the mood of strong contingency; the mood of possibility" (172).<sup>26</sup> *Κατευθύνω*, which is used only twice in the New Testament, is a strengthened form of the verb *εὐθύνω* (*euthunô*). It is used in John 1:23 and James 3:4. When the Jews sent priests and Levites to John the Baptist to ask him who he was, part of his answer is found in John 1:23 where, "He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." The English rendering "Make straight" is from the verb form *εὐθύνατε* (*euthunate*). In Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; and Luke 3:4, the adverb form *εὐθείας* (*eutheias*) from *εὐθύς* (*euthus*) is used.

In all three of these passages the rendering of this adverb with the other words used is "make his paths straight." The idea is to make the road level and to clear all the fallen rock or trees out of the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Thus, by using the optative of *κατευθύνω*, Paul is beseeching God to remove all "...of those obstacles which Satan has used to..." (Rienecker 596)<sup>27</sup> hinder his revisiting the Thessalonians.

*Third, in verse 12*, He prayed that the Lord would "...make (or cause) you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." Paul sets the example. Jesus is the primary example and He commanded His disciples many times to love one another. In John 13:34,35 Jesus said,

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

The part of this prayer that says, "...Love ... toward all men" reveals that believers are to love the lost so much that they speak to them about their souls and witness to them of Christ.

*Fourth, in verse 13* he prayed that God "...may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father...." Paul uses similar language in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Someone may well ask, for what was Paul really praying anyway? Paul was praying for their sanctification. In other words, he was praying that they would be wholly separated unto God and unto the service of His dear Son. What does sanctification mean? To sanctify means to set apart or to separate. Thus the idea behind sanctification for the believer is to be set apart or separated for service to the Lord. The doctrine of sanctification is a practical teaching. When a person is saved, he or she is not only justified before God through the blood of Christ and by faith in Christ (which gives him a right standing before God), but he is also sanctified by the blood through faith in Christ. This means the believer has been set apart as holy by God, the Father, to be his child, friend, and also His special and honored servant. There are three aspects of sanctification for the believer. *The first* is past tense, whereby the believer has been set apart by the blood of Jesus Christ— free

from the penalty and guilt of sin and thus now eligible and suitable to serve God. The book of Hebrews states in 10:10,14:

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. . . . 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

In past tense - the spirit of the believer is sanctified and the believer is set apart unto God. *The second* aspect is present tense, whereby the believer is and is being separated unto service — free from the power of sin — free to serve. Paul writes about this in Romans 6:11-14. In present tense, the soul or life is sanctified, free to serve as the believer yields himself to God. The *third* is future tense, whereby the believer shall be free from the presence of sin and presented blameless before the Father by the Son. In the future tense, the new body is sanctified, the old body is gone. (Sanctification will be discussed further in the next chapter.)

**Jesus shall present all believers before God the Father, (3:13).** Verse 13 states the last words of the prayer of Paul, "At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." It was the aim or goal of Paul to prepare these saints in Thessalonica for the time when Jesus shall return. He desired that they would be ready for that day. All the saved shall one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Each believer needs to ask himself/herself; "Will I receive a full set of rewards?" Paul was praying to that end, that is, that each one of the believers in Thessalonica would receive a full set of rewards. He wanted them to grow up or mature in Christ Jesus, for He said in *verse 12*, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you."

Someone may well ask concerning *verse 13*, "When is the 'coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' to take place? To find the answer, some words be must defined. The word for "coming" in the Greek is from the noun παρουσία (parousia), which is derived from two Greek words: παρα (para) and εἰμι (eimi). The preposition παρα means "beside" (Dana 108)<sup>28</sup> and by extension "along side." The verb εἰμι means "to be." Hence, the word παρουσία means to be along side of, or to be present.

This word is translated "presence" in at least two places in the New Testament:

2 Corinthians 10:10 For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* bodily presence (παρουσία) is weak, and *his* speech contemptible.

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence (παρουσία) only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Therefore, what does "at the coming (παρουσία or presence) of our Lord Jesus with all His saints" mean? When does this take place? The Bible teaches that Christ is coming in the air to receive His saints. This is called the rapture and resurrection of the saints. The apostle addresses both of these in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57. Is this that of which *1 Thessalonians 3:13* is speaking? It does not seem to be, since Paul states this is when Jesus will "...stablish (*or establish*) your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." It must be understood, that there will not only be a coming of Christ in the air to gather the saints unto Himself; but also afterward, a coming of Christ before the Father. This seems to be the sense or meaning of *verse 13*. Also please note the little word "at." This word comes from the Greek preposition ἐν (en) which may be translated with the English "in." Therefore the last part of *verse 13* could be rendered "...in the presence (παρουσία) of our Lord Jesus Christ with all saints (*all believers or ones made holy*)." This is when Jesus shall present all believers before God the Father. Jude 24 states, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." This is when the believer will be free not only from the penalty and power of sin but also from the presence of sin. This is all accomplished by the marvelous mercy and grace of God.

### **Summary of Chapter**

In chapter 3 and continuing into chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul presents the practical teaching of sanctification in relationship to the second coming of Christ.

Along with this, he reveals that all believers will be presented by the Son unto and before the Father. Paul was a living example of sanctification in practice. As shown in the previous chapter, Paul was a model missionary or pastor. In this chapter the heart of Paul is laid open for all to examine. Paul had a great love and deep concern for this church. This is demonstrated in his sending Timothy back to Thessalonica to help them when he really needed the help and encouragement of Timothy in the work at Athens and later at Corinth. Because of his love for them, Paul had warned when he was with them that persecution and suffering afflictions would be part of living for the Lord. Nevertheless, he feared that because of the work of the Tempter, or Satan, that his labor in Thessalonica would come to naught. Paul had the heart of a model pastor for he loved these people and was concerned for their welfare and especially their spiritual welfare.

Some teach and believe that Paul was superhuman and that he never experienced fear, despair, discouragement, and so forth; but this chapter shows that Paul was human like others. Therefore, he was very glad and overjoyed when Timothy rejoined him and gave the good news about the healthy spiritual welfare of this church. This report was a source of great consolation, comfort, and encouragement. Also, it helped for him to know that they had a favorable recollection and memory of him and his helpers and their ministry and that they desired to see them again. This caused the apostle to pour out his heart in exceedingly abundant thanksgiving and prayer to God. He could not thank God enough. He requested that God would clear the way so that he could revisit this church and teach them more of the Word of Truth so that they would be even more "...conformed to the image of his Son..." (Romans 8:29). This intense praying was further proof of the love, concern, and affection of his heart for them.

In the final verses of this chapter Paul turns his praying to two very important things, both of which concern their sanctification. First is the need for them to have

an ever increasing and abounding love one to another, and also, toward all others. Of course, this takes the grace of God in the hearts of believers and growth of that grace in their hearts. Second, he prayed that God will "...stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming (*or presence*) of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." In the day of the judgment seat of Christ the popularity, honor, and wealth of this life, and of this world will seem small and insignificant. Those that have not set their affection on things above, that is, Christ, will wish they had. On the other hand, happy will be the ones who have prepared for that day in pure devotion to the dear Redeemer.

The doctrine of sanctification is a practical teaching. When a person is saved, he or she is justified before God through the blood of Jesus Christ and by faith in Christ Jesus which gives him or her a right standing before God. Also, when a person is saved, he or she is sanctified by the blood through faith in Christ. This means the believer has been set apart as holy by God, the Father, to be his child, friend, and also His special and honored servant. Since God has been so good to save and bless the believer, the believer ought to serve Jesus Christ, who died for all and rose again. The believer should serve God and the Lord Jesus Christ in order to give Him honor and glory, and also, in order that others may be saved and bring Him honor.

Notes

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4. The New Testament, The Greek Text Underlying The English Authorised Version of 1611. (London, England: The Trinitarian Bible Society, n.d. [5M/3/80]). p. 377.
5. Thayer, op. cit., p. 138.
6. Ibid., p. 588.
7. Ibid., pp. 482, 483.
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Note: this is found under Greek Morphology of the word περιράζω in 1 Thess. 3:5.
12. Thayer, op. cit., p. 498.
13. Ibid., p. 256.
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15. D. Edmond Hiebert, The Thessalonian Epistles, A Call to Readiness, A Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1971, 1982). p. 146.
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18. Thayer, op. cit., pp. 49,50.
19. Dana and Mantey, op. cit., p. 101.
20. Thayer, op. cit., p. 145.
21. Marshall, op. cit., p.807.
22. Dana and Mantey, op. cit., pp. 111, 112.
23. Ibid., pp. 102, 114.
24. Thayer, op. cit., pp. 505-506.
25. Ibid., p. 336.
26. Dana and Mantey, op. cit., p. 172.
27. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 596.
28. Dana and Mantey, op. cit., p. 108.



## CHAPTER 7

### A Model Church: A Sanctified Church

(1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)

- VII. A MODEL CHURCH: A SANCTIFIED CHURCH.** 4:1-12
- A. Abound or Increase in Living for Christ. 4:1,2
    - 1. Paul exhorts them to walk and to please God, 4:1a,1b.
    - 2. Paul exhorts them to excel, 4:1c.
    - 3. Paul reminds them of his message, 4:2.
  - B. Be Sanctified, for it is the Will of God. 4:3-8
    - 1. Paul asserts sanctification is the will of God, 4:3a.
    - 2. Paul names four essentials for living holy lives, 4:3b-6a.
    - 3. Paul gives three reasons to live holy lives, 4:6b-8.
  - C. Love one Another, a Proof of Discipleship. 4:9,10
    - 1. This church was a model in brotherly love, 4: 9,10a.
    - 2. Paul urges them to excel in brotherly love, 4:10b.
    - 3. Brotherly love is second only to the great commandment, 4:9,10.
  - D. Be Industrious, Honest, and Orderly in Living. 4:11,12
    - 1. Paul exhorts them to be ambitious, 4:11.
    - 2. Paul exhorts them to walk honestly; lacking in nothing, 4:12.

## CHAPTER 7

### A Model Church: A Sanctified Church

(1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)

In this chapter the Apostle Paul addresses the subject of day to day sanctification. He connects 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 with chapter 4 by saying in *verse 1*, "Furthermore then." The word "furthermore" in this context is not speaking of the conclusion. The word "furthermore" is from the "neuter singular adverbially" τὸ λοιπὸν (to loipon) [from λοιπός] (Thayer 382).<sup>1</sup> Thayer says concerning the use of τὸ λοιπὸν in this verse that "...dropping the notion of time, signifies *for the rest, besides, moreover*, [A. V. often *finally*], forming a transition to other things, to which the attention of the hearer or reader is directed...."<sup>1</sup> The word "then" is from the Greek conjunction οὖν (oun) and indicates "...that something follows from another necessarily..." and can be rendered "...therefore..." (Thayer 463).<sup>2</sup> In this context "then" serves to connect these instructions and exhortations that Paul is going to give them with those previously given. Paraphrased, he is stating, "As for the rest of the instructions; I have a few more things to say to you."

Chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians may be divided into two parts. The first division presents practical exhortations concerning sanctification or walking with and before God and man in holy and pure living (verses 1-12). This division is entitled "The Model Church: A Sanctified Church." The second division reveals the nature of the resurrection and the rapture of the saints (verses 13-18). The first is given in view of the second. The second is an incentive to live sanctified lives. As the believer considers the sure and blessed hope of the return of

Christ and of going to heaven to be with Him forever, it should have an effect on his or her day to day life. The second is given to console these brothers and sisters of Thessalonica in their grief over the persecution they were enduring. Also, it is presented to comfort them over the death of those who may have died due to persecution. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:18, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

In the first part Paul, the model missionary, gives his recipients four helpful, practical exhortations. They are practical for daily living. As the believer follows these exhortations he or she will please and honor God, get along with others, be a blessing to others, and be blessed. For the believer to live a sanctified life for the Lord Jesus, he or she must heed these exhortations: (1) abound or increase in living for Christ, 4:1,2; (2) be sanctified, for it is the will of God, 4:3-8; (3) love one another, a proof of discipleship, 4:9,10; and (4) be industrious, honest, and orderly in living, 4:11,12. In these Paul is urging them to advance in holy living. This was not a new thing for them. For a church to be a good model, the members must follow these exhortations. A model church is a sanctified church.

#### **A. Abound or Increase in Living for Christ, 4:1,2**

After using the expression "Furthermore then..." Paul addresses the members of this church as "brethren." He is reminding them that they are his brothers and sisters in the family of God. They are born again ones, born from above by the Holy Spirit. He calls upon them to remember that he and his helpers are not the authority behind the message of truth, rather the Lord Jesus is the authority. With this in mind, he gives them more instructions. *First*, Paul exhorts them to walk and to please God, 4:1a,1b; *second*, Paul exhorts them to excel, 4:1c; and *third*, Paul reminds them of his message, 4:2.

**Paul exhorts them to walk and to please God, (4:1a,1b).** To begin *verse 1* Paul writes, "...we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by [or "in" from the

Greek preposition ἐν (en)] the Lord Jesus...." He beseeches and exhorts them in the name of or by the authority of the Lord Jesus. Believers need to remember several things about the Lord Jesus that should cause them to take heed to these exhortations. *First*, they should remember that this is the One who suffered, died, and paid for their sins. *Second*, this is the One who forgives the sin and sins of the repentant believer based on the shedding of His precious blood. *Third*, this is the One who gives eternal redemption to those who repent and believe. *Fourth*, this is the One who will take the saved to heaven some day. And *Fifth*, this One is not only Jesus, the Savior, but also the Lord, the Master, and Jehovah, the coming King of Glory.

Next, in *verse 1* Paul reveals the reasons for writing this: "...as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God..." In other words, Paul says, please do as I have instructed you all, and walk with God and for God, because this is the way to please God. The meaning of the word "walk" was discussed with 1 Thessalonians 2:12 in chapter 5 of this treatise on pages 87-88. At this point, it will suffice to say that the Bible compares the life of the born again believer to a walk. The word "walk" speaks of how one conducts his life. In order for the born again believer to please God, he must conduct his life according to the Word of God. The statement, "...as ye have received of us,..." refers to 1 Thessalonians 2:1-11 and specifically to 2:4. This shows that Paul set the example for pleasing God before all. The verb "ought" is from δεῖ (dei), which means "...it is necessary, there is need of, it behooves, is right and proper..." (Thayer 126).<sup>3</sup> The verb "ought" implies that to please God, it is necessary and it behooves believers to walk accordingly. Concerning this, Hiebert states, "Christian living is not a desirable option but a compelling obligation" (162).<sup>4</sup>

**Paul exhorts them to excel, (4:1c).** The members in this church had been living for the Lord. They had been sounding "...out the word of the Lord..." This church was a model church, even though she was not a perfect church. There is no church that will ever be perfect

this side of heaven. Thus, Paul wanted this church to continue to grow and mature in the Lord Jesus. Paul ends *verse 1* by telling why believers "...ought to walk and to please God..." when he says, "...so ye would abound more and more." Paul is urging them to advance in holy living. He is saying that the believer is never to be satisfied with what he has accomplished in the past. Paul was never satisfied with himself. Some might think that he, of all people, would have reason to be, yet he penned Romans 7:14-25 and Philippians 3:1-15. The expression "more and more" is from the adverb *μᾶλλον* (*mallon*) and means "more, still more" (Rienecker 596).<sup>5</sup> The words "ye would abound" is from the present active subjunctive Greek verb *περισσεύητε* (*perisseuête*), which is a form of *περισσεύω* (*perisseuô*). The basic meaning of *περισσεύω* when used intransitively is "...to exceed a fixed number or measure; to be over and above a certain number or measure... to be over... to abound, overflow... to excel..." (Thayer 505).<sup>6</sup> When *περισσεύω* is used with *μᾶλλον*, they together mean "to excel still more, to increase in excellence...."<sup>6</sup> Hence, "so ye would abound more and more" could be rendered "that you all would excel and increase still more in excellence." Michael S. Bushell informs that the word "abounding" "...is used of a flower going from a bud to full bloom."<sup>7</sup> This expresses what the Lord desires for believers. In what are believers to excel: the work of the Lord; the knowledge and grace of God; and in Christian living, giving, love, and grace. Paul wrote the following to the church in Philippi in Philippians 2:12-13,

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. *13* For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

**Paul reminds them of his message, (4:2).** In *verse 2* Paul calls upon the members of this church to recall "...what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." He uses the same kind of language that he used in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. "For ye know..." requires them to recall the message and commands that they had been charged to know and to keep.

"...We gave you by the Lord Jesus" emphasizes that his message and commandments were not of the missionaries themselves but they were by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It was as if Christ were there to give them Himself. The word "commandments" comes from the Greek noun παραγγελία (paraggelia), which means "announcement, a proclaiming or giving a message to... a charge, a command:... used of the Christian doctrine relative to right living, 1 Timothy 1:5..." (Thayer 479).<sup>8</sup>

What were the message and commands which they had been given? According to the meaning and usage of the noun παραγγελία given above, it speaks especially of holy living. Nonetheless, it could be speaking of the following things also with the emphasis being on what Paul wrote in verses 1-12. *First*, the message was salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus according to Acts 17:1-4. *Second*, Paul probably taught them what Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-40, that man ought to love God supremely and love his neighbor as he loves himself. Along with this Paul taught them how born again ones ought to live dedicated lives for God. This can be gleaned from what Paul and his helpers taught in other places and from what is recorded in Acts 14:21-23:

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

*Third*, when one recalls that Paul and his helpers had preached in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica, it is reasonable to contend that he preached, taught, and gave the same basic message and commandments to the Thessalonians that he had given to them of Philippi. And *fourth*, he taught them the great commission (which would include scriptural baptism and the Lord's supper) as found in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8. (This is not to say that Paul had these books available; however, he had been taught by the Lord Jesus Himself who told Paul of these things.) And no doubt, Paul conveyed his

message of Philippians 4:8-9 to them:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. <sup>9</sup> Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

The Bible says in Proverbs 23:7 (KJV) "For as he (*a man*) thinketh in his heart, so is he...."

### **B. Be Sanctified, for it is the Will of God, 4:3-8**

In *verses 3-8* Paul exhorts or instructs them to be sanctified, for it is the will of God. In *verses 1 and 3* Paul makes two very significant statements to this model church and to all churches. *First*, he states, "ye ought to walk and to please God...." *Second*, he declares, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification...." The first statement defines the second. It explains what sanctification is. Sanctification is to walk in the ways of God and His Word and to please God in daily living.

