

ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.”

**18 ¶** I, Paul, write this greeting by my own

hand. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

had committed himself to do (1 Tm 4:6). He was to do the work of evangelism (2 Tm 4:5). Archippus may have become discouraged, and thus, needed this Spirit-inspired admonition to get on with the work that he set out

to do. **18** Paul concludes by authenticating his personal writing of this letter. He also concludes by asking for their prayers since he is in prison on behalf of the gospel and is facing possible death.

## Paul's Letter Of 1 Thessalonians

### Author

The author of this epistle to the church in Thessalonica is the apostle Paul (Compare 2 Th 3:17). This letter, as well as 2 Thessalonians, was also from Silas and Timothy who had been with Paul when the church was first established (See "Author" in introduction to Rm and 1 Tm).

### Date

Paul, Silas and Timothy established the church in Thessalonica on Paul's second missionary journey (At 17:1-9). After the establishment of the church, he left Thessalonica, went to Berea (At 17:10,11), and then on to Athens and Corinth (At 18:1). He left Silas and Timothy in Berea. They stayed briefly, and then came on to Paul in Athens (At 17:14). After leaving the Thessalonians as new converts in a hostile environment, Paul was anxious concerning their faith. He made the decision to be left in Athens alone. He sent Timothy back to Thessalonica and to other churches (1 Th 3:1,2). Paul eventually left Athens and went on to Corinth. It was while he was in Corinth when Timothy returned from Thessalonica with good news concerning the faithfulness of the Thessalonians (At 18:5). Therefore, sometime during the first part of his eighteen month stay in Corinth, he wrote this letter to the young church in Thessalonica between A.D. 50 to 52 (1 Th 3:6,7).

### Theme

The Thessalonians had a truly committed conversion to the gospel. Their example of discipleship was noticed throughout the region. The theme of the letter was the Thessalonians' new Christian life. They were an example of "discipleship in action" (See 1:6-8; 2:13,14; 3:6; 4:9,10). Paul was first concerned with their continued establishment in the midst of great afflictions (3:1-5). However, after Timothy returned with the report of their faithfulness, Paul stated, "*For now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord*" (3:8). Paul thus writes because they stood firm in their call to discipleship in Christ.

### Purpose

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

### Historical Background

The city of Thessalonica was founded in 315 B.C. by the Macedonian King Cassander. After rebuilding the city of Thessalonica in honor of his wife who was the half sister of Alexander the Great. The city later became a Roman political capital. In 42 B.C. it became a "free city", and thus, gained the right to have its own magistrates, who were called "politarchs" (The Greek word for "politarchs" is translated "rulers of the city" in At 17:6). The city was strategically located on the Egnatian highway that linked the eastern Roman Empire with the west. In Paul's day Thessalonica

was a thriving commercial center with an active harbor. It was a key center of culture, religion and government.

When Paul, Silas and Timothy left Philippi, they targeted Thessalonica by passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia (At 17:1-10). Paul preached three sabbaths in the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica. 1 Th 2:7-11 and At 17:1-3 indicate that the evangelists stayed at least three weeks in Thessalonica. As a result of their continued preaching, many religious Greeks and influential women of the city were converted (At 17:4). But the unbelieving Jews of the city accused the evangelists of treason and disloyalty to Roman law, and thus, stirred up the government officials against the evangelists (At 17:7). The city rulers (the "politarchs") subsequently made one of the local converts, Jason, post a bond because of the turmoil that was caused by those who stirred up the city. This bond possibly included the agreement that Paul, Silas and Timothy leave town. The local brethren, therefore, immediately sent them away. Paul, Silas and Timothy then went over to Berea (At 17:10-13). After a short stay in Berea, Paul went on to Athens where Silas and Timothy were to later join him (At 17:14,15). Because of his concern over the young church in Thessalonica, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica in order to establish and encourage the young congregation (3:1,2). Regardless of their former flight by night from the city because of persecution (At 17:10), Timothy returned to exhort and encourage the church. When Timothy returned, Paul was greatly encouraged concerning their stability, and thus, he wrote the 1 Thessalonian letter from Corinth, and later, the second letter (3:6-8).

## Chapter 1

1 ¶ Paul, Silas and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 ¶ We give thanks to God always for you

all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father,

4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

## Chapter 1

### GREETINGS

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

### AN EXAMPLE OF DISCIPLESHIP

2 **We give thanks:** Paul was indeed thankful for these new Christians who had been converted out of an idolatrous religious background (See Rm 1:8; Ph 1:3,4; 2 Th 1:3,4; 2:13). As other churches he had established, he continued to remember them in his prayers because of his anxiety concerning their establishment as a young church (3:1-8). After Paul, Silas and Timothy left the new converts, it is certain that they continued to suffer