The doctrine of sanctification has been much misunderstood. What is sanctification? Or what is it to be sanctified? Initially, it must be understood what it is not. It does not mean that a believer can live in a state of sinless perfection as some teach. It is not a so called "second blessing." The word "sanctify" is used 64 times in 59 verses in the Old Testament and 6 times in 6 verses in the New Testament. It is first used in Exodus 13:2 where God speaks to Moses and commands, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine." The word "sanctify" in this verse is from the Hebrew primary root verb  $\text{שׁוֹדַשׁ}$ , which can be transliterated "kadhash," but Strong number 6942 spells it "qadash."<sup>9</sup> "Kadhash" means to "be set apart, consecrated, hallowed..." (Brown 872,873).<sup>10</sup> In Exodus 13:2 the piel verb form is used and it means to "...set apart as sacred, consecrate, dedicate...."<sup>10</sup> In the New Testament the word

"sanctify" is from the Greek verb ἁγιαζῶ (hagiazô) (used some 29 times in 26 verses) and means "to dedicate, set apart things or persons for God,... to purify, legally or morally... to cleanse persons or things ceremonially... to treat as holy..." (Wigram 8).<sup>11</sup> The second definition that is given by Thayer is "to separate from profane things and dedicate to God..." (Thayer 6).<sup>12</sup> Thus "to sanctify" anything is to set it apart for a special or designated purpose, and to be sanctified is to set apart or be separated to a certain thing. Walvoord gives a good explanation concerning what it means to be sanctified:

Suppose one were living in the time of Christ and wanted to make a gift to the temple. He would bring his gift of gold coins and lay them on the altar. What happens to those gold coins? The moment they were given to God they became sanctified. They were set apart for holy use. The sanctification did not change the character of the gold coins, but it did change their use and the purpose for which they were directed. So, every true Christian has been set apart as holy to God, even though he falls short of perfection (Walvoord 34,35).<sup>13</sup>

For the born again believer to be sanctified is to be separated or set apart unto holy living or to live for the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, it is to let everything in the life of the believer be geared or aimed to pleasing God, yet knowing at the same time that one can not live a perfect sinless life. Notwithstanding, the believer should strive all the while to live in such a way as to give honor and glory to God and the Savior. Hence, the apostle declares in verse 3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification...." He continues to teach these practical and helpful exhortations throughout verse 8. This division will be divided as follows: (1) Paul asserts sanctification is the will of God, 4:3a; (2) Paul names four essentials for living holy lives, 4:3b-6a; and (3) Paul gives three reasons to live holy lives, 3:6b-8.

**Paul asserts sanctification is the will of God, (4:3a).** Since the word "sanctification" is in apposition to "the will of God," Paul is teaching that it is the will of God that each believer be sanctified. Sanctification is a three-fold or three-stage process. *First*, there is *positional or initial* sanctification. This takes place at the point of faith at the time of the new



birth when the lost person is converted and comes into the right relationship with God through trusting Jesus Christ as personal Savior. In *initial* sanctification the believer is sanctified by the blood (Hebrews 10:10,14,18) and set apart by the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 4:4). This puts the believer in a position where he can begin to serve God and where his service is acceptable to God. Sanctification differs from justification before God. Sanctification is not only a once and for all thing, but also a continual process throughout the earthly life of the believer until the saved person is glorified. Justification is completed all at once. The sinner is justified before God by the blood of Christ through faith in Him according to Romans chapters 3-5. In justification several things take place once and for all. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believing sinner. The penalty of sin is paid in full (Christ paid for them on the cross). The guilt of sin is removed. The sins of the sinner are washed away. And the believing sinner has a right standing with God which is forever secured by Christ Jesus.

The *second aspect or stage* of sanctification is a *continual process* that takes place throughout the lifetime of the believer while on earth. This is called *experiential* sanctification which is a day by day growth in grace as the believer takes heed to the Word of God and obeys it. Although the believer has been born again, he is still in the flesh. Therefore, the believer needs the daily cleansing of the Word of God. Jesus gives a very good lesson on sanctification in the account of the washing the feet of the disciples in John 13. Jesus and the Bible have much to say along these lines as gleaned from the following sample passages:

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Luke 9:23 And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

1 John 1:7-9 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In *continual sanctification* the born again one is to strive daily to live and walk close to God every step of the way. Being sanctified or set apart daily to service and walking with God should be the goal of each and every believer. It should be the aim of the believer to become in practice what he already is in position (through justification) before the Father.

The *third aspect or stage of sanctification is complete sanctification*, which shall be accomplished when Christ shall return and give believers new bodies and not before this time. Thus, practical sanctification is a process of becoming holy in living in order to give glory and honor to the one who bled and died to save the believing sinner.

**Paul names four essentials for living holy lives, (4:3b-6a).** God would have each believer to live a holy life, to cease from doing evil, and to learn to do good for His glory and honor. In *verses 3b-6a* Paul cites four essentials that are absolutely necessary for the believer in order to live a holy or sanctified life. Actually these are not four separate essentials, for they are all linked together. *The first essential* is that "... ye should abstain from fornication" as found in verse 3. "Should abstain" is from the strong Greek present middle infinitive form of ἀπέχω (apechô) and means "...to hold one's self from, to abstain..." (Rienecker 597).<sup>14</sup> The idea behind this verb is for a person to hold back oneself and/or refrain from certain things. The word "fornication" is from the Greek noun πορνεία (porneia), which means "...fornication,... prop(erly) of illicit sexual intercourse in general,... metaphorically the worship of idols of the defilement of idolatry as incurred by eating the sacrifices offered to idols..." (Thayer 531,532).<sup>15</sup> This means abstain from sexual immorality or sexual impurity of any kind. This would include abstaining from spiritual fornication and adultery by engaging in worship of false deities and in false churches.

The Greeks and Romans in the day of Paul were given over to the vice of sexual impurity. Mankind really has not changed. This is one of the downfalls of society in this modern age. It is part of "the new morality" (so called by modernist), but "the

new morality" is nothing but the old immorality. The use of the name, "the new morality," is just one of many ways that Satan has for deceiving and trapping people. Sexual impurity is an easy sin in which to fall since the sex drive is a very strong natural impulse. Yet, God would have the believer to control it, and engage in sex only within the sanctity of holy marriage. This is what the Bible teaches in this passage as well as in many other passages. The Word of God says abstain from fornication in any form; abstain from any illicit sexual activity. The believer is to refrain from such unholy activity. Therefore, the Bible teaches that sex outside the marriage relationship is unholy and is sin. This would include sex before marriage, adultery, homosexuality, and any other sex outside of wedlock. Matrimony is a holy thing; it is a holy relationship, ordained of God Himself. Hence, part of the continual sanctification of the believer is to "...abstain from fornication."

Along this line the Bible gives several examples. Two examples are especially notable. One is to be followed and the other is not to be followed. The example to follow is that of Joseph, the son of Jacob as found in Genesis chapter 39. The example not to follow is that of King David as found in 2 Samuel Chapters 11 and 12.

*The second essential* Paul cites concerning sanctification is found in *verse 4*. Paul writes, "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." The verb "should know" is from the perfect active infinitive εἰδένααι (eidenai), which is from the root οἶδα (oida) and/or εἶδω (eidō). The basic meaning of this verb is "to know" with the idea of "...get knowledge of, understand, perceive" (Thayer 172-174)<sup>16</sup> The word "possess" is from the present middle infinitive κτᾶσθαι (ktasthai) from κτάομαι (ktaomai). Rienecker says this word means,

...to acquire. Although the perf(ect) generally means "to possess" some examples from the papyri indicate the word could also mean "possess" in the pres(ent) (Rienecker 597).<sup>17</sup>

The Analytical Greek Lexicon gives these meanings, "...to get, procure, provide...

to get under control, to be winning the mastery over..." (242).<sup>18</sup> The word "vessel," from the Greek neuter noun σκεῦος (skeuos), means "a vessel, utensil for containing anything... household stuff... the mast of a ship, or the sail... the vessel or frame of the human individual..." (Analytical Greek Lexicon 368).<sup>19</sup> However, Thayer says σκεῦος means also "...a woman, as the vessel of her husband..." (577).<sup>20</sup> Because of this latter definition by Thayer some believe that the word "vessel" means wife and not "body." However, the question arises: Does this fit the context? The first part of *verse 4* answers this when Paul writes, "That every one of you...." This reveals that Paul is writing to both brothers and sisters in Christ. This fits the definition, "the vessel or frame of the human individual." These two things lend credence to the interpretation that the word "vessel" means the body in which the soul of the human individual lives, whether male or female. Therefore, the word "vessel" refers to the earthly tabernacle of clay - the fleshly body in which the human soul and spirit dwells. Paul is speaking of personal responsibility, whether male or female. Part of the sanctification of the believer is to perceive and thus learn how to possess or control his or her own vessel or body in order to honor Christ Jesus in every step of life. What does it mean for the believer to possess or control his or her own body in sanctification and honor? It would include neither polluting it, nor debasing it. Rather, the body of the believer is to be used for the noble work of serving God. The Bible clearly states in 1 Cor 6:19-20:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

An example of this is found in 1 Corinthians 9:27 where Paul speaks about himself, "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

*Verse 5* gives the *third essential* concerning sanctification. This is the negative of the second. Paul declares, "Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles

which know not God." "Lust" is from πάθει (pathei), which is the dative singular neuter of πάθος (pathos) and is derived from the verb πάσχω (paschō). For the second definition Thayer states that πάθος means:

...a feeling which the mind suffers, an affliction of the mind, emotion, passion; passionate desire; used by the Greeks in either a good or bad sense.... In the N. T. in a bad sense, depraved passion, Col(ossians) 3:5... vile passions, Ro(mans) 1:26 (472).<sup>21</sup>

Concupiscence is from ἐπιθυμία (epithumia), which means "...desire, craving, longing,... desire for what is forbidden, lust..." (Thayer 238).<sup>22</sup> These two words are synonyms: "...πάθος represents the passive, ἐπιθυμία the active side of vice; ἐπιθυμία is more comprehensive in meaning than πάθος; ἐπιθυμία is (evil) desire, πάθος is ungovernable desire" (472).<sup>23</sup> The word concupiscence is defined as "sensual appetite; lust; eager or illicit desire" (American College Dictionary 251).<sup>24</sup> Paraphrased, Paul exhorts, "do not let your body or vessel control you through lustful passion or undisciplined nature." Therefore, the believer ought not to allow his or her body to be yielded to lustful, sensual desires in sex and so forth. It is not that God prohibits proper and normal desire. Rather, the Bible is saying, do not gratify evil fleshly desires by engaging in illicit relationships. With the help of the Holy Spirit the believer can control "the lust of concupiscence." In 1 Corinthians 6:13 Paul wrote, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body."

*The fourth essential* for continual sanctification is expressed in *verse 6*. It is "that no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter...." The expression "go beyond" is from the present active infinitive of ὑπερβάλλω (huperballō), which means "...to step over, go beyond; metaph.(orically) to transgress... to overstep the proper limits... to trespass, do wrong, sin... of one who defrauds another in business, overreaches..." (Thayer 640).<sup>25</sup> In other words, be honest and do not deceive other people. Do not go beyond what is right. The attitude of society is, "If I do not get caught, it will be all right." The civil authorities may not catch

someone who deceives others, but God does not miss anything. He demands righteousness in the believer. The word "defraud" is from the present active infinitive *πλεονεκτέω* (*pleonekteô*). This word means "...to have more, or a greater part or share;... to be superior, excel, surpass, have an advantage over,... to gain or take advantage of another, to overreach..." (Thayer 516).<sup>26</sup> The idea of "defraud" is to take advantage, to cheat someone, to deceive others. God says in *verse 6* do not be guilty of this "in *any* matter." (Most likely, Paul is basing this exhortation on the last two of the Ten Commandments.) This exhortation is for both men and women and speaks of the personal responsibility of each person. If believers are to live sanctified and holy lives to the honor and glory of Christ, these four essentials must be observed.

**Paul gives three reasons to live holy lives, (4:6b-8).** In these verses Paul gives three reasons why blood bought believers are to be sanctified or live holy lives. *The first reason* given in *verse 6* states "...because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified." This is speaking specifically of transgressing or defrauding another person. However, all four essentials for sanctification are tied together. Thus, Paul warns any who would violate the Word and command of the Lord. He warns they will bring the vengeance of God upon themselves. The divine law of sowing and reaping comes into play. The Bible states in Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The incident in Joshua 7:1-26 about Achan and his sin and punishment is a good example of this. To make matters worse, sin usually affects others beside the person who sins. This is manifested by the comment made about Achan in the last part of Joshua 22:20, "...and that man perished not alone in his iniquity." Although the warning of Numbers 32:23, "...be sure your sin will find you out," speaks directly to the children of Reuben and Gad, it provides a good lesson about sowing and reaping. It sounds the warning to anyone who would "...go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter...."

In *verse 7* Paul asserts *the second reason* believers should live sanctified lives. It is because "...God hath not called us unto uncleanness, (*or impurity*)," but rather believers have been called "...unto holiness." The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:15-18,

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid. *16* What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. *17* But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. *18* Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Believers are to harmonize their lives with the call of God to salvation and to holy living. God told Israel in Leviticus 11:44-45,

For I *am* the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. *45* For I *am* the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

The Apostle Peter quotes this in part in 1 Peter 1:16, where the New Testament declares, "...Be ye holy; for I am holy."

*Verse 8* gives *the third reason* born again believers are to live holy lives. "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God..." Both the first and second use of the word "despiseth" is from the Greek verb ἀθετέω (atheteô). This verb means to "...do away with... nullify, make void, frustrate... to reject, to refuse, to slight..." (Thayer 13,14).<sup>27</sup> This could be paraphrased, "He therefore that rejects this doctrine is not rejecting man, but God." Paul reminds his readers that it is God "...who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." In other words, to reject this doctrine is to "not reject man but to reject God as God." This puts one on very dangerous ground. These three reasons should cause believers to desire to live holy, sanctified lives.

### **C. Love one Another, a Proof of Discipleship, 4:9,10**

In verses 9 through 12 Paul gives further instructions and exhortations

concerning sanctification. In *verses 9-10* he dwells on brotherly love and in *verses 11-12* on living an orderly life. These verses indicate this church was an example to other churches in brotherly love. Paul says you "...are taught of God to love one another." These people realized that true love is active and not passive. Paul states that they practiced their love. Chapter 1 and verse 3 records that in his prayers he remembered their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...." Verses 9-10 manifest that: (1) this church was a model in brotherly love, 4:9,10a; (2) Paul urges them to excel in brotherly love, 4:10b; and (3) brotherly love is second only to the great commandment, 4:9,10.

**This church was a model in brotherly love, (4:9,10a).** Paul declares in verse 9, "But as touching (*or concerning*) brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." "Brotherly love" comes from the compound Greek noun φιλαδελφία (philadelphia). This noun is derived from the root verb φιλέω (phileō) and the noun ἀδελφός (adelphos), which means brother. Φιλέω means "...to love; to be friendly to one... to kiss... and denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion..." (Thayer 653).<sup>28</sup> Φιλαδελφία means "the love of brothers (or sisters)..." and "...in the N. T. the love which Christians cherish for each other as 'brethren'..." (Thayer 653).<sup>29</sup> This is the kind of love that is found naturally in a human family. The kind of love that a person can not help but having. This is more so when one is born into the family of God by the new and spiritual birth.

When Paul writes that he did not need to write unto them about brotherly love because they themselves "...are taught of God to love one another," what did he mean? Before a person can be saved he or she must be convicted that he or she is lost and deserves to go to hell because of his or her sin. When such a one is born again from above, the love, joy, and Spirit of God fills his or her heart and soul. Then, the born again one begins to realize that he or she is now in the family of God and that he or she has many brothers and sisters in Christ.



He or she also reasons that all people who are without Christ as personal Savior are lost and need to be saved. Therefore, the believer is "taught of God" to have brotherly love one toward another. The second word "love" in *verse 9* is from the verb ἀγαπάω (agapaō). This speaks of the kind of love God has for depraved sinners "in providing salvation for men... exhibited by sending his Son to them and giving him up to death... which led Christ, in procuring human salvation, to undergo sufferings and death..." (Thayer 3)"<sup>30</sup> This is the highest kind of love. This love comes by the choice of the will. This is the kind of love the child of God has for God, who has been and is so gracious. This kind of love produces "brotherly love."

In *verse 10* the apostle relates, "And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia...." What was it they did? They manifested that they had love one to another. How did they do this? This refers to 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8 where Paul declares,

So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

It took the love of God and the love for one another for them to do this, that is, to carry out the mission work as spelled out in the Great Commission. This church was a model in brotherly love. This church was a model church and a mission minded church.

**Paul urges them to excel in brotherly love, (4:10b).** Next, in *verse 10* Paul exhorts them to excel in brotherly love when he writes, "...but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase (*or abound*) more and more." This is the same kind of language that Paul uses in *verse 1* and also in 3:12. However, Paul does not stop here, he urges them to excel or abound even more in brotherly love. It was not that they were not doing what they were supposed to do, but that Paul wanted them to do even better. This is good advice for churches in all ages! This is advice that is not really an alternative, but a necessity in view of what Christ has done for sinners. What a wonderful example for churches to follow!

**Brotherly love is second only to the great commandment, (4:9,10).** For brothers and sisters in Christ to love one another is second in importance only to the command of Jesus to love God supremely. Matthew 22:36 records that Jesus was asked, "Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?" This question was put to Jesus by one of the lawyers (a Pharisee) in order to tempt Him. According to Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus answered and said,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

In this answer Jesus quotes part of Deuteronomy 6:4,5 and Leviticus 19:17,18. He sums up the law of Moses and what is required of man in this short passage. Jesus said, "And the second *is* like unto it...." In other words, to "love thy neighbour" is second only to loving God "...with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," which is "the first and great commandment." Jesus states in John 15:12, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." In John 13:34,35 Jesus said to love your brother, "as I have loved you" for "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples...." That you truly cannot separate love for God and for one another is shown by the Apostle John in 1 John 4:19-21,

We love him, because he first loved us. 20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

#### **D. Be Industrious, Honest, and Orderly in Living, 4:11,12**

In *verses 11 and 12* Paul gives more practical exhortations for believers to observe in order to help them live sanctified lives that bring honor and glory to God. The lost (people who have never trusted Christ as personal Savior) will notice the change in saved people as the converted ones live holy lives. Lost people should be able to see Christ in believing sinners. As the lost, "...them that are without..." take notice, they will want the same peace of

heart and purpose of life that the believers have. This will cause lost people to be more aware of the need of their own souls, which is the new birth and salvation. The holy conduct of the believers will cause the lost to be more receptive to the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As mentioned previously, a model church is not a perfect church. These exhortations may indicate that there were some minor problems within this church. This is implied by what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. (In view of 2 Thessalonians he possibly hints in these verses that the excitement about the second coming should keep none from working for the Lord.) In any case, Paul urges them to be industrious, genuine, and orderly in their living; thus, (1) Paul exhorts them to be ambitious, (4:11); and (2) Paul exhorts them to walk honestly; lacking in nothing, (4:12).

**Paul exhorts them to be ambitious, (4:11).** In *verse 11* Paul says that they are to "...study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you." The word "study" is from the infinitive form of the Greek verb φιλοτιμέομαι (philotimeomai), which means "...to be actuated by love of honor; from a love of honor to strive to bring something to pass... foll.(owed) by an inf.(initive), to be ambitious... to strive earnestly..." (Thayer 655).<sup>31</sup> Since φιλοτιμείσθαι (philotimeisthai) is followed by infinitives, the word "study" could be rendered "ambitious." Accordingly, the first part of *verse 11* could be rendered, "and that ye may be ambitious or strive to accomplish something." Since manual labor was very disagreeable to the Greeks, Paul gives them three admonitions concerning the desire to be upright in their employment and in their business dealings. Because human beings are totally depraved due to the sin nature, they do not have the natural desire to be industrious. Hence, Paul encourages them to make it their ambition or goal to do right and to be industrious.

*First*, in *verse 11*, he admonishes them to strive "...to be quiet." The infinitive "be quiet" is from ἡσυχάζω (hêsuchazô), which means "...to keep quiet... to rest...

to lead a quiet life, said of those who are not running hither and thither, but stay at home and mind their business, 1 Thessalonians 4:11; to be silent... hold one's peace" (Thayer 281).<sup>32</sup> Paul wanted each one to lead a quiet life. Paul writes more on this in 2 Thessalonians 3:11,12, where he admonishes the believer not to be "busybodies" and "with quietness" to do their own work.

*Second*, he urges them "...to do your own business." The Amplified Bible renders this "to mind your own affairs..."<sup>33</sup> Each believer is to attend to his own concerns and not be nosy. If one is busy working and attending to his own work and affairs, he will not bother to pry into the affairs of others. The believer is not to be idle. There is an old saying that applies, which states, "an idle mind is the Devil's workshop." *Third*, Paul admonishes them "...to work with your own hands...." He did not mean that each of them had to do "hand work," specifically. Nonetheless, each one is to do his own work in whatever vocation one has chosen. In other words, do not depend on others to do what you can do for yourself. In the last part of *verse 11* he says that they should do this "...as we commanded you." The verb "commanded" comes from παραγγέλλω (paraggellô). Rienecker states that παραγγέλλω means, ...to charge, to order, to instruct. In classical writers the word was used of the orders of military commanders and here brings out the authority w.(ith) which the apostle spoke (598).<sup>34</sup>

Paul reaffirms his previous command that each one be industrious.

**Paul exhorts them to walk honestly; lacking in nothing, (4:12).** In *verse 12* Paul expresses the purpose for what he has been saying, "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing." The verb "may walk" is from the present active subjunctive of περιπατέω (peripateô). The subjunctive is used to express the purpose or reason for a thing. The same root verb was used in 2:12 and 4:1. The life of the born again believer is compared to a walk in the Bible. Consequently, the word "walk" speaks of how one conducts his life. The adverb "honestly" is from εὐσχημόνως (euschêmonôs),

which means "decently, becomingly" (Rienecker 598).<sup>35</sup> Although the primary thrust for this exhortation is toward those "that are without," the believer should also conduct his life decently and becomingly before God, neighbors, family, and his church. No one appreciates a dishonest person or a liar. In stating that "...ye may have lack of nothing," Paul relates an additional purpose for behaving properly toward outsiders. If one follows these exhortation, there will be no need for any one to depend on someone else. By extension, Paul is saying to them to be orderly, peaceful, honest, and industrious. Therefore, believers ought to live in practice that which they are taught by the Bible because they are convicted in their hearts. In living peacefully, the believer should remember Exodus 23:2, which commands, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest *judgment*."

### Summary of Chapter

Even though this church was a model church, she still needed to learn to grow in the knowledge, grace, and ways of the Lord Jesus. To grow in Christ, believers must hearken to the Word of God and apply it to and in their lives. Therefore, Paul beseeches the members by the authority of the Lord Jesus to live holy lives unto God and His dear Son, who shall soon return. He exhorts them concerning the second aspect of sanctification or walking with and before God and man in holy and pure living. These helpful exhortations are practical for daily living. They help the believer grow in grace throughout this earthly life. As the believer follows these exhortations, he or she will please and honor God, get along with others, be a blessing to others, and be blessed. Paul exhorts them: to excel in living for Christ; to be sanctified (for this is the will of God); to love one another; and to be industrious, honest, and orderly in living. For a church to be a good model, these exhortations must be heeded. A model church is a sanctified church.

Notes

1. Joseph H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (1885), (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). p. 382.
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3. Ibid., p. 126.
4. D. Edmond Hiebert, The Thessalonian Epistles, A Call to Readiness, A Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1971, 1982). p. 162.
5. Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, Ed. Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., (Grand Rapids, Regency Reference Library From Zondervan, 1976). p. 596.
6. Thayer, op. cit., p. 505.
7. Michael S. Bushell, BibleWorks for Windows, Windows 3.1 Release, Version 2.3c [Computer Program]. Seattle, WA: (now located in Big Fork, MT) Hermeneutika, 1994.  
 Note: this is found under Thayer/BDB Definitions for the word "abound" in 1 Thess. 4:1 when the Strong's number 4052 is double clicked with the right mouse button.
8. Thayer, op. cit., p. 479.
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11. George V. Wigram, The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon, (1844), Revising Editor: Jay P. Green, Sr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1982), p. 8.
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13. John F. Walvoord, The Thessalonian Epistles: Bible Study Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, 1st printing, 1967). pp. 34,35.
14. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 597.
15. Thayer, op. cit., pp. 531, 532.
16. Ibid., pp. 172-174.
17. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 597.
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19. Ibid., p. 368.
20. Thayer, op. cit., p. 577.
21. Ibid., p. 472.
22. Ibid., p. 238.
23. Ibid., p. 472.
24. The American College Dictionary, edited by Clarence L. Barnhart, (New York: Random House, Copyright, 1950), p. 251.
25. Thayer, op. cit., p. 640.
26. Ibid., p. 516.
27. Ibid., pp. 13, 14.
28. Ibid., p. 653.
29. Ibid., p. 653.
30. Ibid., p. 3.
31. Ibid., p. 655.
32. Ibid., p. 281.
33. The Amplified Bible, Containing the Amplified Old Testament and the Amplified New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [The Lockman Foundation], 1965). p. 319 of the New Testament Section.
34. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 598.

## CHAPTER 8

### A Model Church: The Message On Comfort

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

- VIII. A MODEL CHURCH: THE MESSAGE ON COMFORT.** 4:13-18
- A. The Hope of the Dead in Christ. 4:13,14
    - 1. Believers are to be informed, 4:13a.
    - 2. Some believers are asleep; what about them? 4:13b.
    - 3. Grief is one thing; excessive grief another, 4:13c.
    - 4. The dead in Christ shall arise, 4:14.
  - B. The First Change - the Dead to Rise. 4:15-17
    - 1. Paul gives the message of Christ about this, 4:15a.
    - 2. Until Jesus returns, occupy, 4:15b.
    - 3. Some believers will be living when Jesus returns, 4:15b.
    - 4. The Lord Jesus shall come down from heaven, 4:16,17.
  - C. The Sounds that Accompany the Lord Jesus. 4:16
    - 1. The shout as Jesus descends, 4:16a.
    - 2. The voice of the archangel, 4:16b.
    - 3. The sound of the trump of God, 4:16c.
  - D. The Remaining Saints will be Translated. 4:17a
    - 1. The living saints shall be changed, 4:17a.
    - 2. Old Testament examples of the rapture, Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11,12.
  - E. The Message of Comfort. 4:17b-18
    - 1. All saints shall meet the Lord in the air, 4:17.
    - 2. All saints shall be with the Lord forever, 4:17.
    - 3. This is the message of comfort and hope fulfilled, 4:18.

## CHAPTER 8

### **A Model Church: The Message On Comfort**

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The second division of chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians reveals the nature of the resurrection along with the rapture of the saints. The resurrection and the rapture are a primary motivation for the believer to take heed to the exhortations given in the first 12 verses "...to walk and to please God..." or to live sanctified lives. The return of Christ and the promise of going to heaven should cause the believer to desire to honor and to glorify God in his or her day to day life. Paul states in Philippians 3:20, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The word "conversation" from πολίτευμα (politeuma) could be rendered "citizenship" (Strong 59).<sup>1</sup> Since the citizenship of the believer is in heaven, the believer should act like a citizen of heaven.

The word "resurrection" is from the compound word ἀνάστασις (anastasis). This word is formed by two Greek words, ἀνα (ana) and στασις (stasis). Ἀνα means "upwards, up... denoting motion from a lower place to a higher..." (Thayer 34).<sup>2</sup> Στασις (Stasis) means "a standing, station, state..." (Thayer 585).<sup>3</sup> The verb from which στασις {ἵστημι (histemi)} comes means "to stand..." (Thayer 307, 308, 585).<sup>3</sup> Together these words mean "up stand." Ἀνάστασις (Anastasis) is translated "resurrection" 39 times, "rising again" 1 time, etc. Thus, ἀνάστασις (anastasis) means "a raising up... a rising from the dead... of Christ... of all men at the end of this present age..." (Thayer 41,42).<sup>4</sup> While the noun ἀνάστασις is not found in this passage,



the verb form ἀνίστημι (anistêmi) is used in verses 14 and 16. This verb will be discussed with those verses.

The word "rapture" is not found in the Bible. It is derived from the Latin word "raptus" (Webster's 709)"<sup>5</sup> "Rapture" may be defined as a "...joyful ecstasy... the carrying away of a person to another place or sphere or existence" (American College Dictionary) 1004.<sup>6</sup> This refers to what happens to the believers as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...." Down through the centuries Christians have used these terms to describe what Paul writes about in verses 13-18. It should be added that this speaks of the resurrection and/or rapture of all believers of every age up to that time and not just of those who are members of New Testament churches.

The purpose of the Apostle Paul was to comfort and to cheer these brothers and sisters in Thessalonica in their grief caused by persecution. He also wanted to comfort or console those who were bereaved over the death of those who had died since he had left. Paul spoke of those who had died as being "asleep." He assured them that these would be resurrected when Jesus Christ comes again.

There seems to have been a problem in doctrine with some in this church. Some did not understand the doctrine of the resurrection and the rapture, just as many do not understand it in this modern age (Walvoord 39).<sup>7</sup> Some of the believers in Thessalonica seemed to think that if a believer died, he or she would miss the rapture, and the saints who had already died had already missed it and would come up short. Also, because of this misunderstanding some did not want to work as explained in the comments on verses 10-12. Therefore, the Apostle Paul tells them the truth of this doctrine in verses 13-18. This is the message on comfort given by the model pastor, which is as follows: (1) the hope of the dead in Christ, 4:13,14; (2) the first change - dead to rise, 4:15-17; (3) the sounds that accompany the Lord Jesus, 4:16; (4) the remaining saints will be translated, 4:17a; and (5) the message of comfort, 4:17b-18.

### A. The Hope of the Dead in Christ, 4:13,14

The doctrine of the resurrection is taught in both the Old and New Testaments. Most Bible scholars believe the book of Job is the earliest of the Bible books written. Job expresses his belief in the resurrection several times but the clearest, most understandable passage is Job 19:23-27. In Job 19:25-27 Job clearly states,

For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: *26* And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God: *27* Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me.

The Psalmist David expressed his belief in the resurrection in Psalm 17:15 when he writes, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." There are other passages, but these will suffice to represent the truth of the hope of the Old Testament believers who have died in Christ. Jesus taught on the resurrection in many places in the gospel records. Paul wanted the members of the church in Thessalonica as well as all believers to enjoy and to rest in the sure hope of the resurrection. Therefore, he gives them instructions about this sure hope as follows: (1) believers are to be informed, 4:13a; (2) some believers are asleep; what about them? 4:13b; (3) grief is one thing; excessive grief another, 4:13c; and (4) the dead in Christ shall arise, 4:14.

**Believers are to be informed, (4:13a).** In *verse 13* Paul wrote, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren...." He addresses them as "brethren." Hence, this is written to the saved. As mentioned previously Paul had not been able to be with the church in Thessalonica but for a short time. Evidently, he had not been able to teach all of the details of the doctrine of the second coming and the resurrection. Meanwhile, some had died and their loved ones thought that they would go to a different place than those who were alive when Jesus returned or at least would come up short in some way. It seems they thought Jesus was coming during their own generation and time (Walvoord 39).<sup>8</sup> Believers in every generation should think this also and be

ready for His return at all times. In any case, they had been ignorant on this subject. Paul was writing to enlighten them. They did not have the benefit of having the completed New Testament. God has revealed His Word to mankind and He does not want His people to be ignorant of His Word, His wonderful promises, and the blessed hope. Thus, in the first part of *verse 13* Paul tells believers that he wants them to pay special attention to what he is going to say. What he had to say would be a great incentive to sanctification as well as a great consolation. Paraphrased, he says, "I would not have you all to be ignorant or uninformed, brothers and sisters, about or concerning those who are asleep."

**Some believers are asleep; what about them? (4:13b).** Next, in *verse 13* Paul declares that he does not want them to be uninformed "...concerning them which are asleep..." The word "asleep" is from the present middle participle of κοιμάομαι (koimaomai) and is listed by Thayer under κοιμάω (koimaô). It means "...to cause to sleep, put to sleep... metaph.(orically)... to fall asleep, to sleep... and euphemistically... to die..." (Thayer 351).<sup>9</sup> The present middle participle κοιμωμένων (koimômenôn) could be rendered "...the dead..."<sup>9</sup> Paul is using euphemistic language. Today, when someone dies, people will say, the deceased has "passed away." This is done to take away the harshness and pain of the announcement. Jesus used the same kind of language when He conversed with His disciple concerning the death of Lazarus in John 11:11-14:

These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. 12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. 14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

The statement "concerning them which are asleep" makes it seem as though some of these beloved members had died recently. Who are those that slept? Paul is speaking of the dead in Christ who are already in the grave. These are those who had trusted Jesus during their earthly life, but have died and are in the grave. Paul uses this term, "asleep," to show that the death of those in Christ is temporary and not permanent. The word "asleep" is never

used of Jesus and His death because He endured the separation from God, His Father, because of our sin. On the other hand, the dead in Christ do not and will not endure separation from God the Father in the spirit. The word "asleep" when used of death refers to the saved.

Some have used this and other passages to teach a doctrine of soul sleeping. The Bible does not teach this doctrine, but rather that the soul of the one who has died in Christ goes to be with Christ. The term "asleep" has reference only to the body and not the spirit. The proof that the spirit of the saved goes to be with God at the point of physical death is found in Philippians 1:21-23 and 2 Corinthians 5:6-9. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Philippians 1:21-23, For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

2 Corinthians 5:6-9, Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

What is absent? When a believer dies, the born again soul or spiritual self leaves the body and goes to be with Christ. The doctrine of soul sleeping is not found in the Bible.

**Grief is one thing; excessive grief another, (4:13c).** Paul further explains in *verse 13* why he wants believers to be informed. It was so "...that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." The word "sorrow" is from the verb λυπέω (lupeô) and means "...to make sorrowful; to affect with sadness, cause grief,... to grieve, offend ..." (Thayer 383).<sup>10</sup> He did not want them to grieve like people who have no hope. He is saying, "Do not sorrow as do the heathens." The pagans were not sure of a life after death and a blessed resurrection. They were lost without Christ. As far as most pagans knew, their hopes were gone when the last shovel of dirt fell on the grave of their dead loved one. The heathen would go into great mourning. Their grief was

great and excessive. Their grief was not mitigated or relieved by the hope of a life after death. Consequently, Paul was telling the Thessalonian brethren that this is not the case of those asleep in Christ. The saved have a sure hope of going to heaven, but the lost are doomed to hell. They have no hope. The lost do grieve and it is only right to grieve over the loss of a loved one, but the saved are not to grieve as do the pagans and those who have no hope. What is the hope of the believer? It is the blessed hope of which Paul wrote in Titus 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Paul was not saying believers are not to grieve or sorrow; but because believers have a sure hope of blessed life after death, there is no reason to grieve excessively.

From this at least five things can be learned. *First*, the world without the gospel of Christ is destitute of hope, future paradise, and a utopia; but it is certain of burning in hell. *Second*, the excessive sorrow because of the death of one of the children of this world is not something at which to wonder or marvel. Why? They bury their hope in the grave to decay and many do not even believe in a life after death. *Third*, the only way that the tears and sorrow can be wiped away is through the blessed hope of Jesus and the promised resurrection. *Fourth*, the true Christian should not sorrow excessively as others when he loses a true Christian loved one. The eye of the weeper should look up through his tears to God the Savior. *Fifth*, it is an extremely sad thing to die without hope.

**The dead in Christ shall arise, (4:14).** In *verse 14* Paul clarifies why believers should not grieve as do "others" or people who are lost. He asserts, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Because the first clause in the Greek text is introduced by the conjunction  $\epsilon\lambda$  (ei) translated "if," and the verb  $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu$  (pisteuomen), translated "we believe," is present indicative active, this clause is a first class conditional clause (Davis 68).<sup>11</sup> By this clause, Paul is affirming the death and resurrection of Jesus. The words "rose again" come from the verb  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\lambda\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\mu\iota$  (anistêmi) and

is the intransitive second aorist active indicative ἀνέστη (anestê). As an intransitive verb ἀνίστημι (anistêmi) means "...to rise, stand up... of the dead..." (Thayer 47).<sup>12</sup> This shows that Jesus rose from the grave of His own power, the power of God. The Bible declares in Acts 2:24, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Since He "...knew no sin..." "...did no sin..." and "...in him is no sin" (according to 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5), death could not hold Him. Paraphrased, Paul is saying, "Since it is true that Jesus died and rose again, it is also true that those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Therefore, if a person is saved and then dies, he or she will be raised from the grave. It is as simple as that! What blessedness! What joy! What cause for shouting and rejoicing! Put another way, Paul says, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so...." Even so what? "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." When this same apostle wrote to the Corinthians he gave a more detail explanation in 1 Corinthians 15:12-13, 20-23:

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? *13* But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.... *20* But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. *21* For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. *22* For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. *23* But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Who are the ones who "...sleep in Jesus"? This was explained previously. They are the same ones that Paul spoke of in *verse 13*. The Bible explains this in 2 Corinthians 5:8.

The statement "...them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" is further explained by Hebrews 12:22-23 where the Bible relates that Jesus will bring "...the spirits of just men made perfect..." with him to join them together with the resurrected body. What kind of body is the resurrected body? Paul answers this in 1 Corinthians 15:42-53:

So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: *43* It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: *44* It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. *45* And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living

soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit. *46* Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. *47* The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. *48* As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. *49* And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. *50* Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. *51* Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, *52* In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. *53* For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

In the resurrected body there will be no blemishes, no blindness, no hearing loss, no cut off fingers or arms, no diseases, no cripples, no cancer, no heart trouble, and whatever else may be defective or weak in this earthly body. These things will be no more. And best of all, the resurrected body will be free from sin and sins. Sanctification will be complete. The resurrected body will be a glorified body and therefore perfect in every way. It will manifest and show forth the complete victory over sin and Satan through Christ. Christ is the victory (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). The dead in Christ shall be resurrected from the grave and be with Jesus forever.

### **B. The First Change - The Dead To Rise, 4:15-17**

Paul assures them in verses 14-17 of the resurrection of those who are saved but physically dead and in the grave. When Christ comes for His saints in the air, at least two things will happen in following order. First, there will be the resurrection of the dead in Christ. Second, there will be the translation or rapture of those in Christ who are physically alive. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:51, "...We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Paul explains the first change as follows: (1) he gives the message of Christ about this, 4:15a; (2) until Jesus returns, occupy, 4:15b; (3) some believers will be living when Jesus returns, 4:15b; and (4) the Lord Jesus shall come down from heaven, 4:16,17.

**Paul gives the message of Christ about this, (4:15a).** The apostle reinforces the message of verse 14 by stating in *verses 15*, "For this we say unto you by the

word of the Lord...." He is saying, "this is what God revealed to me to give to you all." Or "this is the inspired revelation of God on this subject." When he writes to the Corinthians on this subject, he declares in 1 Corinthians 15:51 "Behold, I show you a mystery...." The word "mystery" from μυστήριον (mustêrion) means "that which man cannot know apart from God's revelation" (Rienecker 96).<sup>13</sup> Paul was not speaking of something "mysterious" as in so-called magic; instead he was speaking "of something formerly unknown but now revealed" (Bushell).<sup>14</sup> He meant that God had revealed these things to him. Some Bible commentators feel there is a problem since it cannot be found in the New Testament where Christ said this (Heibert 195).<sup>15</sup> Paul may be referring to Matthew 24:30,31,

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Jesus taught concerning the resurrection in several passages including John 11:1-45 and John 14. It is quite possible that Christ Himself revealed the specifics of this doctrine when Paul was in Arabia being taught by Christ. (Refer to Galatians 1:11-24).