persecution from the Jews in the area (See At 17:13; 2 Th 1:4,5). Nevertheless, the Thessalonian disciples continued in their faithfulness to evangelize the region around them. They did not lose their focus on being the Lord's representatives for the gospel in their local region. **3** The Thessalonians excelled in three areas of Christian behavior that exemplified them as a truly converted church. (1) **Work of faith:** They were not disciples who simply believed in God and Jesus. Their faith was carried into action with an obedient response to the grace of God (2 Co 4:15). Their faith moved them into action (Jn 6:29; see comments Js 2:14-26). (2) **Labor of love:** In their relationship with one another, they were moved to action to care for one another (Rm 16:6; 2 Th 1:3; see comments Gl 5:6; 1 Jn 4:19). (3) **Patience of hope:** Hope of eternal heaven moves one to remain committed to that which is necessary to arrive at one's eternal dwelling in heaven (Rm 8:24,25; 15:4; Hb 6:18,19). Because of their hope of heaven, they remained committed to Christ. Once one gives up hope, he loses his incentive to maintain a life that is governed by the principles of Christ. **In our Lord:** Their work, labor and patience were all in Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27). Therefore, all labors were the result of their coming into a covenant relationship with God through their obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 6:3-6). In this relationship with Christ, their labors were not in vain (See comments 1 Co 15:58). **4 Your election:** Before the creation of the world, God planned and predestined that the church would go into eternal dwelling (Rm 8:29,30). Therefore, those who free-morally choose to become members of the church through obedience

**5** For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much conviction, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

**6 ¶** And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,

**7** so that you were examples to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

**8** For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has spread abroad, so that we do not need to speak anything.

**9** For they themselves report about us, what

to the gospel become a part of the group of saved that God will elect out of the world at the end of time. Christians are thus elect in this time, though the election will occur at the end of time (See comments Ep 1:7-14; 3:8-13; see Cl 3:12; 2 Th 2:13,14; 1 Pt 2:9,10). The Thessalonians were now elect in God because they had personally elected to become members of the predestined church of Christ. Their election, therefore, was conditioned on their choice to obey the gospel. **5 For:** This preposition links the election of verse 4 with the gospel of this verse. **Our gospel:** The Thessalonians' election in Christ was made possible through their voluntary obedience to the gospel that Paul, Silas and Timothy had personally preached to them. The gospel ("good news") was Paul's, Silas' and Timothy's in the sense that they were the instruments through whom God preached the gospel (Rm 16:25; see 2 Co 5:18,19; see comments 1 Co 15:1-4; compare Gl 1:6-9,11,12). **Not ... in word only:** Words were used to communicate the event of the death of Jesus for our sins, His burial and His resurrection for our hope. The words used in preaching and teaching were not the gospel. They were only the medium through which the gospel was communicated (1 Co 15:1,2). Paul wanted to remind the Thessalonians that the medium of words to communicate the gospel was backed up by the miraculous work of God in their lives. **In power:** The miraculous power of the supernatural was manifested in order to confirm the word of God (Mk 16:17-20; Rm 15:19; 2 Co 12:12; Hb 2:3,4). **In the Holy Spirit:** The word that they preached was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was not the invention of man (Gl 1:11,12; 2 Tm 3:16,17; see comments 1 Co 2:1-13; 4:20). **Much conviction:** The evangelists delivered the message of the gospel with much confidence. It was confidence that was characteristic of those who had actually experienced the miraculous work of God in their lives (Hb 2:3). **Kind of men we were:** In order to edify the new converts in Thessalonica, Paul, Silas and Timothy set an example of boldness, courage, selflessness and work (2:2; At 17:1-10). Their lives became the example for the new converts to follow (1 Co 11:1; Ph 4:9). After following the example of the evangelists, the Thessalonians set an example for the rest of the churches throughout Macedonia (vs 7; see 2:14). The effective work of Paul, Silas and Timothy is manifested here in the method of their work. They not only preached the gospel, they also lived the effect of the gospel in their own lives. They thus gave the new converts a pattern by which they should be obedient in response to the gospel (See Ph 1:27). The influence of the evangelists was extended to others beyond the Thessalonians by the Thessalonians' following of Paul, Silas and Timothy in their manner of behavior.

**6 Imitators of us:** The natural response of those who had been taught the gospel would be to follow the

example of those who taught them the gospel. Thus, the Thessalonians became followers of the evangelists who suffered for the name of Jesus in their response to the gospel (See 1 Co 4:16; 11:1; Ph 3:17; 2 Th 3:7,9). In conjunction with the willingness to suffer for Jesus, the Christlike conduct of a disciple is handed down from one generation of converts to another. It is important, therefore, for those who establish churches to carry out in their lives the behavior of that which they preach and teach (See comments Ph 1:27; 1 Tm 4:12). This is important because new converts will follow the example of the initial evangelists. The sons and daughters of the first converts will follow the example of their mothers and fathers who were the first converts. And thus, the behavior of the initial evangelists will be passed down from one generation to the next. How the first evangelist behaves in his establishment of churches will affect the nature of those he converts for many decades.

**Much affliction:** The persecution came from the community in which they lived. Their acceptance of the gospel brought upon them the ridicule of those idolaters in the community who mocked the change in their lives from their previous idolatrous behavior (2:14; see At 5:41; 14:22; Rm 4:1-5). **With joy:** Those who follow the Lord with a spirit of joy through persecutions, have captured the spirit of the gospel that brings peace of mind (At 13:52; 2 Co 6:10; 8:1,2; Gl 5:22). **7 Examples to all:** They had followed the example of the Lord as manifested in the lives of the evangelists. In turn, they became examples to all the Christians in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. Such is the influence of those disciples who carry out in their lives the behavior of evangelists who are truly committed to the work of evangelism. By example, the evangelists encouraged others to carry on in the same manner of evangelistic fervor as they manifested in the establishment of churches. Disciples in any region need evangelistic individuals who will be an example of evangelism. **8 The word of the Lord has sounded forth:** This was the example of the Thessalonian church. They were setting an example of evangelism, not only in their own region of Macedonia, but in their mission efforts to Achaia (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15; Rm 10:18). Members personally evangelized the local province of Macedonia. However, they extended their work beyond their local area to the province of Achaia from where Paul was writing this letter. In fact, their efforts went to "every place." Paul's exaltation of the example of these disciples, therefore, was because of their evangelistic efforts to preach the gospel to the world. **Do not need to speak anything:** They were not a church who sought for an evangelist to come and do their evangelism for them. They needed no imported evangelist to do what was their responsibility to do. Local disciples have the responsibility of evangelizing their local areas. They also have the responsibility

manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

**10** and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

## Chapter 2

**1 ¶** For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.

**2** But after we had suffered before and were shamefully treated in Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God with much opposition.

**3** For our exhortation *did not come* from error or uncleanness or by way of deceit.

**4 ¶** But as we have been approved by God to

be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

**5** For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness. God *is* witness.

**6** Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others.

**7** As apostles of Christ we could have been burdensome to you. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse tenderly cares for her own children.

**8** So affectionately longing for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own souls, because you had become very dear to us.

**9** For you remember, brethren, our labor and

to send out evangelists to evangelize other areas. Paul here affirmed that the reputation of the conversion of this church and their evangelistic efforts had extended even to Achaia before Paul's arrival in the region. **9 *They ... report:*** Paul was writing from Achaia. Before he could proclaim the great receptivity of the Thessalonians to those in and around Corinth, others, possibly the Greeks of Achaia, had already heard of and told Paul of the great reception of the gospel by the Thessalonians. The entire Greek society had been told how the Thessalonians had turned from idols to serve the one true and living God (compare At 14:15; 15:19; 26:18). They had turned from the idolatrous worship that was so common in the region (Rm 6:15-23; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; Cl 3:24). Therefore, the Thessalonians' zeal for the truth sent a message throughout all the idolatrous Greek culture of Macedonia and Achaia (See At 17:6; 19:23-41). We would assume, therefore, that the true conversion of anyone should be an example about which others would talk. **10 *Wait for His Son:*** The proclamation of the gospel included the teaching that Jesus was coming again (4:13-18). Jesus will come again. He will come from a heavenly realm wherein He now dwells (At 1:11). Christians, therefore, must look forward to the coming of Jesus (2 Pt 3:11-13). Christians are looking for Jesus, for it is He who will reward them for their labors (1 Co 15:58). ***Wrath to come:*** The great day of wrath that is coming will be the time of the coming of Jesus. It will be a day of wrath for those who have not obeyed the gospel (Rm 2:8; 2 Th 1:7-9; 2 Pt 3:12). Jesus will come with judgment of condemnation on those who have turned from God (At 17:31; Rm 5:9; Rv 19:15; compare comments Mt 25:26,30,46).

## Chapter 2

### THE INTEGRITY OF EVANGELISTS

**1,2** The coming of Paul, Silas and Timothy to Thessalonica was not unproductive. The preaching of the gospel produced fruit (At 17:5-9). They had been spitefully treated in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica. Paul and Silas had been unjustly thrown into

prison (At 16:22-24). Nevertheless, they continued in their work of evangelism. ***We were bold:*** The sincerity of their preaching was manifested in their boldness to continue preaching regardless of persecution. **3** The integrity of the evangelists' lives gave witness to the truth of their message (2 Co 7:2). They did not speak with hidden agendas of deceit. Neither did they speak with impure motives. **4 *Entrusted with the gospel:*** God had given to them the ministry of reconciliation, which ministry was accomplished through the preaching of the gospel (1 Co 7:25; see comments 1 Co 2:1-13; compare At 20:24; Rm 1:1,5; Ti 1:3). Therefore, neither the subject of their preaching nor their preaching was influenced by what pleased men (Gl 1:10). **5 *Flattering words:*** When one uses flattering words in his preaching, his intentions are often different from what he says. He seeks to manipulate men by the use of words rather than the message he speaks (Rm 16:17,18). Paul did not use flattering speech in order to win the Thessalonians to himself (2 Co 2:17). He preached the truth of the gospel. ***Cloak of covetousness:*** Paul did not preach the gospel as a means of financial support. He supported himself while he preached to the Thessalonians, though he did receive some support from the Philippian church (Ph 4:15,16; 2 Th 3:6-9; see At 20:34,35). **6** Though the evangelists had a right to place themselves in a position to accept financial support from the Thessalonians (1 Co 9:4-9), they did not do such. They humbly worked in Thessalonica with their own hands while they preached the gospel (2 Th 3:8). They did so in order to set an example that every Christian must work to support himself and help the poor (2 Th 3:6-12). **7 *Apostles:*** This is from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means "one sent." The evangelists worked as those sent out by Christ on behalf of the mission of Christ (At 14:14; 2 Co 8:23; 9:1). ***Gentle among you:*** The spirit by which the evangelists cared for the new converts of Thessalonica is here portrayed by Paul to be as a nursing mother. They dealt tenderly with the new babes in Christ by not making demands on them that they could not bear (1 Co 2:3; 2 Tm 2:24). **8 *Impart ... our own souls:*** The first thing Paul preached

hardship, for laboring night and day, because we would not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