**Until Jesus returns, occupy, (4:15b).** Paul continues the message of the Lord Jesus by writing, "...we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." When shall Jesus return? (It is not under the purview of this treatise to discuss the various views of the timing of the rapture such as: pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation; except to say that when it comes, all the saints shall go to be with the Lord.) Jesus said in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Paul did not know when Jesus would return. If all prophecies had been fulfilled during his lifetime, it could have been while he was still living. Notice that Paul used the plural first person pronoun "we." He was looking for the Lord to return during his lifetime.



What time of day will Jesus return? It could be at dawning! It could be at noontime! It could be at midnight! It could be at anytime of the day or night, and for some it will be during the day and for others it will be at night due to the different time zones. Nevertheless, it shall be the crowning day. In the meantime, what should believers be doing? Some in the days of Paul had the wrong idea. However, Jesus said in Luke 19:13, "...Occupy till I come." This means that New Testament churches (and their members) should carry out the Great Commission until Jesus returns. The "when" is not as important as "being in a state of readiness." (That members should be ready, will be discussed in chapter 9.)

**Some believers will be living when Jesus returns, (4:15b).** Verse 15 reveals that some believers will be "...alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord..." This is a promise. Jesus indicates this when he declares in Luke 18:8, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (This has to be taken in the context of Luke 17:22-37. Thus the answer to the question in Luke 18:8 would be in the affirmative). No matter how great the falling away from the truth, some believers will still be alive when Jesus Christ returns. Nonetheless, those "...which are alive..." in Christ shall "by no means" precede those asleep in Christ. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, "... that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." The negative "not" is the translation of οὐ μὴ (ou mê). Thayer says, "The particles οὐ μὴ in combination augment the force of the negation, and signify *not at all, in no wise, by no means...*(410, 461)".<sup>16</sup> "Shall... prevent" is from the aorist active subjunctive of φθάνω (phthanô). Rienecker states, "The aorist subjunctive used with the emphatic negative has the sense of an emphatic future indicative (599)."<sup>17</sup> Φθάνω means "to come before, precede,..." (Thayer 652).<sup>18</sup> In the days of the King James translators one of the meanings of the word "prevent" was "precede." The American College Dictionary indicates that the meaning of "prevent" at one time was "precede," but

now it is obsolete (960).<sup>19</sup> Paul makes it clear in verse 16 that the living saints shall *in no wise* precede those asleep when he writes, "...and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

**The Lord Jesus shall come down from heaven, (4:16,17).** Paul makes it plain and clear in *verse 16* that "...the Lord himself shall descend from heaven..." or in other words, Jesus will come for the saints both those alive and those asleep. The emphasis is on the pronoun "himself." There will be no substitute. Jesus will not send an angel, but He, Himself, will come down from heaven. *Verse 17* indicates He will come in the clouds and be in the air. He will not at this time touch the earth. This is known as the first phase of His second coming. The last phase will be when He comes to the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation to conquer and defeat the beast (or the anti-Christ) and all his forces. Paul writes about this in 2 Thessalonians and John addresses it in Revelation 19. Jesus will descend "...with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." "Shall rise" is from ἀναστήσονται (anastêsontai), which is the future middle indicative of ἀνίστημι (anistêmi). Being a middle voice verb means it is intransitive. It has the same basic meaning as when used in *verse 14*. It means "to rise... stand up... of the dead." At the command of Christ all of the saved dead shall rise and rise before those who are "alive and remain." Thus, the ones who are "alive and remain," will have no advantage over the dead in Christ.

### **C. The Sounds that Accompany the Lord Jesus, 4:16.**

The sounds or instruments of sound of verse 16 describe the descent or the coming down from heaven of the Lord Jesus. When He descends, the sounds that accompany Him will be distinct and authoritative. Down through history when a great king or ruler would come upon the scene, the announcement of his coming was a great fanfare with much pomp. Even so, it will be when the King of kings, Lord of lords, and only Savior comes to claim His

own. These sounds that accompany the Lord Jesus will accomplish precisely what God desires for them to accomplish. They will get the attention of those on earth and especially the attention of every believer. Paul records that the Lord Jesus shall descend with: (1) a shout, 4:16a; (2) the voice of the archangel, 4:16b; and (3) the sound of the trump of God, 4:16c.

**The shout as Jesus descends, (4:16a).** Paul declares that "...the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout..." The noun "shout" comes from the Greek κέλευσμα (keleusma), which means "an order, command, spec. a stimulating cry... or that by which a signal is given to men, e.g. to rowers by the master of a ship, to soldiers by a commander (with a loud summons, a trumpet call)" (Thayer 343).<sup>20</sup> This is the only time κέλευσμα is used in the New Testament. The verb form κελεύω (keleuô) is used some 27 times. It means "to command, to order..." and "...designates verbal orders, emanating (usually) from a superior" (Thayer 343).<sup>21</sup> Luke uses this verb in Acts 25:6, where he records that the Roman governor Festus, when "...sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought." Hence, this shout is the authoritative command of Christ. This "shout" is the shout of the victor, the cry of might, power, and supreme authority. It will penetrate the graves of all the dead in Christ. It will pierce to the deepest depths of the sea. It will be heard by every believer, dead and alive, everywhere upon the earth, from Adam to the smallest babe in the cradle. Jesus told Lazarus to come forth from his grave with a shout in John 11:4: "And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus had been dead four days as testified by Martha, his sister in John 11:39: "...Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." John 11:44 records, "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." When Jesus shall descend and shout, then the redemption of the body will take place as seen in Rom 8:23-25:

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is

not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

**The voice of the archangel, (4:16b).** Next, Paul announces that "...the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... with the voice of the archangel..." What is an archangel? This word is from the Greek word ἀρχάγγελος (archaggelos) which means "archangel, or chief of the angels" (Thayer 76).<sup>22</sup> This word is found one other time in the New Testament. In Jude 9 Michael is called the archangel. An archangel is a chief angel and a leader of a heavenly host. L. D. Foreman makes a helpful comment about verse 16 when he writes, "...the voice of the ARCHANGEL will call the sleeping from their graves to their heavenly homes, so Michael will sound the trumpet for the resurrection" (63).<sup>23</sup> This evidently means that the archangel and possibly other angels will come with the Lord Jesus. The angels have always been used by the Lord to help in His work. This is established by many passages in the books of Daniel and Revelation, and throughout the Bible. (Refer to Daniel 10:13-21; 12:1-3; and Revelation 7:1-3, 9-17.)

**The sound of the trump of God, (4:16c).** Then, Paul proclaims that "...the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." This is the blowing of the trump of God. The blowing of the trumpet was connected to several things concerning the children of Israel in the Old Testament. (Refer to Numbers 10.) But mainly the trumpet was sounded to herald an alarm, to summon an army to battle, or to summon the people to worship. In the latter case, it was meant to gather together the whole nation of Israel. When the Lord Jesus Himself descends from heaven, all the bodies of the saints in whatever state and everywhere they may be found will be raised. These bodies will be retrieved and resurrected whether found: in the sea; in the mountains; in the grave; as bones in the desert picked by the birds and dried by the hot sun; as ashes blown to the four winds; and wherever else, even if eaten by fish or other wild creatures. This trump will

be heard by all the saved: asleep or alive. Thus, the dead in Christ shall hear, be raised first from their graves, and then be given new bodies.

#### **D. The Remaining Saints will be Translated, 4:17a**

Since some of the members of the church in Thessalonica did not have a complete, sound understanding of the doctrine of the resurrection and the rapture, Paul explains to them that the ones who were saved, yet have died, would in truth be raised from the dead. In *verses 13-16* he took great pains to make this point very clear. Believers should have a good sound understanding of this important doctrine. In both *verses 15 and 16* he assures them that the dead in Christ shall precede those that "are alive and remain." Now he turns to the circumstance of the saints who will be living when the Lord comes in the air. When the living saints hear the shout, the voice, and the trump, (1) they shall be changed in their order, 4:17a. (2) There are Old Testament examples of the rapture, Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11,12.

**The living saints shall be changed, (4:17a).** In *verse 17* Paul declares, "Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...." The adverb "then" connects the events explained in *verses 15 and 16* with the events of *verse 17*. "Then" is from ἐπειτα (epeita), which means "thereupon, thereafter, then, afterwards... in enumerations it is used of time and order" (Thayer 230).<sup>24</sup> Paul is saying, the dead shall rise first, and immediately thereafter, the living saints shall be raptured. The verb "shall be caught up" is from the future passive indicative of ἀρπάζω (harpazô). Ἀρπάζω (harpazô) means:

...to snatch up, to seize, to carry off by force, to rapture. The word often denotes the emotion of a sudden swoop, and usually that of a force which cannot be resisted (Rienecker 599,600).<sup>25</sup>

Both groups "shall be caught up together." Paul explains that the living saints will be changed in the twinkling of the eye. In 1 Corinthians 15:52 he writes, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised

incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Those who "are alive and remain" will be changed. They will receive new incorruptible bodies just as will the ones who are resurrected. The Bible declares in 1 Corinthians 15:53, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality." This occurrence is also known as the translation of the living saints.

**Old Testament examples of the rapture, (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11,12).**

The saints in the Old Testament believed in the resurrection according to Job 19:23-27 and Psalm 17:15. These Scriptures were discussed earlier in this chapter. Another passage that proves this is found in Genesis 22 along with Hebrews 11:17-19. Genesis 22 is the account of Abraham obeying the command of God to sacrifice his only promised son, Isaac. Genesis 22:5 states, "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Abraham not only said that he and Isaac (who was the lad) would go and worship, but also that he and Isaac would return again unto these young men who were servants of Abraham. This shows by implication that Abraham believed in the resurrection. Explicit evidence is given in Hebrews 11:19.

Likewise, the saints in the Old Testament believed that God could take a believer to heaven by translating them into glory. Note again what Paul wrote in *verse 17*, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air..." The Old Testament gives two examples of this type of occurrence. *First*, there is the example of Enoch; the man who walked with God. Genesis 5:24 states, "And Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him." This is explained in the New Testament in Hebrews 11:5 which testifies, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Enoch is a perfect example of what will happen to those who "...are alive and remain..." when Jesus returns.

The *second* example is that of Elijah, the prophet, who was caught up into

heaven by a whirlwind. In 2 Kings 2:11-12 the Bible says,

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. *12* And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

The Bible states that Elisha saw Elijah no more. The sons of the prophet looked all over in vain for Elijah and found him not. The reason they did not find him was that he was in heaven with God. This is another example of what will happen to those who "...are alive and remain...." (Also refer to Matthew 17).

#### **E. The Message of Comfort, 4:17b-18**

Death is a reality no matter how much people try to put it out of their minds. The Bible teaches that death is a result of sin according to Genesis 2:17, Romans 5:12, and 1 Corinthians 15:55,56. The Bible teaches that there is life after death either in heaven or in hell. Each believer should thank God that Christ came and conquered sin, death, hell, and the grave by His death, burial and resurrection in order to redeem the human soul and body. Death cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, each human being can conquer death and hell through faith in Jesus Christ. Even so, death brings grief to the human heart. Comfort is needed. As discussed earlier the purpose of Paul was to comfort and to cheer bereaved believers by informing them about the message of hope, the resurrection and the rapture. *Verse 18* proclaims, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The words of verses 13-17 contain the message on comfort given by the model pastor. It is most consoling for believers to know that: (1) all saints shall meet the Lord in the air, 4:17; (2) all saints shall be with Lord forever, 4:17; and (3) this is the message of comfort and hope fulfilled, 4:18.

**All saints shall meet the Lord in the air, (4:17).** This includes both the resurrected and the raptured saints. Paul states in *verse 17*, "Then we which are alive

and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air..." Who is the "them?" The antecedent of this pronoun is the noun clause "the dead in Christ" in verse 16, who "shall rise first." "Together" is from ἅμα (hama) which means "at the same time, at once, together... together with..." (Thayer 30).<sup>26</sup> Therefore the resurrected saints and the raptured saints shall both together meet the Lord in the air. This will be the great reunion day! What rejoicing!

**All saints shall be with the Lord forever, (4:17).** Paul concludes *verse 17* by saying, "... and so shall we ever be with the Lord." With the pronoun "we" Paul includes himself and all saints up until the time of the rapture. The word "ever" is from the Greek πάντοτε (pantote) and means "at all times, always, ever" (Thayer 476).<sup>27</sup> This means that all the saints that are "...caught up together... to meet the Lord in the air..." shall be with Him throughout eternity, and eternity is forever. Where will these saints be? They will be with the Lord Jesus, and that will be utopia, paradise, heaven at last, forever and forever. What blessedness!

**This is the message of comfort and hope fulfilled, (4:18).** Paul instructs, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The word "comfort" is from παρακαλέω (parakaleô). It means to call to one's side... to address... to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort... exhorting and comforting and encouraging..." (Thayer 482).<sup>28</sup> Jesus used the noun form to speak of the Holy Spirit as "the Comforter" in John chapters 14-16. The model pastor uses this message to comfort and console those who are bereaved and in grief because of the death of a loved one. He uses it to help those who are overcome with the fear of death and dying. This message is a comfort to the lost after they have been convicted by the Holy Spirit and they respond by faith. This message brings assurance and surety about the "after life." True Christians can use it to comfort loved ones in need. Each reader should ask, "Do I have the assurance that this message of comfort affords?" The Bible says in 1 John 3:1-2,

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not,



because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Jesus encouraged the use of this message for cheer by telling His disciples in

John 14:1-3,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."

### Summary of Chapter

In that Jesus died for our sins and arose from the grave, Paul gives the following order of events for the resurrection and the rapture in verses 14-17. *First*, he gives the assurance that the saints living on the earth (at that time) shall not precede those that sleep (to go to meet with the Lord in the air). *Second*, He says that Christ Himself shall descend from heaven. At this point, with power Christ commands all saints to rise and to meet with Him. He will do so with the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead shall rise first. *Next*, the saints living on the earth shall be changed and caught up together with the resurrected saints. *Then*, all the saints shall go to be with the Lord.

By saying in verse 18 that they should comfort one another with these words, it would appear that Paul meant that God would not allow the living saints to go through the great wrath of God at the end of the Great Tribulation. From the general teachings of Chapter 4 it seems that some of them wanted the Lord to come back quickly and in their lifetime. There seems to be some who wanted to just sit down and watch for Him. Some in this day and time want to do the same. Jesus exhorted His disciples to "occupy till I come." Church members have a great responsibility to live for Jesus, worship Jesus, and serve Him every waking moment of everyday. Without the testimony of the saved, the lost world will die, and go to hell. The lost need this most consoling message of salvation, resurrection, and rapture.

## Notes

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18. Thayer, op. cit., p. 652.
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24. Thayer, op. cit., p. 230.
25. Rienecker, op. cit., pp. 599, 600.
26. Thayer, op. cit., p. 30.
27. Ibid., p. 476.
28. Ibid., p. 482.

## CHAPTER 9

### A Model Church: The Members Are Ready

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

- IX. A MODEL CHURCH: THE MEMBERS ARE READY.** 5:1-11
- A. The Time of the Return of Christ is Uncertain. 5:1,2
    - 1. Paul taught about the times and seasons, 5:1,2.
    - 2. Paul taught about the uncertainty of the date, 5:1,2.
    - 3. Paul taught about the day of the Lord, 5:2.
    - 4. Paul taught it would be an unhappy time for many, 5:1,2.
  - B. The Lost World is Unprepared. 5:3
    - 1. They are unprepared, 5:3-10.
    - 2. They are wrapped up in disastrous deception, 5:3.
    - 3. They are doomed, 5:3.
    - 4. They shall not escape the judgment of God, 5:3.
  - C. The Believer can be Ready, therefore, be Ready. 5:4-8
    - 1. Brethren are not of darkness but of light, 5:4,5.
    - 2. Brethren should not sleep, 5:6a.
    - 3. Brethren should watch and be sober, 5:6b-8.
  - D. The Calm Assurance from God - His Promise. 5:9-11
    - 1. Paul states the nature of the promise, 5:9.
    - 2. Paul assures the promise is not dependent on the believer, 5:9b-10a.
    - 3. Paul expresses this brings the calm assurance, 5:10b-11.
    - 4. Paul gives the proper response to this great and precious promise, 5:11.

## CHAPTER 9

### **A Model Church: The Members Are Ready** (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is coming again. He desires His people to live for Him and to be prepared for His return. One question that people ask is "when." But Jesus did not emphasize "the when" so much as He did the readiness of the believer. During His earthly ministry, Jesus instructed the church in Jerusalem to be prepared or ready at any time for His return. In the gospel records of Matthew and Mark the Lord Jesus used expressions like this:

Matthew 24:42,44 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.... 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Matthew 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Mark 13:33,35,37 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.... 35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning.... 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Similar language is used in Luke 21:34,36. The context of these Scriptures is the return of Jesus Christ. He exhorts the believer to be ready for His soon return. Therefore, the church members in the model church should be ready.

Each church member should ask, "Am I ready for the return of the Lord Jesus?" "Am I ready for death, whichever may come first?" Only God knows which will be first. In the previous chapter entitled "A Model Church: The Message On Comfort," it was shown that for the safety of believers, it makes no difference which is first, since whether dead or alive, believers "...shall be caught up together,... to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be

with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). 1 Thessalonians 5:10-11 affirms this by stating, "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. // Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

The two-fold subject of chapter 5:1-11 is "the day of the Lord" and the need for believers to be ready for that day. In this passage Paul couples together the need for readiness and the safety of those who are alive in Christ. It is also a continuation of "...The Message On Comfort" in view of verses 10 and 11. He wrote verses 10 and 11 to assure believers that heaven is sure and they are safe and secure in Jesus. Notwithstanding, each believer should ask the question, "Am I ready to meet Christ Jesus the Lord face to face" The subject Paul writes about in this section is; "The Model Church: The Members Are Ready." The solemn serious truth is that the returning Lord will be "the Judge" of all. Therefore, the Apostle Paul addresses the following points: (1) the time of the return of Christ is uncertain, 5:1,2; (2) the lost world is unprepared, 5:3; (3) the believer can be ready - therefore - be ready, 5:4-8; and (4) the calm assurance from God - His promise, 5:9-11.

#### **A. The Time of the Return of Christ is Uncertain, 5:1,2**

First Thessalonians chapter 5 is connected to chapter 4 by the postpositive conjunction  $\delta\epsilon$  (de), which is translated "but." Dana and Mantey state that besides being "an adversative particle,"  $\delta\epsilon$  is "...also common as a transitional or continuative particle, when it may be translated *and, moreover, then, now, etc*" (244).<sup>1</sup> The preposition "of" is from  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$  (peri). When used with the genitive case,  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$  can be translated "about, concerning" (109).<sup>2</sup> Verse 1 could be translated, "Moreover, concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." This shows that chapter 5 is a continuation of the exhortations that Paul gave in chapter 4. In chapter 4:13-18 he explained the details of the resurrection and the rapture,

and now, he wants them to understand the uncertainty about the timing of the return of Christ. Concerning this, in *verses 1 and 2* he reminds them of the things he had taught them: (1) about the times and seasons, 5:1,2; (2) about the uncertainty of the date, 5:1,2; (3) about the day of the Lord, 5:2; and (4) it would be an unhappy time for many, 5:1,2.

**Paul taught about the times and seasons, (5:1,2).** In *verse 1* Paul again addresses them as "brethren." This is a term of mutual love and respect for the children of God who have a very close bond in that all believers have the same Savior, Jesus Christ. It is also a term of identification. These "brothers and sisters" are fellow believers who compose or make up the local assembly of baptized believers in Thessalonica. Paul wrote this epistle to a local New Testament church. There is no other kind of church.

Paul states in *verse 1* moreover, concerning "...the times and the seasons,... ye have no need that I write unto you." The words "times and... season" need to be defined and explained. The word "time" comes from the plural genitive χρόνων (chronôn) of χρόνος (chronôs). Χρόνος "denotes a space of time, whether long or short... it implies duration..." (Vine 1005,1149, 1150).<sup>3</sup> It has the idea of "...time in general..." (Thayer 673,319).<sup>4</sup> The English word "chronology" is derived in part from this word. The word "seasons" comes from the Greek genitive of καιρός (kairos). It means "...a measure of time, a larger or smaller portion of time, hence... a fixed and definite time... the time when things are brought to a crisis, the decisive epoch waited for... the opportune or seasonable... the right time..." (Thayer 318,319).<sup>5</sup> Also καιρός has the idea of "...a definitely limited portion of time with the added notion of suitability" (319).<sup>6</sup> It carries the idea of the right moment to do or not to do something. The "times" speaks of "the when" and the "seasons" of the events surrounding "the day of the Lord." Paul says, concerning "...the times and the seasons... ye have no need that I write unto you." This is stated in contrast to chapter 4:13-18 where he teaches about the resurrection and the rapture. Their knowledge of that was incomplete because Paul had not had enough time with them. But

concerning the day and hour of the return of the Lord, Paul says you know about this already. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 indicates that he had already taught about this.

**Paul taught about the uncertainty of the date, (5:1,2).** There was no need for Paul to write to them about a specific day and hour of the return of Christ (*verse 1*). He had taught them that the timing was uncertain as far as man is concerned. This is implied by what he states in *verse 2*. Even though many have tried, no human being can put an accurate and actual date on His return. The Lord Jesus Himself said in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Paul declares in *verse 2*, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." The adverb "perfectly" is from ἀκριβῶς (*akribôs*) and means "exactly, accurately, diligently..." (Thayer 24).<sup>7</sup> Thus, he relates that they know "accurately or precisely" that His coming will be just like "a thief in the night." Why is Paul saying this? It is because he had already instructed them about this matter. Besides this, Paul indicates by the context that believers do not need to know the particular time of "the day of the Lord." In so saying Paul shows that people do not put into practice what they already know. The emphasis for all is "be ready."

**Paul taught about the day of the Lord, (5:2).** No doubt, Paul had taught them about "the day of the Lord" from the Old Testament Scriptures. What is "the day of the Lord?" From a study of this expression as used in both the Old and the New Testaments, several things can be gleaned. To understand it, one must realize it is more than a 24 hour day, rather it is an epoch of time, yet future. It is mentioned some 20 times in 18 verses in the following Old Testament chapters: Isaiah 2; 13; Jeremiah 46; Ezekiel 13; 30; Joel 1; 2; 3; Amos 5; Obadiah; Zephaniah 1; Zechariah 14; and Malachi 4. Some most notable passages are Isaiah 2:10-12; Isaiah 13:6-11; and Zephaniah 1:14-18. The following are excerpts from these:

Isaiah 2:10-12 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. *11* The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and

the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. *12* For **the day of the LORD** of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that is* proud and lofty, and upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought low.

Isaiah 13:8-9 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces *shall be as* flames. *9* Behold, **the day of the LORD** cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Zephaniah 1:14-15 **The great day of the LORD** is near, *it is* near, and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of **the day of the LORD**: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. *15* That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.

"The day of the Lord" is mentioned some 5 times in 5 verses in the following New Testament passages: Acts 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; and 2 Peter 3:10. Mention is made also of the day of Christ and etc. In 2 Peter 3:10 Peter declares,

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

*These passages reveal several things about the day of the LORD of which all are yet future.. First*, according to Isaiah 2:10-12; 13:6-11; and Zephaniah 1:14-18, it is a day when God will take complete control of the earth. Therefore, it is a day that belongs to God. *Second*, according to Joel 2:3; Amos 5:18,20; and Acts 2:20, it is a day of great darkness, earthquakes, and other such things. *Third*, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Joel 2:1,11; and 2 Peter 3:10, it is a day in which God comes down and breaks the chain of historical events. *Fourth*, according to Jeremiah 46:10; Obadiah 15; and Zephaniah 1:14-18, it is a day when God will pour out His stored up wrath upon His enemies and the wicked. Who are the enemies of God? The answers are: the Christ rejecters, unbelievers, the Anti-christ, Satan and all his angels. *Fifth*, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; Daniel 2:44; and Revelation 11:15-17, it is the time when Jesus Christ will deliver His people (the saved) and the kingdoms of the world will become His kingdom. Christ and His saints will rule and reign for a thousand years.



**Paul taught it would be an unhappy time for many, (5:1,2).** Paul compares the timing of the second coming to "a thief in the night." Because for those who are unprepared, it will be an unhappy time. It is compared to "a thief in the night" because it will be unexpected for the vast majority of the masses of humanity. And too, the beginning of the day of the Lord will be sudden. This is established by the words of Jesus to John in the book of the Revelation and in the record of Luke,

Revelation 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Luke 12:39-40 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. *40* Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

To say the least, it will be an unhappy and desolate time for those who are unprepared for this great day of judgment. It will be a time when God pours out His wrath upon the earth, which is taught in the book of the Revelation and many other places. Only God knows the date. It is uncertain to believers as well as to the world, yet believers know Jesus is coming, so they are to be ready for His return.

### **B. The Lost World is Unprepared, 5:3**

Jesus said in Luke 19:10 "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Who is lost? Anyone who has not been saved is lost. They are doomed to the burning everlasting fires of hell. A person can only be saved by repenting of his or her sins and trusting Christ from the heart. Most people who are lost do not know that they are lost. The Bible states in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4,

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: *4* In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

By and large, the religions of the world teach (in one form or another) that one is saved by works. But the Word of God clearly teaches that salvation is by the grace of

God through faith in Christ and His shed blood. In *verse 3* Paul warns that this lost and dying world is unprepared for "the day of the Lord." He declares, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." From this at least four things can be learned about the lost world: *first*, they are unprepared, 5:3-10; *second*, they are wrapped up in disastrous deception, 5:3; *third*, they are doomed, 5:3; and *fourth*, they shall not escape the judgment of God, 5:3.

**They are unprepared, (5:3-10).** In *verse 3* Paul declares "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Note the pronouns "they" and "them." Who are these people? The identification is given in verses 3-7. These third person personal pronouns are in contrast to the first person personal pronouns, both singular and plural, used in verses 4-10. These signify two different groups of people. Paul uses the plural "ye" to refer to the members of the church in Thessalonica. He also uses the singular "you." When he includes himself he uses "we" and "us." Paul implies "they" are unprepared. Verses 4 and 5 imply that the "they" are in darkness. They do not know the times, nor do they want to be bothered with the seasons. Verse 6 implies that the "they" are asleep as to spiritual things. The "others" refer to "they." Verses 6 and 7 imply that the "they" are not watching for the return of the Lord and are not sober. Instead, they are drunk with living this earthly life. In other words, these are the people without Christ as personal Savior. These are people who are lost. People, who for the most part, care only about pleasure and living this earthly life without regard to God and His Word, the Holy Bible. The fact that they are unprepared is illustrated by Christ Jesus in His comparison between the people of the day of Noah and the people of the world just before His return, as recorded in Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-27.

**They are wrapped up in disastrous deception, (5:3).** *Verse 3* relates the attitudes of most people when it states, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety...."

The attitude of most people is: "It may happen to them, but it will not happen to me." The lost are wrapped up in self-deception that will be disastrous. (Satan plans to keep them that way until it is too late.) They think they are safe and secure; but it is not so. Mark well, what these people are saying. "They" shall be saying that they shall have "peace and safety," but they shall be suddenly destroyed. The word "peace" is from εἰρήνη (eirênê), which means "peace... state of national tranquillity... exemption from the rage and havoc of war... peace between individuals, i.e., harmony, concord..." (Thayer 182).<sup>8</sup> Peace in this context indicates a situation and condition that does not cause people to have feelings of alarm and fright (Heibert 212).<sup>9</sup> "Safety" comes from ἀσφάλεια (asphaleia), which means "firmness, stability... certainty, undoubted truth... security from enemies and dangers, safety..." (Thayer 82).<sup>10</sup> The idea behind this is that since it has been so long since God has intervened directly, or at least seemingly so, that people do not really think He ever will. Peter spoke this in 2 Peter 3:3-5:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.

But this feeling of safety and peace is a ruinous deception, a mirage and an illusion. This great delusion is being put into place even now by the forces of Satan.

**They are doomed, (5:3).** Paul continues in *verse 3* "...then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child..." "Sudden" comes from αἰφνίδιος (aiphnidios), and means "unexpected, sudden, unforeseen" (Thayer 18).<sup>11</sup> This word is used only one other time in the New Testament. In Luke 21:34 it is translated "unawares." "Sudden" indicates that the doom is unexpected and unforeseen, so that people in general are unprepared. The word "destruction" from ὄλεθρος (olethros) means "ruin, destruction, death... the loss of a life of blessedness after death, future misery" (Thayer 443).<sup>12</sup> "Destruction" does not mean physical annihilation.

Instead, it means eternal separation from God and Christ. This word is used in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 and there it is modified by the word "everlasting." "Destruction" has the idea of utter and hopeless ruin and the loss of all that gives value to existence and life itself. "Destruction" is not the loss of being, but rather, the loss of well-being. It is the consignment of all the lost (the unsaved) to be cast into hell fire and to total separation from God. The worse suffering of all will be that the lost one will be away from the presence of the mercy, grace, love, care, protection, and presence and glory of God. Paul illustrates the suddenness by the illustration of the labor pains a woman has who is about to give birth to a child.

**They shall not escape the judgment of God, (5:3).** Further, Paul says, "...and they shall not escape." He means "they" shall not escape the judgment of God. The verb "shall... escape" is from ἐκφύγωσιν (ekphugôsin), which is the aorist active subjunctive of ἐκφεύγω (ekpheugô). The emphatic negative, οὐ μὴ (ou mê), is used before this verb. As discussed in the comments on 1 Thessalonians 4:15, οὐ μὴ in combination means "not at all, in no wise, or by no means." It was also shown that when οὐ μὴ is used with the aorist subjunctive, it has the sense of an emphatic future indicative. Thus, this portion of verse 3 could be rendered "...and they shall not escape, no, by no means." Those who are unprepared, in that, they have rejected Jesus and the love of God, will not escape from the wrath and judgment of Almighty God, no, not in any wise. The lost may be unprepared, but the saved are to be ready for that day to come.

### **C. The Believer can be Ready - therefore - be Ready, 5:4-8**

In verses 4-8 the apostle tells them that since the believer can be ready, he or she should be ready at all times for "the day of the Lord." He shows them that as believers they have the tools to be ready. After giving the reasons they can and should be prepared, he instructs them in the ways they are to be ready. This section can be divided as follows: (1) brethren are not

of darkness but of light, 5:4,5; (2) brethren should not sleep, 5:6a; and (3) brethren should watch and be sober, 5:6b-8.

**Brethren are not of darkness but of light, (5:4,5).** The first thing to notice in verse 4 is that Paul addresses them as "brethren." This means they are saved and have Christ as their advocate, the One who brings true peace, safety, and security. Moreover, children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, "...are not in darkness." The word "darkness" is from the Greek noun σκότος (skotos) which means "darkness... of night darkness... of darkened eyesight or blindness... metaph(orically) of ignorance respecting divine things and human duties, and the accompanying ungodliness and immorality, together with their consequent misery in hell... persons in whom darkness becomes visible and holds sway..." (Thayer 580).<sup>13</sup> Paul is using the word "darkness metaphorically." Believers have been delivered from the darkness and have been given the light of life. Believers have the light of Christ in their hearts and should not be engaged in evil and/or blinded by sin. Brothers and sisters in Christ are not to allow the darkness of the world to control them. In effect Paul is saying, that "the day of the Lord" will not overtake or seize to take control of the one who is not in darkness. Nonetheless, there is a great danger of believers being unprepared for the judgment seat of Christ. This is true of those who do not maintain fellowship with Jesus as they should.

In *verse 5* Paul states that the believers "... are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." Believers have the Word of God and the Spirit to illuminate them. Jesus is the light of the world and delivers those who trust in Him from the power of darkness. The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 1:12-13:

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: *13* Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son.

The practical application of *verses four and five* is this: The children of light and day

should not live according to darkness; they should not live as if they are of the night and darkness. They could adopt the same lifestyle as those who are without Christ, but they are not to do so. Paul explains that "the day of the Lord" should not overtake the saved as it does the lost and unprepared. He did not say it would not, but that it should not. Therefore, be ready.

**Brethren should not sleep, (5:6a).** In verses 6-8 Paul enumerates how the believer may be ready. He begins in the first part of *verse 6* by stating, "Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others..." "Therefore" is the rendering of ἄρα οὖν (apa oun). Thayer gives special attention to the joining together of these two conjunctions. He says that "ἄρα is the more logical, οὖν the more formal connective; ἄρα is illative, οὖν continuative" (Thayer 71).<sup>14</sup> Ἄρα means "consequently,... and so, so then, accordingly."<sup>14</sup> Οὖν "...is used in drawing a conclusion and in connecting sentences together logically..." and may be rendered "...then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so..." (Thayer 463,464).<sup>15</sup> When they are used together, ἄρα οὖν may be rendered "so then...."<sup>15</sup> The words "let us... sleep" is from present active subjunctive of καθεύδω (kathēudō). Καθεύδω means "to fall asleep, to drop off to sleep... to sleep... euphemistically, to be dead... metaph.(orically) to yield to sloth and sin, and to be indifferent to one's salvation" (Thayer 313).<sup>16</sup> This is not the same word or meaning as found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14. Rienecker gives the significance of the use of the subjunctive when he says that the, "...cohortative subjunctive used with the negative indicates a prohibition" (Rienecker 601).<sup>17</sup> Paraphrased, the first part of *verse 6* says, "Based on what I have already said, let us not yield to sloth and sin, and be indifferent to spiritual things, as *do* others, that is, the lost or the unprepared."

**Brethren should watch and be sober, (5:6b-8).** In the last part of *verse 6* Paul continues to give exhortations for the readiness of the believer. He declares, "...but let us watch and be sober." He uses the strong adversative conjunction ἀλλά (alla)

which means "...but, nevertheless... an objection... an exception... a restriction... nay rather, yea moreover..." (Thayer 27).<sup>18</sup> "Watch" is from the present active subjunctive of γρηγορέω (grêgoreô). It means and has the idea:

to stay away, to watch, and to be vigilant. The word signifies the proper attitude of the Christian.... The subjunctive is cohortative and the present tense indicates a continuing attitude (Rienecker 601).<sup>19</sup>

The verb "be sober" is also present active subjunctive from νήφω (nêphô). It means "to be sober... to be calm and collected in spirit... to be temperate... circumspect" (Thayer 425).<sup>20</sup> It has the idea of keeping self under control. Paul exhorts believers to be alert and yield to the control of the Holy Spirit. *Verse 7* gives the contrast to *verse 6*. The essence of *verse 7* is that believers should not be drunken with and by the pleasures and glamour of this life. Jesus said in Luke 21:34, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

*Verse 8* reemphasizes what Paul has already said. He gives further reasons to be alert and to exercise Spirit-control. He says believers are of the day and have knowledge of the day of the Lord and of spiritual things. Then He compares believers to soldiers of the cross and warriors for Christ. He exhorts them to put on spiritual armor and be in practice what they are in position, holy. He says believers are to put "...on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." Believers should clothe themselves with the armor of God and wear it at all times for protection and to help in serving the Master. This could be compared to both Romans 13:16-18 and to Ephesians 6:14-17. Also the combination of the terms faith, hope, and love reminds one of 1 Corinthians 13:13 and 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

#### **D. The Calm Assurance from God - His Promise, 5:9-11**

Paul desired that the Thessalonian believers be ready for the day of the Lord, yet he wants them to enjoy the calm assurance of resting in the Lord God. God has promised that the believer will be completely redeemed: spirit, mind, and body. The

spirit is saved at the point of faith, in the new birth. With the new birth comes the promise and prospect of full redemption. The mind is renewed as the believer fellowships with God through Bible study and prayer, and by making application of Bible truths to his life. The body shall be redeemed in the resurrection and/or the rapture. Then salvation will be complete. God wants the believer to realize that his salvation is eternally secure in Christ Jesus. This is the promise of which Paul reminds believers in this passage. *First*, Paul states the nature of the promise in 5:9. *Second*, Paul assures that the promise is not dependent on the believer in 5:9b-10a. *Third*, Paul expresses this brings the calm assurance in 5:10b-11. *Fourth*, Paul gives the proper response to this great and precious promise in 5:11.

**Paul states the nature of the promise, (5:9).** The apostle states the promise in verse 9, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." This promise comes from God, the true and faithful One. Any promise God makes is sure, steadfast, and unmovable. This promise has both a negative and positive aspect. "For" from the conjunction ὅτι (hoti) may be rendered "that, because, or since" (Thayer 458, 459).<sup>21</sup> The verb "hath... appointed" is from the aorist middle indicative of τίθημι (tithêmi). This verb means "to set, put, place... lay... to make... to set forth... to establish..." (Thayer 622,623).<sup>22</sup> The middle voice means "to make (or set) for one's self or for one's use... to appoint with one's self or in one's mind."<sup>22</sup> The word "wrath" is from ὀργή (orgê), which means "anger... wrath, indignation,... anger exhibited in punishment, hence used for punishment itself... to undergo punishment in misery..." (Thayer 452).<sup>23</sup> Paul uses the negative οὐκ (ouk) with the verb. Hence, he is saying, "Based on what I have already said, you can be assured that God has not appointed the believing sinner to punishment or to undergo the punishment of God in misery...." This is confirmed by the words of Jesus in John 3:18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only



begotten Son of God." The Bible states in John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." The punishment that the believer deserves was taken by Jesus Himself on the cross. He suffered in the place of each believer.

The positive aspect of this promise is that, God has appointed the believer "...to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." The noun "obtain" is from περιποίησις (peripoiêsis), which means "a preserving, preservation... possession... an obtaining: with a genitive of the thing to be obtained..." (Thayer 504,505).<sup>24</sup> The Greek word for "salvation" is in the genitive case. The sense is that God has appointed the believer to obtain salvation and it is preserved. God established the plan of salvation. When a sinner repents of sin and believes in Christ, God has established that such a one will be saved and He sets that one aside. He preserves that one for Himself. Someone may ask: "Does not the believer already have salvation?" The answer is yes. The word "salvation" as used in this context takes in more than just the new birth. It includes full and complete fellowship with Jesus Christ. It includes the redemption of the body of which children of God will not experience until the resurrection and/or the rapture. Only then, will salvation be complete in all three tenses as has been previously discussed.

**Paul assures the promise is not dependent on the believer, (5:9b-10a).** This two-fold promise is not dependent on the believer. It is dependent on God and His Son. It is God who made the promise. It is God who "hath not appointed" the believer "to wrath." It is God who has promised that the believer will obtain complete and full salvation by or through the Lord Jesus Christ. This salvation is offered by God through Jesus Christ. This salvation is secured by the grace of God through faith. It is eternally secure and the believer is safe in the arms of Jesus Christ. Once saved, a person is destined to obtain salvation, complete and full, and full fellowship with Christ and the Father. Many scriptures can be offered to prove that the believer is eternally secure in Christ such as: John 3:16; 5:24; Romans 8:29-38.