**10 ¶** You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe,

**11** just as you know how we exhorted and comforted and implored every one of you as a father *does* his own children,

**12** so that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto His kingdom and glory.

**13** For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the

word of God which you heard from us, you did not receive *it as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God that also effectively works in you who believe.

**14** For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Judea that are in Christ Jesus, for you have also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews,

**15** who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us. And they do not please God and are contrary to all men,

**16** forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that

in Thessalonica was the gospel (See 1 Co 15:3). After the Thessalonians' obedience to the gospel, they invested their own lives in the lives of the new converts. Paul, Silas and Timothy earnestly manifested their love by unselfishly giving themselves to minister unto the spiritual needs of the church (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16; compare At 20:19,20,24,31; 2 Co 12:15). **9 Laboring night and day:** Paul refers here to their tentmaking work in order not to be a financial burden to the new converts. He, Silas and Timothy worked with their own hands in order to support themselves. They did not want to take support from new converts unless they be accused of preaching for hire (See comments At 18:3; 20:33-35; 2 Th 3:8,9; 2 Co 12:13). However, at the same time they worked with their own hands, the Philippian jailor and Lydia of the established Philippian church were sending regular support over to them while they worked in Thessalonica (See 2 Co 11:8,9; Ph 4:16,17). One of Paul's methods of work was not to take financial support from newly established churches with which he worked. In the case of the establishment of the Thessalonian church, several influential people of the community were converted, and thus, Paul did not want to be seen as a hireling who preached in order to receive their money (See At 17:4).

**10 Devoutly and justly and blamelessly:** The godly behavior of the evangelists complemented the nature of the gospel which they preached (1:5; 2 Co 1:2; Ph 1:27). Their preaching and teaching were not only in words, but also in a behavioral example that could be followed by those who believed (1 Co 11:1; Ph 4:9). **11** As a father genuinely cares for his children, the evangelists exhorted the Thessalonians through teaching (2 Co 5:20). They comforted and encouraged them (3:1-8). They charged each member to live after the principles of Jesus' teachings (1 Tm 6:17; 2 Tm 4:1,2; see Ph 1:27; Cl 1:10). **12** Paul gives the reason here why they lived a godly example before the Thessalonians while they exhorted, comforted and charged them. The reason was that they might maintain a behavior of life that was worthy of God (Ep 4:1; Cl 1:10). **Who has called:** They were called through the preaching of the gospel (Rm 8:28; 1 Co 1:9; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Th 2:14). They were called out of the world unto the kingdom reign of God, the Son (Cl 1:13). Since Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords with authority over all things (Mt

28:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Tm 6:15), then we assume that the word "God" is here used in reference to Jesus who reigns over all. The Thessalonians were called by the preaching of the gospel unto Jesus' own kingdom reign over all things.

#### GODLY LIVING BRINGS PERSECUTION

**13 It is in truth, the word of God:** What the evangelists had spoken to them made sense. However, the Thessalonians did not accept the word that was preached as a good message of man, but as the message of God. They accepted it as the word of God because it was confirmed by the miracles that were worked by the hands of the evangelists (1:5; Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). **Effectively works in you:** The word of God works in the hearts of those who believe (Rm 1:16; Hb 4:12). It works because men and women accept it as the word of God. Therefore, the work of the word of God in the hearts of individuals must be combined with belief. A knowledge of the Bible without belief will produce no spiritual growth. However, if one truly believes that the Bible is the word of God, then it will mold his life after the godly principles that are taught in the Bible (At 20:32). **14 Imitators of the churches:** The Thessalonian church was an example church that was followed by churches in Macedonia (1:6,7; see Gl 1:22). However, the Thessalonians had imitated the example of the churches in Judea. They obeyed the gospel under the same severe persecution at the hands of their neighbors as the Jewish Christians did in Judea (3:4; At 17:5; 2 Th 1:4). They were willing to sacrifice their relationships with an idolatrous community in order to obey the word that was preached unto them. **15 Killed ... persecuted:** In this statement, Paul severely denounces the Jews for their behavior that was contrary to the work of God through national Israel (See Mt 23:37; At 2:23; 7:51,52; 17:5-14). Because Jesus did not fit into their preconceived ideas of a national messiah who would deliver them from Roman oppression, they had Him crucified (Lk 24:20; At 2:23). They did such after the same manner by which they killed the Old Testament prophets of God who sought to call them back to God (Jr 2:30; Mt 4:12; 23:34,35; At 7:52). They persecuted with the same wicked motives the evangelists of God who had gone forth with the message of the gospel. Paul here states two indictments against national Israel be-

they may be saved, to heap up their sins always, for wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