The *first part of verse 10* declares that it is Jesus, "Who died for us...." Jesus is the one who paid the price in full for all of the sins of everyone who has ever lived or that shall ever live. As the song says, "Jesus paid it all." God accepts and justifies the sinner who puts his or her faith in the beloved Son. The promise is not based on the life or works of the sinner, but upon the fact that Jesus shed His precious blood on the cross. When the blood of Jesus is applied to the heart of the sinner by faith, the penalty of sin of the sinner is counted by God as paid in full, his/her guilt is removed, his/her sins are washed away, and the soul is as white and pure as fresh fallen snow. Jesus died not for Himself, but He died a substitutionary death for all who will accept it by faith.

**Paul expresses this brings the calm assurance, (5:10b-11).** *Verses 10 and 11* speaks of the calm or peace that the repentant believer has. Calm assurance is brought to the believer because he or she is assured of heaven. In *verse 9* God promises that the born again blood bought believer is not appointed to wrath. On the other hand, complete redemption "by our Lord Jesus Christ" is appointed to the saved sinner to be obtained at the instance of the resurrection and/or the rapture. *Verses 10 and 11* are verses of great comfort. It is Christ "who died for..." all. Thus Paul is saying that whether the believer is awake (those saved who are still alive physically at the time of the rapture), or whether he or she is asleep, (those who are saved but whose bodies are in the grave at the time of the rapture), all believers, dead or alive, shall live together with Him forever in glory.

The verb "wake" is from the Greek verb γρηγορέω (grêgoreô). It is the same word that is translated "let us watch" in *verse 6*. In *verse 6* the emphasis is on watching and being vigilant. In *verse 10* the context causes it to carry the idea of the believers who are alive and doing business for the Lord Jesus while awaiting the return of Christ. Although the word "sleep" in *verse 10* comes from the same word used in *verses 6 and 7*, it does not have the

same shade of meaning. In *verses 6 and 7*, καθεύδω (kathēudō) is used in the metaphorical sense of yielding "to sloth and sin." The context of *verse 10* would indicate that καθεύδω (kathēudō) simply speaks of a believer who is "dead" and his or her body is in the grave.

In the *last part of verse 10*, Paul says, whether one is awake or asleep, because Christ "died for us, that... we should live together with him." The words rendered "we should live" is the translation of the aorist active subjunctive verb ζήσωμεν (zēsōmen) which is from ζάω (zaō). Rienecker says that ζάω means "to live" (601).<sup>25</sup> He further writes, "The aorist points to this 'life' as a definite fact secured to us by the equally definite death of our Lord" (Milligan qtd by Rienecker 601).<sup>25</sup> The Amplified Bible translates the *last part of verse 10*, "so that... we might live together with Him *and* share His life" (320)<sup>26</sup> Therefore, as this writer stated in the introductory remarks of this chapter on pages 174-175, 1 Thessalonians 5:10,11 affirms 1 Thessalonians 4:17,18. These inspired Scriptures of truth bring calm assurance to all believers. These Scriptures cause living believers to be comforted over the death of loved ones who have died being in Christ. Paul assures them of this when he writes in the *first part of verse 11*, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together..." which is the same assuring message of 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

**Paul gives the proper response to this great and precious promise, (5:11).**

*Verses 9 and 10* express the promise of safety in Christ, security in Christ, and life with Christ in heaven forevermore. On the other hand, *Verse 11* gives the proper response to this precious promise. Paul states, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." The idea is that this promise should encourage each believer, give them calm assurance, and give them incentive to honor God with proper service. Also each believer should encourage and comfort fellow believers to "keep on keeping on" serving the Lord and one another. This will cause the church to be edified (built up) in the faith and to be prepared for the second coming.

### Summary of Chapter

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 the Apostle Paul addresses and emphasizes the need for each believer to be ready for "the day of the Lord." Paul links the need for readiness and the safety of those who are alive in Christ. He assures believers that heaven is sure, secure, and they are safe in Jesus. In view of verses 10 and 11 this portion of Scripture is a continuation of "...The Message On Comfort." He exhorts church members to be ready and at the same time sound out the warning from God that every person outside of Christ needs to "flee from the wrath to come." John the Baptist used this type of warning in Matthew 3:7 and Luke 3:7. Every person should ask himself, "Am I prepared in face of 'the wrath to come' to stand before God, face to face." Each believer should ask the question, "Am I ready to meet Christ Jesus the Lord, face to face." The subject about which Paul writes in this section is; "The Model Church: The Members Are Ready." The returning Lord will be "the Judge" of all.

The Apostle Paul wanted the church in Thessalonica to realize and learn several things connected with "the day of the Lord." He wants believers to realize that inasmuch as the timing of the coming of the Lord Jesus is uncertain, they should be ready at all times. Since the timing is uncertain, he warns that people in general are not prepared and those who remain unprepared shall not escape the wrath to come. Notwithstanding, the believer can be ready because God supplies the believer with all the necessary spiritual equipment in order to be ready. Paul indicates that believers should not only be ready, but also that believers should witness to the saving grace of God. In chapter 1 Paul had commended the church in Thessalonica for being good "ensamples" and for sounding "...out the word of the Lord..." and he wanted them to continue in this good work to the glory of God. They were ready and he wanted them to continue to be ready. He instructs them that they should possess calm assurance because God has given believers a great and precious promise. They should in turn be comforted and comfort others. The model church member is ready.

Notes

1. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament. (N.p.: Macmillian, 1957), p. 244.
2. Ibid., p. 109.
3. W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984). pp. 1005,1149,1150.
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5. Ibid., p. 318.
6. Ibid., p. 319.
7. Ibid., p. 24.
8. Ibid., p. 182.
9. D. Edmond Hiebert, The Thessalonian Epistles, A Call to Readiness, A Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1971, 1982). p. 212.
10. Thayer, op. cit., p. 82.
11. Ibid., p. 18.
12. Ibid., p. 443.
13. Ibid., p. 580.
14. Ibid., p. 71.
15. Ibid., pp. 463, 464.
16. Ibid., p. 313.
17. Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, Ed. Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., (Grand Rapids, Regency Reference Library From Zondervan, 1976). p. 601.
18. Thayer, op. cit., p. 27.
19. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 601.
20. Thayer, op. cit., p. 425.
21. Ibid., pp. 458,459.
22. Ibid., pp. 622,623.
23. Ibid., p. 452.
24. Ibid., pp. 504,505.
25. Rienecker, op. cit., p. 601.
26. The Amplified Bible, Containing the Amplified Old Testament and the Amplified New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [The Lockman Foundation], 1965). p. 320 of the New Testament Section.

## CHAPTER 10

### A Model Church: Walking Worthy of God (1 Thessalonians 5:12-28)

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## CHAPTER 10

### **A Model Church: Walking Worthy of God**

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-28)

Paul begins this passage with the words, "And we beseech you, brethren...." In general, he beseeches them in view of what he has written to them throughout the entire epistle. In particular, he beseeches them in view of what he has written in chapter 5:1-11. He continues with the subject that he initiated in chapter 4:1-12. In chapter 4 verses 1-3 Paul exhorts this model church and all New Testament churches "...to walk and to please God... for this is the will of God, even your sanctification...." Sanctification is to walk in the ways of God and His Word. It is to walk to please God in every day life. It includes having the right and proper relationship and fellowship with God and other people. Besides the exhortations given in chapter 4, Paul delivers additional exhortations to the Thessalonians in chapter 5:12-28. By the authority of the Lord Jesus, Paul exhorted them in 1 Thessalonians 4:1 and 10 "to walk and to please God..." in order that they would "...increase (or abound) more and more" or grow in maturity in Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 2:11,12 he exhorted them to "...walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." What it means to "walk worthy of God" was explained in the comments made on 1 Thessalonians 2:12:

... the word "walk" speaks of how one conducts his life. In this present day it speaks of the lifestyle of an individual. In Ephesians 4:1 Paul admonishes believers to conduct their lives in a manner... worthy of having answered the call of God to be saved. (Refer to page 88.)

In chapter 5:12-28, Paul continues with this line of reasoning so that the members of the church in Thessalonica will exercise exemplary conduct and

acceptable worship. Thus, he beseeches them to practice these various exhortations for proper Christian conduct. By practicing these things, born again believers will live holy lives and worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 5:24). In living holy lives and worshipping in an acceptable manner, they will give glory and honor to God and the Lord Jesus Christ. These exhortations may be summarized as follows: *first*, walking worthy in regard to pastors, 5:12,13; *second*, walking worthy in regard to others, 5:14,15; *third*, walking worthy in regard to joyful living, 5:16-18; *fourth*, walking worthy in regard to acceptable worship, 5:19-22; *fifth*, walking worthy because of the God of peace, 5:23-24; and *sixth*, final requests, instructions, and benediction, 5:25-28. When church members walk worthy of God, their church will be a model church.

#### **A. Walking Worthy in Regard to Pastors, 5:12,13**

In verses 12 and 13 the Apostle Paul makes three very strong requests of the members of the church in Thessalonica concerning walking worthy in regard to church leaders. No doubt, this is speaking of pastors and/or preachers and possibly other teachers within the local church. These three requests are as follows: (1) appreciate pastors, 5:12, (2) esteem pastors, 5:13a; and (3) help pastors by living in peace, 5:13b. If believers will practice these things, they will strengthen their church and walk worthy of God in regard to pastors.

**Appreciate pastors, 5:12.** Paul begins this verse by expressing his *first request* when he says, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." The verb "to know" is from the perfect active infinitive εἰδέναι (eidenai), which is from the root οἶδα (oida) and/or εἶδω (eidô). Εἰδέναι is the verb translated "should know" in 1 Thessalonians 4:4. Thayer says the basic meaning of this verb is "to know" with the idea of "...get knowledge of, understand, perceive" (172-174).<sup>1</sup> Thayer says the word is used "Hebraistically..." in "1 Thessalonians 5:12" and could be rendered "to have regard for one, cherish, pay attention to."<sup>1</sup> One definition for the word "regard" is "to take



into account, consider" (American College Dictionary 1019).<sup>2</sup> "Regard" carries the idea of admiration, favor, respect, and etc.<sup>2</sup> The word "cherish" means "to hold dear... to keep or cultivate with care and affection..." (Webster 143).<sup>3</sup> The word "appreciate" is a synonym of "cherish."<sup>3</sup> The Amplified Bible renders *verse 12*, "Now also we beseech you, brethren, get to know those who labor among you -- recognize them for what they are, acknowledge and appreciate and respect them all --your leaders who are over you in the Lord, and those who warn and kindly reprove and exhort you" (320).<sup>4</sup> Paul is speaking in particular of pastors, preachers, and possibly other Bible teachers as proved by his enumeration of the duties they perform. *Verse 12* specifies these as follows: *first*, they "labour among you" (in the Word of God); *second*, they have charge "over you in the Lord," and *third*, they "admonish you" or give you instructions in spiritual things. The brothers and sisters should know and/or appreciate pastors and preachers among them.

The Apostle Paul during his missionary journeys organized New Testament churches. He also ordained elders in each local assembly of baptized believers according to Luke in Acts 14:23, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." (Refer to Titus 1:5-9.) Even though the terms "elder, pastor, and bishop" have slightly different meanings, the New Testament uses them to refer to the same office. (Refer to Acts 20:17; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1; and Titus 1:5.) These terms are used for the spiritual overseer or the leader over spiritual things in a local church. The word bishop is from ἐπίσκοπος (episkopê). It means one having "...the oversight, i. e. overseership, office, charge... the office of a bishop, (the overseer or presiding officer)..." (Thayer 242,243)<sup>5</sup> in a New Testament church. The Apostle Peter uses the present active participle of the verb ἐπισκοπέω (episkopeô), which is translated "taking the oversight thereof" in 1 Peter 5:2. Peter instructs preachers to, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy

lucre, but of a ready mind." When Paul uses or refers to the term "bishop," he uses it to speak of a preacher who was the undershepherd over one local church. The word "pastor" comes from the Greek noun ποιμήν (poimên). Ποιμήν is used 18 times in the New Testament and is translated "shepherd (s)" 15 times, "Shepherd" 2 times, and in the plural form, "pastors," 1 time in Ephesians 4:11.

In verse 12 Paul beseeches believers to appreciate, *first*, the ones who "labour among you" in the Word of God. Believers should not be strangers to the pastor. Believers should not be cold and distant to him and his family. At the same time, they should not meddle into his private business anymore than they would meddle into the private business of others. (Refer to 4:11,12.) *Second*, Paul beseeches believers to appreciate the ones who "are over you in the Lord," i.e., one who has charge over you in the Lord. The idea is that of a spiritual overseer. The pastor is one that is to see that the things done are done according to the Word of God. Therefore, believers, and especially church members, should regard the pastor as a spiritual leader and teacher of holy things. Also, believers should regard their pastor as one in whom they can confide and with whom they seek counsel for spiritual problems as well as other problems. *Third*, Paul beseeches believers to appreciate the ones who "admonish(es)" the believers, i.e., the one who gives believers instructions and warnings concerning spiritual things. Believers should not be strangers to the house of God where their pastor preaches the Word of Life. Most likely, God has given him the very message that a believer needs for the hour. If a believer misses a service, he or she may miss the blessing and the message he or she needs the most, either now or in the future. Believers should not consider the admonitions and reproofs of the pastor as those of a stranger, but as one who loves them and the church of which they are members. Believers should consider the preacher as one who is a pastor and a dear friend. The writer of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 13:7,17:

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. . . . 17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

The word "rule" has the same idea as spiritual overseer, but it is actually a stronger word.

**Esteem pastors, 5:13a.** In the *first part of verse 13* the apostle expresses the second request by writing: "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake...." Walvoord comments that church leaders:

...should be esteemed because of the work they are doing. In other words, when we recognize that God is using a man, it is in the end a recognition of God and His sovereign choice, of divine grace, and gifts, and not the man himself. The glory must remain with God even though we recognize the instrument (58).<sup>6</sup>

The brothers and sisters should esteem the pastor very highly in love for the work he is doing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter summarizes this work in 1 Peter 5:1-5:

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

The work of the pastor is to feed the flock of God. He is to take the oversight or be the pastor. He is not to do it by constraint or force. He is not to be a dictator, yet he is to lead the flock of the Lord willingly. He is not to do it for filthy lucre. In other words, he is not to be greedy. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches that he is to be supported by the church with tithes and offerings from her members. He is not to be starved. His standard of living should be, at least, equal to that of most of the members. The pastor is to be an example to the flock of God. Therefore, church members should value very highly the office and love the pastor for the work he is doing in the Lord.

Besides what Peter wrote, what else constitutes the work of the pastor (according to the New Testament)? This is conveyed in several other Scriptures. Paul instructs Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." He added in 2 Timothy 4:1-3:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.

The pastor is to: preach the word, be ready or prepared at all times, "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (or teaching). As previously stated, the pastor is to be the spiritual overseer. This is also taught in Acts 20:28:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

These Scriptures imply that the pastor should be an example in evangelizing the lost. However, he should teach the members that they have a great responsibility and privilege to witness to the lost about Christ.

**Help pastors by living in peace, 5:13b.** In the *last part of verse 13* the apostle expresses the third request when he writes: "...*And be at peace among yourselves.*" This is speaking of the proper pastor-church relationship and the relationship among the brethren. The context involves walking worthy in regard to pastors. The Apostle Paul links the relationship among the brethren to the appreciation and high evaluation of pastors. With the right kind of God-called man as pastor and with the members following his biblical teachings, as he follows the Lord, a church will go forward for Christ in sweet, satisfying harmony. This will cause the members to be at peace among themselves. This means the Thessalonians and all believers should be careful not to instigate a quarrel. On the other hand, they should endeavor to preserve the peace. Jesus said in Mark 9:50, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost

his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." When church members fight among themselves, the testimony of the church to the grace of God suffers tremendously. Quarrels will cause a church to cease to grow, glow, and go for the Lord Jesus. When a church is corrupted by division and unrest it will be difficult to accomplish the job that Jesus wants done. If someone has a grievance, they should settle it as soon as possible. In Matthew 18:15-19, Jesus instructs His disciples in the procedure for settling differences. This is to be done in love and humility with frankness and forthrightness. All too often, this scriptural practice is neglected. When church members are not "at peace among" themselves, church problems multiply. Consequently, pastors nor churches will be effective in doing the task the Lord Jesus has charged them to do. Church members must live in peace with each other. Otherwise, the kingdom work of Jesus Christ will not be advanced. Brothers and sisters in Christ should remember that they are trophies of the grace of God. They are citizens of heaven. These things being true, their lives should reflect what they are. They should walk worthy in regard to pastors and to each other.

### **B. Walking Worthy in Regard to Others, 5:14,15**

The testimony of a New Testament church is very important to the Lord, to the community where she serves, to the world in general, and to themselves. Part of maintaining a God honoring testimony is to "walk worthy in regard to pastors." However, it is also extremely important for church members to exercise the proper conduct towards others. Paul exhorted the church in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 4:12 to "...walk honestly toward them that are without...." In 1 Thessalonians 5:14,15 he teaches them further along this line by exhorting them to walk worthy in regard to others. In these verses he deals with (1) three types of individuals who need special attention, help, and care, 5:14; and he relates to them (2) the standard of Christian conduct, 5:14, 15.

**Three types of individuals who need special attention, help, and care, 5:14.**

The *first part of verse 14* states, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak...." In this three-fold exhortation, Paul uses the Greek imperative mode for each of the verbs: "warn," "comfort," and "support." This implies a responsibility. The apostle exhorts the "brethren" to deal with three kinds of people who need special attention, help, and care. *First*, the unruly need to be warned or admonished. "Unruly" is the translation of the accusative plural, ἄτακτος (ataktos). Ἄτακτος means "disorderly, out of the ranks, (often so of soldiers); irregular, inordinate... immoderate pleasures... deviating from the prescribed order or rule" (Thayer 83).<sup>7</sup> Bushell adds that it was "used in Greek society of those who did not show up for work."<sup>8</sup> Hence, "unruly" also carries the idea of being idle. The adverb form of ἄτακτος is translated "disorderly" in 2 Thessalonians 3:6:

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly [ἀτάκτως (ataktos)] and not after the tradition which he received of us."

It is the duty of the church to warn the unruly or disorderly. Believers are Christian soldiers. Even as regular army soldiers may be disorderly, believers sometimes get out of line. An army patrol can not effectively accomplish the mission assigned to it with even one unruly soldiers. Even so, a New Testament church cannot effectively carry out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus when she does not take care of disorderly members. It is the responsibility of a church to administer church discipline in love.

*Second*, and on the other hand, it is the duty of the brothers and sisters in the church to "comfort the feebleminded." "Feebleminded" is translated from the accusative plural adjective form of ὀλιγόψυχος (oligopsuchos), which means "fainthearted, worried, discouraged, fearful" (Rienecker 602).<sup>9</sup> This word includes the dispirited, the disheartened, the downcast, and the cowardly. The feebleminded or fainthearted needs to be encouraged in the faith. At times

every believer needs the consoling voice of a dear friend. *Third*, Paul exhorts church members in Thessalonica to "support the weak" The verb "support" is rendered from the present middle imperative of ἀντέχομαι (antechomai). The Analytical Greek Lexicon says ἀντέχομαι means "to exercise a zealous care for any one" in "1 Thess. 5:14" (32).<sup>10</sup> In Romans 15:1-2 the Bible states,

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

Those weak physically, morally, and/or those weak in the faith should be helped, supported, and consoled.