**17 ¶** But we, brethren, having been taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.

**18** Therefore, we wanted to come to you, even I, Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us.

**19** For what *is* our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not you in the presence of our

Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

**20** For you are our glory and joy.

### Chapter 3

**1 ¶** Therefore, when we could no longer endure *it*, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone.

**2** And we sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen you and to comfort you concerning your faith,

**3** so that no one should be moved by these

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

**17** It was surely difficult for Paul to leave the newly established Thessalonian church in order to go on to Corinth and Athens. His statements in this verse seem to indicate that he had developed a strong emotional tie with the Thessalonians. He thus wrote these words only a few months after his departure in order to express his feelings that he was eager to see them again (See 3:1,2). Such sentiments should be characteristic between churches and evangelists as evangelists go about preaching the gospel to the lost in order to establish churches. **18 *Satan hindered us:*** We are not told exactly what hindered Paul from returning to visit the Thessalonian church. However, he gives credit to Satan for the hindrance (Rm 1:18; 15:22). We must keep in mind that Satan is going about doing his work to hinder the preaching of the gospel and the work of edifying the church. We do not know how he does such, but we must not be lured into indifference concerning his ever present work to deceive the hearts of the innocent (1 Pt

5:8). **19,20 *It is not you:*** The hope, joy and crown of the evangelist is the presentation of his converts before the Lord (See Jd 24). This is his greatest joy and the victory of his work (See 2 Co 1:14; Ph 4:1; 2:16; 3 Jn 3,4). Evangelists are motivated by their desire to present the fruit of their labors before the Lord at the end of time. We would conclude that those who have no fruit to present before the Lord because they failed to reach out to others, have no hope, joy and crown.

### Chapter 3

#### TIMOTHY'S MISSION

**1 *At Athens alone:*** Many evangelists have worked alone in areas where there were no brothers. Their only strength was the presence of the Lord (See At 17:10-34). And so it was with Paul while he was in Athens. His desire to determine the situation of the Thessalonians outweighed his desire for companionship in the midst of another idolatrous culture. **2** Paul was alone in Athens when he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica in order to encourage the church in its early months of development (vs 5; 2:14; Rm 16:21). We must not forget also that Timothy willingly returned to a hostile environment from which he, Paul and Silas had to leave by night (At 17:10). ***Strengthen ... comfort:*** One of the works of an evangelist is not only to preach the gospel to the lost, but also to edify newly established churches. Therefore, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica in order to strengthen the Thessalonian church. However, we must keep in mind that Timothy did not stay indefinitely with the Thessalonian church. We assume that after they had been established and encouraged, he came back to Paul in order to carry on his evangelistic work (vs 6). Once a church is established, it is the responsibility of the elders to feed the flock (At 20:28). The emphasis in New Testament church establishment was that the churches were established, and then commended to God and the word of His grace (At 20:32). As in the case of the establishment of the Philippian, Thessalonian and Berean churches, the evangelists only paid brief visits in order to encourage and edify the churches. While the evangelists carried on with their primary work to preach the gospel to the lost, elders and teachers continued to minister to the spiritual needs of the local churches (See comments Ep 4:11-16). **3 *By these afflictions:*** It seems that the reason why Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica was because of the unusual circumstances that prevailed in Thessal-

afflictions, for you yourselves know that we are appointed for this.

**4** For indeed, when we were with you, we told you in advance that we would suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass and you know.

**5** For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you and our labor might have been in vain.

**6¶** But now that Timothy has come from you to us, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good re-

membrance of us, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you,

**7** for this reason, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you through your faith.

**8** For now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord.

**9¶** For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sakes before our God,

**10** praying exceedingly night and day that we might see your face and might perfect what is lacking in your faith?

onica. The church was suffering through the persecution of the community. Though the new converts understood that they must go through many tribulations (At 14:22), Paul felt that they needed the extra encouragement of Timothy. However, we must keep in mind that Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica for his own peace of mind. Because he, Silas and Timothy had to leave Thessalonica hurriedly, he was concerned for their well-being in the midst of a hostile environment. **We are appointed for this:** Paul affirmed to the Thessalonians that he and the other apostles were destined to persecution for preaching the gospel (Jn 16:2). In his use of the pronoun "we", we could assume that he included the Thessalonians since they were also undergoing great persecution. The apostles and early Christians suffered great persecution from the unbelieving world because they maintained their faith in the midst of a hostile society that had given itself over to hedonistic idolatrous practices (Mt 5:10-12; At 9:16; 14:22; 1 Co 4:9; 2 Tm 2:12; 1 Pt 2:21). The early Christians also suffered greatly at the hands of those who had been deceived by religious superstitions and traditions. We should not, therefore, think that it is a strange thing that the church in any community of the world would suffer persecution from those who are deceived by Satan through immoral living and religious traditions. Those churches that live in such social conditions, but do not suffer persecution, have lost the light of their influence on the community.