**The standard of Christian conduct, 5:14,15.** In the *last part of verse 14 and in verse 15* Paul set forth a two-fold overall standard of Christian conduct. *First*, he asserts a very important all-around standard of Christian conduct when he says in the *last part of verse 14*, "...be patient toward all *men*." "Be patient" is the rendering of the present active imperative form of μακροθυμέω (makrothumeō). Μακροθυμέω means "...to persevere patiently and bravely... in enduring misfortunes and troubles... to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others; to be mild and slow in avenging; to be longsuffering, slow to anger, slow to punish" (Thayer 387).<sup>11</sup> The idea is to be very slow to anger, control the temper, be longsuffering, and considerate even in the face of offenses, injuries, and short comings of others. It is imperative that the born again blood bought believer cultivate this virtue toward both members in a church and those outside the membership.

*Second*, in *verse 15*, Paul asserts, "See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*...." This is the consequence of being patient. When someone is offended or injured in some way, the natural response is to get even. This is not the standard that God has set for His children. The Bible says in Rom 12:19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." When offended, believers should allow God to take care of the situation and of the offending parties according

to His timetable and judgment. Believers must remember that God always knows best. When Paul says, "See that none" do this, he is actually encouraging the church in Thessalonica to act as a group and not allow any of the members to render evil for evil to others.

The other side of this coin is expressed in the *latter part of verse 15*, "...but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*." The standard of conduct for the child of God to follow is not to render evil for evil, but rather do good in the face of evil. Certainly, this would include not using foul language, but the emphasis of the exhortation is to be benevolent, kind, just, generous among other believers and to others. In this world there are at least three standards of conduct toward others. Walvoord has summarized it as follows:

first, the standard of the heathen wicked world which does evil in response to good; second, there is the attitude of the so-called cultured world which is to do good toward those who do good to them; third, there is the attitude of Christian faith to do good to them [*even those*] who do evil to us (59).<sup>12</sup>

Joseph, the son of Jacob, in Genesis is a good example of this. Jesus is the primary example and He instructs His disciples in Mat 5:38-40,

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:  
39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

The above instructions give the standard of overall Christian conduct. Jesus set the standard by His life and death. Believers should follow His blessed example.

### **C. Walking Worthy in Regard to Joyful Living, 5:16-18;**

Paul continues to exhort the Thessalonians to live holy lives through the end of chapter 5. This includes how to worship God in an acceptable matter. Part of holy living is to walk worthy in regard to joyful living. Holy living is joyful living. In verses 16-18 he gives three commands to help in living the holy life. These are all imperatives. Yet they are privileges of the people of God. These are: (1) rejoice evermore, 5:16; (2) pray without ceasing, 5:17; and



(3) give thanks in every thing, 5:18. These three commands are inseparable. (They are also inseparable from the commands given in verses 19-22.) If one is to live joyfully, he or she must not only rejoice, but he or she must also pray and give thanks. What is the reason for this? Paul says, "this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." It is interesting to note the modifying words of these exhortations. "Evermore" means at all times. "Without ceasing" means continually. "In every thing" means for all things.

**Rejoice evermore, 5:16.** In the light of the suffering of Paul and his helpers, it is remarkable that Paul expresses this command to "Rejoice evermore." In Acts 16, Luke records the imprisonment and stripes that Paul and Silas received in Philippi. They were placed in jail for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather than complain that God did not immediately deliver them, they prayed and sang praises to God for all to hear. They could do this because they were saved and trusted God. They believed that Jesus had died and was resurrected. They believed that all who repent and believe in Jesus for personal salvation are redeemed by His precious blood. Therefore, Paul and Silas were rejoicing in the Lord Jesus and in eternal salvation. They rejoiced even more when God used their persecution to bring about the salvation and even the baptism of the jailer and his family.

While happiness usually depends on external circumstances, rejoicing or having joy depends on the standing of a person before the Almighty God. The Bible teaches that God cares for His children. From the example of Job and others, the believer learns that nothing can touch him or her until God allows it. If God allows it, then God has a great purpose for it. The Bible assures believers in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that,

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Believers should rejoice evermore in the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, in salvation, and in all spiritual blessings. Believers should rejoice evermore because

the Bible teaches eternal security for every repentant and believing sinner. Believers should rejoice evermore because Jesus watches over every believer and will someday take all believers to heaven. Believers should rejoice evermore because God knows all about their troubles, trails, and testings. Believers should rejoice evermore because of the truth of Romans 8:28.

**Pray without ceasing, 5:17.** The next command (which is also a privilege of church members) is, "Pray without ceasing." Prayer avails much. Prayer and answered prayer will cause the heart to rejoice. An excellent scriptural example of praying without ceasing is found in Acts chapter 12. King Herod had the Apostle James, the brother of John, killed. Further, King Herod imprisoned the Apostle Peter. Luke records in Acts 12:5, "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." The church in Jerusalem prayed for Peter and God sent an angel and delivered him out of prison. Jesus told His disciples in Luke 18:1, "...that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Refer also to Ephesians 6:18 and James 5:15-16.) In order to walk worthy in regard to joyful living the believer should engage in prayer without ceasing.

**Give thanks in every thing, 5:18.** Yet another great privilege of born again blood bought believers is "In every thing give thanks." This is part of holy and joyful living. The believer can always find something for which to be thankful. Even in sorrows and trials there are hidden blessings or hidden lessons that may turn into a blessing(s). There are many comforting passages in the Bible. Romans 8:28 declares, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The following poem was copied from a church bulletin several years ago. The author is unknown to this writer.

**"IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS"**<sup>13</sup>

"Mid sunshine, cloud or stormy days,  
When hope abounds or care dismays,  
When trials press and toils increase,  
Let not thy faith in God decrease -  
'In every thing give thanks.' "

All things we know shall work for good, Nor would we change them if we could;

'Tis well if only He command; His promises will ever stand -

'In everything give thanks.'

"He satisfies the longing heart, He thwarts the tempter's cruel dart,  
With goodness fills the hungry soul, And helps us sing when billows roll.

'In every thing give thanks.' " (Calvary Baptist Bulletin, Duncan, OK)<sup>13</sup>

In the *last part of verse 18* Paul adds, "...for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This goes with all three verses, verses 16, 17, and 18. In order to walk worthy in regard to joyful living God has ordain that believers: "Rejoice evermore. . . . Pray without ceasing. . . . In every thing give thanks...." These are privileges for every believer.

#### **D. Walking Worthy in Regard to Acceptable Worship, 5:19-22**

In verses 19-22 Paul gives five more commands. These relate to acceptable public worship in the church. They are in addition to what Paul has already written in the previous verses. "Quench not the Spirit" is the first and main command. The others relate to it. This is true because "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). Also, this is true because the Holy Spirit teaches, convicts, guides, directs, reproves, and reveals the truth of the Scriptures. (Refer to John 14-16.) In order for the Thessalonians and all believers to walk worthy of God in regard to acceptable worship the apostle charges them to: (1) quench not the Holy Spirit, 5:19; (2) despise not prophesyings, 5:20; (3) prove all things, 5:21a; (4) hold fast that which is good, 5:21b; and (5) abstain from all appearance of evil, 5:22. For a New Testament church, or a family, or an individual believer to engage in acceptable worship, whether private or public, they must observe these exhortations and admonitions.

**Quench not the Holy Spirit, 5:19.** In *verse 19* Paul admonishes them, "Quench not the Spirit." The Spirit is the Holy Spirit of God. The verb "quench" is from the present active imperative form of σβέννυμι (sbennumi). Σβέννυμι means "to extinguish, quench... of fire or things on fire... to be quenched, to go out..."

metaph(orically) to quench i.e. to suppress, stifle: of divine influence" (Thayer 572).<sup>14</sup> The Analytical Greek Lexicon says this word means "to quench, damp, hinder, thwart" (364)<sup>15</sup> in and for 1 Thessalonians 5:19. The idea behind "quench" is to put out the fire, to hinder, or extinguish or to let hinder the consuming force. The word "quench" is used a total of twelve times in the Bible. In 2 Samuel 14:7 "quench" is used of quenching coal. In 2 Samuel 21:17 it is used of quenching the light of Israel. In Psalms 104:11 "quench" speaks of quenching thirst. The Song of Solomon 8:7 says, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it...." The prophets speak of the judgment of God as being like fire that cannot be quenched in: Isaiah 1:31; Jeremiah 4:4; 21:12; and Amos 5:8. Two of these are as follows:

Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

Amos 5:6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour *it*, and *there be* none to quench *it* in Bethel.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 42:3 in Matthew 12:20, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." In Ephesians 6:16, Paul states that by taking the shield of faith the believer can quench the fiery darts of the wicked. The past tense of "quench," quenched, is used a total of seventeen times in the Bible. Jesus said in Mark 9:43, "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched"

Although the words "quench" and "grieve" are from different Greek words and have different meanings, they are related. Things that grieve the Spirit are seen Ephesians 4:30-31:

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. *31* Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.

The verb "grieve" is from λυπέω (lupeō). Λυπέω (Lupeō) means "to make sorrowful; to affect with sadness, cause grief; to throw into sorrow... to grieve,

offend...." In quenching the Spirit believers cause the Spirit of God to be grieved. According to Psalm 78:40, Israel grieved God during their journey from Egypt to the promised land. Psalms 78:41 reveals that they "...tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel." What an appalling thought! What caused God to be grieved with Israel? It was because they did not follow and believe His Holy Word. Believers grieve the Spirit when they do not follow His leadership as clearly spelled out in the Word of God. Isaiah 63:10 speaking of Israel states, "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." ("Vexed" is from the same word in the Hebrew as is "grieved".) Born again believers grieve the Spirit when they do not follow the Word of God and act in faith believing that God knows best. To quench the Spirit means to suppress or smother the influence of, draw back and refuse to go where the Spirit leads. While the Spirit leads, He does not compel.

*1 Thessalonians 5:19* declares, "Quench not the Spirit," that is, do not suppress, stifle, hinder, thwart, or extinguish the work of the Holy Spirit. To quench the Spirit is to let the fires of revival die down because believers are not feeding the fire the proper fuel. What is the proper fuel. The proper fuel includes: (1) prayer, (1) Bible study, (3) fellowship in church capacity, and (4) witnessing to others of their need of Jesus as Savior. On the negative side: (1) it is not doing what the Spirit leads one to do according to the Bible; and (2) it is not doing the good that one knows he or she should do. (Refer to James 4:17.) What is the purpose of engaging in prayer, Bible study, fellowship, witnessing, and attending worship services? The answer is to see the face of the glory of Christ Jesus. When a believer sees the glory of Jesus, everything else will seem so dim and unimportant. Thus, he or she will not have any trouble putting Jesus and service to Him first and foremost in his or her life. In this way believers will not quench the Holy Spirit. Therefore, part of walking worthy in regard to acceptable worship is to "Quench not the Spirit."

**Despise not prophesyings, 5:20.** As previously stated, the exhortations of

verses 20-22 are related to the one in verse 19. If the Spirit is quenched, a church, a family, nor an individual can engage in acceptable worship. To "despise prophesyings" is to quench the Spirit. "Despise" is the rendering of the present active imperative form of ἐξουθενέω (exoutheneô). Besides being translated "despise" 6 times in the New Testament, this word is rendered "set at nought" 3 times, "are least esteemed" 1 time, and "contemptible" 1 time. To "despise" a thing is to set at nought as not important or as nothing. The word "prophesy" has a dual meaning. The first meaning is to predict accurately the future under the direction of the Holy Spirit. This is what the Bible prophets did. This is the meaning in 1 Corinthians 13:8, "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." On the other hand, "prophesy" means simply to preach or tell forth the Word of God, that is, to preach what has already been written and completed. Even though, Paul may have had both of these meanings in mind, the latter meaning is the meaning that is applicable today. This is true because of what is said in 1 Corinthians 13:8. Because of the purpose of preaching, Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 14, that to preach is better than to speak in tongues or to perform miracles. (Besides, speaking in tongues and miracles are not available today as they were in the New Testament era as proven by 1 Corinthians 13:8.) In regard to the fact that preaching is better, take note of three passages of Scripture. The first is Romans 1:14-16:

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. *15* So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. *16* For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Paul did not say, "I am ready" to speak in tongues or to perform miracles. He did say, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you...." The second passage is found in 1 Corinthians 1:18,21:

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . *21* For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

The third passage is found in Romans 10:17, "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." According to these three passages, preaching (which includes teaching) has the power that is needed to bring about the salvation of the lost soul. Preaching is that which God uses to instruct the saved in the service of God after they are saved. Preaching (or witnessing), either one-on-one, or one preaching to many, is that which is used of the Holy Spirit to bring about conviction in the human heart. In fact, these passages show that there is nothing else available to do the job. Preaching has an influence for good. No man is made poorer or less respectable by it.

Those that despise preaching, despise the very instrument used and ordained of God to save their souls and to promote their spiritual welfare. If one despises the preaching and teaching of the Holy Word of God, the Spirit will be quenched. *Verses 19 and 20* go together. Each believer should ask this question of himself or herself: "Do I despise the preaching of the Word of God?" Some one may say, oh, no! Yet, if a person is not consistent in his or her church attendance, then maybe he or she should think again. The Bible declares in Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." One way people manifest that they despise the preaching of the Word of God is disregarding Hebrews 10:25 and Matthew 6:33,34. Another way is not yielding to the message of truth and not making the application of it to their individual lives. Therefore, part of walking worthy in regard to acceptable worship is to "Despise not prophesyings."

**Prove all things, 5:21a.** In *verses 21 and 22* Paul gives three more imperatives that believers are to practice in order to "Quench not the Spirit." In the *first part of verse 21* Paul exhorts the church in Thessalonica to "Prove all things." Charles B. Williams translates this, "But continue to prove all things until you can approve them" (Williams *qtd by* Vaughan 946).<sup>16</sup> Believers must prove or test

whether the doctrines and practices presented are true. The "all things" refers to the message that is being preached, for not everything being preached is truly of God. Believers should not believe, receive, nor practice everything they hear without proof. Whatever is being taught should be tested by the Bible. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:14,

That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Satan uses using many false teachers and many things to deceive people. Discernment skills must be developed. Believers should not allow themselves to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." In Acts 20:29-30 Paul warns,

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. *30* Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

In 1 Timothy 4:1-3 Paul warns that some will depart from the true set of doctrine:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; *2* Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; *3* Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Therefore, believers must "try the spirits" as instructed by the Apostle John in 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." How can a church and her members prove or test all things? The prophet Isaiah states in Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them." The Bereans did this according to Acts 17:11 "These... received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Teachers and preachers should be careful not to add to nor take away, nor inject, nor pervert, nor change the Word of God. Therefore, part of walking worthy in regard to acceptable worship is to "Prove all things."

**Hold fast that which is good, 5:21b.** The next positive imperative that must be practiced in order to "Quench not the Spirit" is to "Hold fast that which is good."



"Hold fast" is the rendering of the present active imperative of κατέχω (katechô). Κατέχω means "to hold back... retain... from going away... to hold fast, keep secure, keep firm possession..." (Thayer 339,340).<sup>17</sup> The adjective "good" is from the Greek word καλός (kalos). This word means "beautiful... excellent... choice... precious, useful... good, excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well adapted to its ends... genuine, approved" (Thayer 322).<sup>18</sup> The born again believer should by no means let go of "...that which is good" or excellent, precious, useful, genuine, and approved. The believer should cling to it by all means. What is that which is good, genuine, and approved? The first answer is: Christ Jesus as our personal Savior. Furthermore, it includes "holding on to the Word of Life." People should be careful that they do not trash the Word of God for a mess of poisoned pottage. Proverbs 23:23 states, "Buy the truth, and sell it not: also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." Not only should a church and believers cling to the truth but also contend for the truth. Jude declares in Jude 3,

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude says to "contend for the faith" or the New Testament system of doctrines that was delivered unto the New Testament churches in the first century once and for all. The Psalmist proclaims in Psalms 119:103, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!" Therefore, part of walking worthy in regard to acceptable worship is to "Hold fast (*or firmly*) that which is good."

**Abstain from all appearance of evil, 5:22.** In *verse* 22 Paul admonishes "Abstain from all appearance of evil." This is needful in order to "Quench not the Spirit" and to engage in acceptable worship. Many church members take this admonition too lightly. This forewarning stands in stark contrast to the good of holding to the truth of the Word of God. The word "evil" is from the Greek neuter substantive adjective πονηρός (ponêros).

Ποιηρός means "full of labours, annoyances, hardships... pressed... by labours;... bringing toils, annoyances, perils;... of a bad nature or condition;... in an ethical sense: evil wicked, bad..." and when used with "...the neuter... substantively, evil, that which is wicked" (Thayer 530,531).<sup>19</sup> Since ποιηρός is a substantive adjective, it performs "the full function of a noun" (Dana 118).<sup>20</sup> The noun ποιηρία (ponêria) is from the same root as ποιηρός. Ποιηρία means "depravity, iniquity, wickedness... malice... evil purposes and desires" (Thayer 530).<sup>21</sup> Ποιηρία is a synonym of κακία (kakia). Thayer says, "κακία (meaning "malignity... wickedness, depravity... wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws... evil, trouble") "denotes rather the vicious disposition, ποιηρία the active exercise of the same..." (Thayer 520).<sup>22</sup> Hence, ποιηρός, "...is active and denotes that which is destructive, injurious, and evil in its effect" (Trench *qtd by* Hiebert 248).<sup>23</sup> One form of evil that many people do not consider nor realize, is that of preaching false doctrine. While believers should "Despise not prophesyings," they should, at the same time, "Prove all things." One Bible commentator puts it this way: "The worst forms of wickedness consist of perversions of the truth, of spiritual lies" (Lenski *qtd by* Heibert 248).<sup>24</sup> The children of God are to abstain from all types of evil. Evil offers itself in many, various, and several diverse ways. These ways are ever increasingly different, alluring, and deceiving. It makes itself available in all kinds of varieties. It takes several divergent directions. Hiebert writes, "Evil has a complexity which stands in striking contrast to the simplicity of the good" (Heibert 249).<sup>25</sup>

The verb "abstain" is translated from the present middle imperative form of ἀπέχω (apechō). The present middle infinitive form of ἀπέχω is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "...that ye should abstain from fornication." As the comments on that verse mentions (page 140), "The idea behind this verb (ἀπέχω) is for a person to hold back oneself and/or refrain from certain things." The present imperative demands that a church and her members continually abstain from evil and all appearance of evil. All should react to evil and the appearance of evil as a former United States President said many times about the use of

harmful drugs, "just say no." This is the only safe and right thing to do along with beseeching the help of the Holy Spirit. Besides the two times used in 1 Thessalonians, "abstain" is also used in Acts 15:20,29; 1 Timothy 4:3; and 1 Peter 2:11. The Bible states in Acts 15:20 and 1 Peter 2:11, respectively:

Acts 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they **abstain** from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood.

1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, **abstain** from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

"Abstain" carries the idea of voluntarily refraining from doing a particular thing. This admonition is very far reaching. It is not just "abstain from all evil," but "abstain from all appearances of evil." In other words, Do not even appear to do evil. God says to His People in 1 Peter 1:16, "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." Therefore, part of walking worthy in regard to acceptable worship is to "Abstain from all appearance of evil." In summary, God wants believers to be light reflectors so that they will reflect the light of life everlasting into a dark, perverse, and corrupt world that has lost its way and needs to be converted unto and by the glorious gospel of Christ Jesus.