**4 We told you:** One of the principles that Paul taught the churches he established was what he taught in Asia Minor. He strengthened the souls of the new converts by teaching that through many tribulations we would enter into the kingdom of God (At 14:21,22). New disciples must be taught that the activation of their faith in their lives will lead them to persecution from friends and community members. As with the early church in the seat of Judaism in Judea, the persecution will come from the religious leaders of the community. The zeal of the Thessalonian church (1:6-9) led them to be persecuted for preaching the gospel. Their lives testified to the truth of what Paul taught the churches. **5 The tempter:** Paul here mentions another reason why he sent Timothy to Thessalonica. It was because of his own concern. He wanted a report from them that they remained faithful in the face of Satan who followed in the footsteps of Paul to destroy the fruit of his labors (1 Pt 5:8; see Mt 4:3; 1 Co 7:5; 2 Co 2:11; 11:3).

**6 Timothy has come:** Timothy and Silas came

from Macedonia while Paul was in Corinth (At 18:5). Not only was Paul encouraged by the good report concerning the condition of faith of the Thessalonian church, but his encouragement moved him to preach in Corinth. The faithfulness of brethren always encourages evangelists in their work (2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 4). **7** The Thessalonians' faith was reaching out to evangelize their region (1:6-9). Their love for one another was maintaining the fellowship of the saints (2 Th 1:3; see Gl 5:6; 1 Jn 3:23). **Comforted:** The Thessalonians' desire to see Paul gave him comfort (2 Co 1:3-7; see Ph 1:8). It gave him comfort because he was concerned about their faithfulness in the midst of persecutions they were enduring. Their continued faith and love were a special comfort for him because of the affliction and distress he was enduring for preaching of the gospel in Corinth (At 18:5-11). **8 We live:** The Thessalonians' evangelistic faith and mutual love greatly encouraged Paul, Silas and Timothy, and thus, they were spiritually encouraged to carry on with their own evangelistic work. Paul was so overjoyed with their work and love that he stated that he was enjoying the fulfilled life of the evangelist because of their faithfulness (Compare Ep 6:13,14; Ph 4:1). **9,10 What thanks can we render to God:** It seems that the joy that Paul had in his heart could not be fully expressed to God in the words of man. He experienced a joy that was beyond the description of the ordinary joy that is expressed for human accomplishments. Herein is revealed the motivation that drives the evangelist. He is driven to do his work because of the joy that comes from immersing the alien sinner into Christ. He is also greatly motivated by the joy that comes from his work of edifying the church to continue in the faith, evangelistic work, and loving fellowship of the Christian community. It brings great joy to his heart to be with the disciples in order to equip them through biblical education and personal example to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18; see 2 Co 13:9; Cl 4:12). Since one of the works of the evangelist is always to train faithful men to teach others also (2 Tm 2:2), then those who would give themselves to the work of an evangelist find joy in teaching others.

#### MAINTAIN HOLINESS

**11 Direct our way to you:** We do not presume to understand how God would answer this prayer. What is comforting is the fact that an inspired apostle prayed that God work in his life in order to make it possible for

**11 ¶** Now may our God and our Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.

**12** And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and toward all, even as we *do* toward you.

**13** May He strengthen your hearts *to be* blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

#### Chapter 4

**1 ¶** Finally, brethren, we request and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus that as you have received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, you should abound more and

more.

**2** For you know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

**3 ¶** For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication;

**4** that every one of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

**5** not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God;

**6** *and* that no *one* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

**7** For God has not called us to impurity, but

him to go to Thessalonica. The fact that Paul made this request reaffirms the fact that God does work in a non-miraculous manner in order to bring about good for the church. We may not understand how He accomplishes the fulfillment of such requests, but we have faith that He does. Paul did not make this prayer without believing that God could make it happen. **12 *May the Lord make you to increase and abound:*** Paul continued here the possibilities that lie within the power of prayer. He used the word "may" to reaffirm that the answer to our prayer lies within the will of God. In this request, he believed that it was within the work of God to present the occasions by which the Thessalonians would increase in their loving fellowship of one another and to those outside the fellowship of the church. This would certainly be one request that should be on the lips of every member of the family of God, for it is by loving one another that the church witnesses to the community that they are the disciples of Jesus (See comments Jn 13:34,35; see 4:1,10; Ph 1:9; 2 Th 1:3). **13 *Strengthen your hearts blameless:*** When a congregation grows in love, insecurity is dispelled. One is established in the faith by the growth of love within a congregation wherein every member feels accepted (Compare 1 Jn 4:16-18). ***In holiness:*** Paul's point is that one cannot maintain holiness without a heart of love. An unloving heart is to be blamed for all sorts of discord and division within a congregation. On the other hand, the fellowship of loving hearts produces a bond within a group of people that is the greatest fortress against the wiles of the devil (See comments Cl 3:12-17). ***With all His saints:*** When Jesus comes again He will bring with Him all the disembodied spirits of those saints who have died (See comments 4:13-18). Therefore, we must understand that when one dies he or she is with Jesus (2 Co 5:8; Ph 1:23).

#### Chapter 4

##### THE HOLY LIFE

**1 *Abound more and more:*** The Christian life is a process of continual spiritual growth (2 Pt 3:18). One should continue to grow in his work for the Lord be-

cause of his continued spiritual growth within (1 Co 15:58). ***Ought to walk:*** When Paul, Silas and Timothy were in Thessalonica they gave an example of behavior that manifested the Christian walk of life (1:5,6; see Ph 1:27; Cl 1:10). When one lives a life after the principles of God's will, he will please God in his life. **2 *Commandments:*** Though one is not saved by a meritorious keeping of commandments in order to justify himself before God (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16), one cannot walk contrary to God's will and be saved. Our love of God is manifested by our obedience to His will (Jn 15:14; 1 Jn 5:3). Our appreciation for the grace of God is magnified in our lives by our willingness to follow the directions of the One who saved us (See comments Rm 3:31; 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). **3** It is the will of God, who sanctified us through the sacrificial blood of His Son Jesus, that we not be involved in illicit sexual acts. The Greek word *porneia* is used here which refers to all illicit sexual activity (1 Co 6:15-20; Cl 3:5). ***Sanctification:*** In sanctification one is set apart from the world through his obedient response to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross through Jesus (Ep 5:27). One is cleansed by the blood of Jesus in order to be separated from the world of sin (5:23; Hb 10:10; 1 Pt 1:15-25). **4 *Possess his own vessel:*** Every Christian must learn to control his own sexual desires. Sexual desires are to be fulfilled only in a marriage relationship (See comments 1 Co 7; see Rm 6:19). Someone is always hurt if such desires are fulfilled outside the bond of marriage. **5 *Not in lustful passion:*** No unmarried Christian should allow himself or herself to be placed in a situation where sexual desires are free to be satisfied (Cl 3:5; compare Ep 4:17,18). Those who know God know that they will give account of their behavior before God. Therefore, the fact that one realizes that he will give account of his actions should strike fear in the hearts of those who would commit sexual immorality. **6 *The Lord is the avenger:*** In this context, Paul speaks of Christians' sexual behavior in relation to one another. If sexual immorality occurs within the fellowship of the family of God, God will avenge those who commit such (2 Th 1:8). He will avenge those who defraud their brothers. Therefore, if one so behaves as to harm the flock of

in holiness.

**8** Therefore, he who rejects does not reject man, but God, who has also given His Holy Spirit to you.

**9 ¶** But concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.

**10** And indeed you practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more,

**11** that you make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and to do your own business and to

work with your own hands, as we commanded you,

**12** so that you may walk honestly toward those who are outsiders and *that* you may have lack of nothing.

**13 ¶** But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, so that you do not grieve as others who have no hope.

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

**15** For this we say to you by the word of the

God, God will deal with such a one according to his sin. **7** We were not called out of the world by obedience to the gospel in order to continue our lives after the immoral behavior of the world (See Hb 12:14; 1 Pt 1:14-16). When one obeys the gospel, he comes into a community of believers that does not behave as the world (See Lv 11:44; 2 Pt 2:5,9). **8** Those who reject God's commandments in reference to living the holy life have actually rejected God. The commandments were given through Paul. However, they must keep in mind that their rejection of the commandments was not a rejection of Paul, but of God who inspired Paul to deliver the commandments (Lk 10:16). **Given His Holy Spirit to you:** This is Paul's affirmation of the inspiration of himself, Silas and Timothy. The commandments that these prophets gave to the church came through the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit (See comments 1 Co 2:10-13; 2 Tm 3:16,17). Therefore, when one rejects the commandments of God that were given through the inspiration of the New Testament prophets, he rejects the God who gave the commandments through the Spirit (See comments Jn 12:48).

**9 Brotherly love:** The Thessalonian church excelled in their love of one another (Jn 13:34,35; see Rm 12:10; Hb 13:1; 1 Pt 1:22). **Taught by God:** The inspired prophets of God in their midst had fully explained their responsibilities toward one another as the community of God (Compare 1 Jn 2:20,27; see Mt 22:39; Jn 6:45; 15:12,17; 2 Th 1:3). **10 Toward all:** The Thessalonian church not only manifested their love of one another locally, but also to other disciples throughout Macedonia. **Increase more and more:** No matter how much one would extend his love toward another, there is still room for growth (3:12). There is no end to the amount of love one can extend toward others. **11 Lead a quiet life:** Christians are not those who join in riots, social disturbances or anything that would cause turmoil in society. They lead a quiet life of inner tranquility and calmness (Compare Jn 14:1; Ph 4:7). **Do your own business:** A Christian should not be one who becomes involved in the lives of others in order to cause disturbance or hostility (2 Th 3:11; 1 Pt 4:15). **Work:** Paul had commanded the Thessalonians to work with their hands in order to support themselves (Ep 4:28; 2 Th 3:6-12; 1 Tm 5:8). They were also to work in order to have the ability to give to the poor (At 20:35). Their work with their own hands would cause the community in which they lived to respect them for their diligence.