#### **E. Walking Worthy Because of the God of Peace, 5:23-24**

In verses 12-22 under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul gives this model church in Thessalonica encouraging exhortations concerning how they can continue to be a model church. These exhortations proclaim how they can live holy lives in harmony with God and with other church members. In other words, Paul tells them how they should walk worthy of God in regard to pastors, to others, to joyful living, and to acceptable worship. He will now speak about the subject of "walking worthy because of the God of peace."

When Paul proclaims in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly..." he expresses a prayer wish. The verb "sanctify" in the Greek

text is in the optative mood. This mood is "the mood of *possibility*" (Dana 172).<sup>26</sup> When the Greek writer wanted to express a wish, he normally used the optative mood (Dana 173).<sup>27</sup> This is implied by the words, "and *I pray God*." Besides expressing a prayer, Paul verifies the truth that the God of peace (the One who is reconciling all things to Himself by Jesus Christ) will indeed sanctify completely every believer at the point of the glorification of the body. Sanctification is the work of the triune God. Complete sanctification is brought to pass by God and is accomplished at "...the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is only then (when believers shall be given glorified bodies) that they shall be free from the presence of sin. What glory! What promise! What sure and steadfast hope! This discussion shall be expanded, as the comments on verses 23-24 are developed under the following points: (1) the meaning of the title, the God of peace, 5:23; (2) the meaning of the expression sanctify you wholly, 5:23,24; (3) the meaning of the expression be preserved blameless, 5:23,24; and (4) the message that the God of peace is faithful, 5:24.

**The meaning of the title, the God of peace, 5:23.** To begin *verse 23*, Paul states, "And the very God of peace..." The conjunction "and" is the rendering from the postpositive conjunction δέ (de). Δε (de) has been rendered "moreover" in other places. Here it is used, not as an adversative, but as a continuative particle. Therefore, δε is used to connect *verses 12-22* with *verses 23-24*. The word "very" is the rendering of the personal intensive pronoun αὐτός (autos) (Davis 65,66).<sup>28</sup> Αὐτός may be translated "himself" (Davis 65,66).<sup>28</sup> Since αὐτός is placed at the beginning of the sentence in the Greek text, it is emphatic. The noun "peace" is the same Greek word as used in *verse 3*. (Refer to page 181.) However, in this *verse*, "peace," εἰρήνη (eirênê), is used in the genitive case. A literal translation of "And the very God of peace..." could be "Moreover the God of the peace, Himself..." The message of Paul is that God is the source and the one behind the request that Paul is about to make. God, Himself, will perform without fail the request of the prayer that Paul makes to Him. This is also assured to the believer by *verse 24*.

"Peace" is the state of freedom from war. It speaks of the peace that Christ made between God and sinners. The word "peace" as used here is in contrast with a state of agitation and conflict which a sinner has with his conscience and with God. The unrest of the sinner is described in Psalm 57:20, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" However, the saved sinner is at peace with God since Jesus made peace for all sinners on His cross.

Consider the following Scriptures:

Romans 5:1 Therefore being (*or having been*) justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; *19* To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. *20* Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. *21* For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Colossians 1:20-22 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven. *21* And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled *22* In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.

The Bible states clearly in Ephesians 2:14-18 that Christ is our peace. Christ not only makes peace between God and sinners, He also gives the peace **of** God that passes all understanding in times of trouble, grief, pain, and hardship. Paul states in Philippians 4:7 "And the peace **of** God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The peace **of** God is a result of the peace **with** God. All of the above Scriptures explain the reasons God is called "the God **of** peace."

**The meaning of the expression sanctify you wholly, 5:23,24.** As Paul continues in verse 23, he says, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly...." Or "Moreover the God of the peace, Himself, sanctify you wholly...." The word "sanctify" and the doctrine of sanctification have been discussed previously on pages 125, 126 (chapter 6; 1 Thes. 3:13) and on pages 137-140 (chapter 7; 1 Thes. 4:3-8). However, a brief summary is in order in explaining verse 23.

The basic definition of "sanctify" is to set apart or to separate. "To sanctify" anything is to set it apart for a special or designated purpose, and to be sanctified is to be set apart or be separated to a certain thing. Sanctification in this life is both: (1) once and for all, and (2) a continual process throughout the earthly life of the believer until the believer is glorified. *There are three aspects of sanctification.*

*The first aspect (past tense) is initial sanctification,* whereby the believer has been set apart (at the new birth) by the blood of Christ and by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. The believer is thus eligible and suitable to serve God. This means he or she has been set apart as holy by God to be His child, friend, and special, honored servant. This puts the believer in a position to begin to serve God with acceptable service. This means the believer is now ready to live a holy life for the Lord Jesus.

*The second aspect (present tense) of sanctification is a continual practical process* that takes place throughout the lifetime of the believer. In the present tense, as the believer yields to God, the life of the believer is being separated and set apart to serve. This is a day by day growth in grace, as the believer trusts in God and obeys the Word of God. It should be the aim of the believer to become in practice what he already is in position (through justification) before the Father. Sanctification (a process of becoming holy in living) is to walk in the ways of God and His Word and to please God in daily living, giving honor and glory to God and Jesus Christ.

*The third aspect (future tense) of sanctification is complete sanctification.* This will be accomplished when Christ returns to give believers new bodies but not before that time. The believer shall be free from the presence of sin and presented blameless before the Father by the Son. *In the past tense* the saved one has been freed from the penalty of sin, ready to serve. *In the present tense* the saved one is being freed from the power of sin, free to serve. *In the future tense* the saved one is freed from the presence of sin completely. In the future tense, the new body is sanctified, the old body is gone.

As previously mentioned, Paul uses the optative mood of the verb "sanctify." Thus, the *first part of verse 23* could be rendered with the use of "may:" "Moreover may the God of the peace, Himself, sanctify you wholly...." The word "wholly" is from the accusative form of the Greek adjective ὁλοτελής (holotelês). Rienecker says this word means "wholly, entirely, 'quite completely' " (603).<sup>29</sup> He adds that, "The word not only implies entirely, but involves the further idea of completion...."<sup>29</sup> Thus, Paul is praying for the future tense aspect or complete sanctification. Paul does not mean, nor does the Bible teach, that believers obtain or can obtain complete sanctification in this life. Paul is not saying that believers ever will or ever can live a perfect holy life (while dwelling in this house of clay). The assurance that is indicated by *verses 23-24* should incite believers to make it their goal in this life to strive to live as close to Christ as possible. Believers are set apart, and they are to consider

themselves set apart permanently unto God. Brother Kimsey G. Fry, Pastor of Calvary Missionary Baptist Church of Poteau, Oklahoma, says that believers are to consider themselves, "reserved for the exclusive use of God in this life." Even so, it is true that at the coming of Christ, believers shall be changed and shall be given new glorified bodies. At that time believers will be wholly, completely sanctified, or set apart, perfect, and free from the presence of sin. This does not take place in fleshly mortal bodies. Complete sanctification is brought to pass by God according to *verse 24* and is accomplished at the parousia or coming of Christ. This is the meaning of the expression "sanctify you wholly."

**The meaning of the expression be preserved blameless, 5:23,24.** In the *last part of verse 23* Paul declares, "...and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." *First*, take note of the clause, "...and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body...." The word "whole" is translated from the Greek nominative neuter case of the adjective ὁλόκληρος (holoklēros). This adjective means "complete in all its parts... complete, entire, whole..." (Thayer 443).<sup>30</sup> The Greek text, ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα, could literally be rendered "whole (or entire) of you the spirit and the soul and the body." This shows that the adjective "whole" or entire relates to all three: "the spirit and the soul and the body."

*Second*, this proves man is a trinity created in the triune image of God. (According to Genesis 1:1,26 and Matthew 28:19, God is the triune God and the triune God created man in His triune image and likeness.) Man is triune: spirit, soul (intelligence), and body. In the fall of man in the garden of Eden, the spirit of man died to God and the mind and whole being of man became depraved. The Apostle Paul refers to this in Ephesians 2:1 when he writes, "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Man became spiritually separated from God. When the soul is saved (quickened or made alive) in the new birth, the

Holy Spirit renews the spirit in the repentant sinner. However, it will not be until the resurrection and rapture that believers shall be completely and/or wholly sanctified.

*Third*, the verb "be preserved" is from the aorist passive optative form of the verb τηρέω (têreô). Τηρέω means "to attend to carefully, take care of... to guard... metaph.(orically) to keep, one in the state in which he is... to observe... to reserve..." (Thayer 622).<sup>31</sup> The idea of this verb in this usage is "to keep (or preserve) one in the state in which he is." As stated with the comments about the verb "sanctify," the optative mood is "the mood of possibility." Paul is expressing a prayer that he knows will be answered in the affirmative. Therefore, paraphrased, Paul is saying, "I pray God that your whole or entire being (spirit and soul and body) may be kept or preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

*Fourth*, the word "blameless" is translated from the Greek adverb ἀμέμπτως (amemptôs). The idea behind this word, "blameless," is "...so that there is no cause for censure" (Thayer 32).<sup>32</sup> This adverb is rendered "unblameably" in 1 Thessalonians 2:10, where Paul said that he and his helpers behaved "unblameably." Paul and his helpers are an example of this. Paul prayed that they would follow this example. His prayer is prayed in view of the coming of the Lord Jesus.

In the meanwhile, before the resurrection and the rapture takes place at His coming, believers can be assured that even though they do not live perfectly or without sin, God shall preserve them blameless in Christ before Himself and His throne. Although a slightly different Greek word is used in Colossians 1:22 and Jude 24 the same idea is expressed. In any case, in the *last part of verse 24*, Paul says the God Himself "...will do it." That is, God will preserve believers blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus. Conybeare and Howson lend help in understanding verses 23-24. Their translation is as follows:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body all together be preserved blameless, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. (24) Faithful is He who calls you; He will fulfill my prayer (311).<sup>33</sup>



This leaves no doubt that Paul was sure that God would in that day completely sanctify all believers. In the meantime, Paul was sure that God will preserve blameless the entire being of every believer unto that day. (Refer to 2 Timothy 1:12.)

**The message that the God of peace is faithful, 5:24.** Paul declares in the first part of verse 24, "Faithful *is* he that calleth you,...." This refers back to the title, "the very God of peace" or "the God of the peace, Himself" in verse 23. How does God call sinners to Himself? He calls sinners by the gospel message of Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit. (Refer to John chapters 14-16.) Believers are secure eternally in Him for God is faithful in all things. The justification of believers depends on Him. The sanctification of believers depends on Him. The glorification of believers depends on Him. Paul states these things in 1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 8:28-30; Philippians 1:6:

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.

The God of peace is faithful, and because He is, He will answer the prayer of Paul in the affirmative. The people of God should walk worthy because of the God of Peace for many reasons. The reasons named in this chapter and section are: (1) He is the God of peace who made peace between believers and Himself by reconciling them to Himself through the shed blood of His dear Son; (2) He will completely sanctify and free every believer from the presence of sin at the time of the coming of Jesus; (3) He will preserve every believer blameless until the return of Jesus; and (4) He is faithful.

**F. Final Requests, Instructions, and Benediction, 5:25-28**

In verses 25-28 Paul concludes this first epistle to the church in Thessalonica with his final requests, instructions, and benediction. *First*, he requests that they pray for him and his helpers, 5:25. *Second*, he instructs them to greet all the brethren, 5:26. *Third*, he instructs them to read this letter to all the brethren, 5:27. *Fourth*, he concludes with a prayerful benediction, 5:28.

**Paul requests that they pray for him and his helpers, 5:25.** Paul requests that they pray for him and his helpers. Church members should pray for their pastor, other preachers, and missionaries of like faith and order. If church members want their pastor to preach like he ought, then they should pray for him like they ought. How often should believers pray for their pastor? Verse 17 has the answer. "Pray without ceasing." If believers would truly humble themselves before God and pray for their church, each other, and the lost around them, it would not be long until God would pour out a blessing the church could not contain.

**Paul instructs them to greet all the brethren, 5:26.** Paul admonishes them to greet all the brethren in a friendly manner with kindness and love. The "holy kiss" was a customary and cultural thing of the eastern nations. It is still practiced to some extent today. The "holy kiss" of which Paul writes was merely a show of friendship used in New Testament times throughout the Mediterranean countries and the Middle East. This is shown by Luke 22:47-48 and Romans 16:16:

Luke 22:47-48 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

Romans 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

Today church members use a handshake instead of "an holy kiss." Of course, even today in our culture, many embrace each other on special occasions.

**Paul instructs them to read this letter to all the brethren, 5:27.** Paul asked them to read this letter to all the brethren in verse 27. He was aware that what he had written to this church was the Word of God. It was God breathed by the Holy Spirit. The holy brethren, of course, were the same as the ones to whom Paul addressed this letter in 1 Thessalonians 1:1. These were saved, baptized members of the church at Thessalonica. Even so, God meant for it to be read by all churches in every age and to be taken as the very Word of God.

**Paul concludes with a prayerful benediction, 5:28.** Paul concludes in verse 28 by prayerfully proclaiming: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." This is a prayer that expresses the heart felt desire of the apostle for them. Lost and saved sinners need the grace of God. Lost sinners need to accept the grace of God by faith in Christ unto salvation. Saved sinners need to appropriate the grace of God in order to walk worthy of God. Without grace (the unmerited favor of God) lost sinners could not be saved. Without grace saved sinners could not serve and worship God in an acceptable manner. Without the Lord Jesus Christ there would be no Savior. Without the Lord Jesus there would be no forgiveness of sin, no justification, no sanctification, and no glorification. Without Jesus it would be hell for all. Without Jesus there would be no Great Commission and no New Testament church. Without Jesus there would be no preaching of the truth of the gospel of salvation. Without the Lord Jesus Christ there shall be no one to sit upon the throne of David and rule this world in righteousness. Without Jesus there would be no one to defeat Satan, the man of sin, and the false prophet. Without King Jesus there would be no millennial kingdom. Thank God for His Son. Thank God for His grace through His Son. Every born again blood bought believer should thank God and praise the name of God for His marvelous saving grace and also, for His New Testament churches that preach the truth.

### **Summary of Chapter**

The model church member in the model church will walk worthy of God. To walk worthy of God, church members must walk according to His will, His way and His Word. This includes having the right and proper relationship and fellowship toward God and others. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 Paul beseeches the church in Thessalonica and all churches to practice exemplary conduct and acceptable worship. In summary, the apostle exhorts them in verses 12--22 to walk worthy of God in regard to pastors, others, joyful living, and acceptable worship. The faithful God of peace, Himself, and His sure promises are the incentives for believers to walk worthy. He will completely sanctify and glorify each believer in that day.

In order to live holy lives giving glory to God, believers must treat others with respect, grace, and love. They should love and respect their pastor(s). They should live in unity and harmony with others and make accommodation when needed. Sometimes they must give special attention, help, and care to certain people. They should do good even to those who do them evil. To live holy lives they should live joyful lives: rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks. To worship acceptably, they must not quench the Spirit or despise preaching, but prove all things; hold fast that which is good, and abstain from all appearance of evil. To practice these things will cause a church to be a good example. In addition, they will "sound out the word of the Lord" to the uttermost part of the earth. This is the only way a church can honor God and grow, glow, and go for God and be a good model.

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26. Dana and Mantey, op. cit., p. 172.
27. Ibid., p. 173.
28. William Hersey Davis, Beginner's Grammar of the Greek New Testament. (New York: Harper and Row, copyright 1923). pp. 65-66.
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## Joseph L. Looney (II): Landmark Baptist Preacher-Teacher

### (About the Author)

Joseph L. Looney (II) was born in Shreveport, LA, and raised near Magnolia, Arkansas. He was the third child of Jack and Mary Looney who taught him right from wrong, about the Bible and the true God. His father worked in the oil fields. His mother was a school teacher and later a librarian at Southern State College (now: Southern Arkansas University). His father went to the Methodist Church. His father made a profession of faith and was baptized and became a member of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church southeast of Magnolia in 1969.

Upon graduation from Magnolia High School in 1956, Joe joined the U.S Army Reserves, "Six Month Active Duty Program" and served about 6 years in the Reserves. After the Six Month Program, Joe attended Southern State College, Magnolia. In the summer of 1957 while working for the Banner News, Joe met and later married Miss Patsy Ruth Griffis, December 27, 1957, at the Davidson Missionary Baptist Church near Waldo, AR. Pat has been a faithful, loyal companion ever since that time. (Pat worked as a school teacher and assistant for 31 years.) January, 1961, Joe received the Bachelor of Science--Industrial Engineering degree from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

In May, 1960, John Blake a follow engineering student revealed the following Scriptures (Romans 3:10,23; 6:23; 5:6,8 and etc.). Joe realized that he was lost and needed to be saved. Two weeks later Joe asked Christ Jesus to save him and forgive him of his sins and was saved at the age of 21 (June, 1960). He then followed the Lord in scriptural baptism and became a member of Central Missionary Baptist Church of Fayetteville, AR.

While working as an Industrial Engineer for Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company in Trumann, AR, the Lord began dealing with Joe concerning the call to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It wasn't until October, 1971, that Joe came before the Cavanaugh Missionary Baptist Church, Ft. Smith, AR, and surrendered to the Master's will by faith. In January, 1973, he accepted the pastorate of the Mountain Grove Missionary Baptist Church near Alma, AR. He was ordained in March, 1973, by the Cavanaugh Church under the ministry of Brother E. Keith Simmons. Joe worked as an industrial engineer for over 20 years in Arkansas and Kentucky (1960 -- 1982).

Joe has served the following Missionary Baptist churches as pastor from 1973 until the 2017:

Mountain Grove, near Alma, AR January 1973 -- July 1981

Unity, near Paron, AR March 1983 -- August 1986

Pine Top, near Broken Bow, OK June 1987 -- July 1995

Calvary, Gillette, WY August 1995 -- July 2014

Wards Creek, Simms, TX April through July, 2017 (Interim)

Joe and Pat are currently Members of Austin Chapel, De Kalb, TX

Education: Magnolia High School, Magnolia, Arkansas Graduated: 1956

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Annual Speaker for Macedonia MBA of OK.; Messenger Meeting: Sept. 30, 1989

Moderator for Macedonia MBA of OK.; Messenger Meeting: Sept. 1994 & elected for 1995

Moderator (& Moderator's Address) for Rocky Mountain MBA: August 4, 2000 (Greeley, CO)

Moderator (& Moderator's Address) for Rocky Mountain MBA: August 3, 2001 (Cheyenne, WY)

Assistant Parliamentarian for Rocky Mountain MBA for several years

Speaker for Graduation Exercises in May, 2012 for Gulf Coast Baptist Institute, Hattiesburg, MS

Organizer, Planner, and Moderator for the WyKota Landmark Baptist Fellowship Retreat (Meeting at Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford, NE) (2002 thru 2014)

Joe and Pat have three children, Joe L. Looney III (Baptist preacher) of Broken Bow, OK, Marietta Raney (school teacher in New Boston) of De Kalb, TX, and William Looney (computer building structure designer) of Lowell, AR; and four grandchildren.

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**THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH — A GOOD MODEL**

**--- Volume One ---**

**(1 Thessalonians all 5 Chapters and all Verses )**

**A Commentary on The First Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians**

**By  
Joseph L. Looney II**