When one becomes a Christian, therefore, he accepts the responsibility to work in order to support himself, his family and others who need help to get started. **12** It is the responsibility of the Christian to live responsibly before the unbelievers (Rm 13:13; Cl 4:5; see 1 Pt 2:12). Living a responsible life includes working in order to supply one's physical needs.

#### THE FINAL COMING OF JESUS

There were some in the church of Thessalonica who were concerned about brothers and sisters who had died. They incorrectly believed that the Lord would come in His final coming in their lifetime. They also believed that the righteous who were alive at the time of Jesus' coming would have an advantage over the righteous dead at the resurrection. In the following discussion Paul corrects their misconceptions concerning the final coming of Jesus. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous at the end of time (Jn 5:28,29). However, there is no promise in the scriptures concerning the unrighteous receiving a resurrected body as the righteous will in which to dwell throughout eternity. In this context, as well as the contexts of 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, only the righteous are under consideration.

**13 Who are asleep:** One easily goes to sleep at night because he realizes that he will awake in the morning. So it is with physical death for the saints. From the perspective of God, death is as one who falls asleep, but will awake into eternal dwelling (Mt 9:24; 1 Co 15:51). **Do not sorrow ... as others:** Christians should view death from a different perspective than those who do not have hope of life after death. Unbelievers do not have the hope of an eternal heaven (Ep 2:12). Therefore, those who attend the funeral of the righteous should have a different spirit about them than those who have no hope. **14 If we believe:** The attitudes of the believers who bury their dead are different than the unbeliever because of the believers' belief in the resurrection of Jesus. The fact that Jesus arose from the dead never to die again is evidence that those who believe in Him will also be resurrected never to die again (Rm 4:24; 10:9; 14:9; 1 Co 15:13). We could reverse the argument of Paul. If we believe that the righteous will be resurrected, then we must believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. The denial of either resurrection is a denial of the other. **Bring with Him:** When Jesus comes again, He will bring the spirits of those saints who have

Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord will not go before those who have fallen asleep.

**16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

**17** Then we who are alive *and* remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

**18** Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

## Chapter 5

**1 ¶** But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that *anything* be written to you.

**2** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.

**3** For when they say, "Peace and safety!"

died and are now disembodied in His presence (3:13; Zc 14:5; see 2 Co 5:8). They will be coming with Him in order to receive their resurrected and changed bodies (See comments 1 Co 15:35-57; 2 Co 5:1-8). They will thus be coming in order to be embodied for eternity in glory (Cl 3:4; see Jd 24). **15 Word of the Lord:** Paul assures them that what he now reveals comes directly from the Lord (See Gl 1:11,12; 2 Co 12:1). **We who are alive:** Reference here is to those saints who will be alive at the time of the final coming of Jesus. Though some of the Thessalonians will misunderstand what he says here, Paul is not inferring that the Lord definitely would come in his lifetime or the lifetime of the Thessalonians. The pronoun "we" should be understood to refer to any saints after the writing of this letter who would be alive at the time of the final coming of the Lord. The New Testament writers were not deceived by the Holy Spirit to be led to believe that Jesus was coming in His final coming in their lifetime. Emphasis is on being prepared at all times for His coming. Since Jesus has not come in His final coming for almost two thousand years, then we know that Paul did not mean that the Lord would come in his lifetime. **Will not go before:** At the event of the final coming of Jesus, the righteous living will not ascend before the embodied saints who have died. **16 Descend from heaven:** Jesus will come from His present heavenly realm of dwelling (At 1:11). We do not assume that Jesus dwells in a location that is like a physical location of dwelling as in this world. Bible students must understand that there are no words of this world that can fully explain the realm of existence of God. Nor are there any words that can adequately explain the events about which Paul here speaks. Therefore, we caution ourselves in this and similar contexts concerning placing our strict earthly definitions on these words that explain a future event that has never before happened. **With a shout... voice... trumpet:** We do not pretend to understand what the shout will be. Emphasis is surely on the fact that the coming of Jesus will not be some secret event that will transpire unnoticed by the world. There will be an announcement that will sound throughout the world (1 Co 15:52). Since the descending from heaven and the angelic announcement will be universal, then we assume that something different from anything that has ever happened will end this present world. **Dead in Christ will rise first:** See comments Jn 5:28,29. Paul's comfort to the Thessalonian Christians expands the thoughts of Jesus in John 5:28,29. Since there will be an order to resurrection, his message to the Thessalonians is that

the dead saints will be the first to be resurrected. They will be resurrected before unbelievers who will come forth from the tomb to face continued punishment (Mt 25:41). In reference to the resurrected saints, their bodies that were buried will be the seed that will come forth as a changed and transformed spiritual body (See comments 1 Co 15:35-57; Ph 3:20,21; 1 Jn 3:2). **17 Caught up together:** As the resurrected saints are caught away from the earth, then the living saints will join them in their departure from this world. **In the air:** Jesus will not come again in order to set foot on this earth. We will ascend to meet Him. He will not descend to this earth in order that we meet Him at some location on earth. **Always be with the Lord:** Once Christians are embodied again with a spiritual body, then they will go into endless dwelling with the Lord. To die and be with the Lord in a disembodied state is not the final desire of the Christian. It is the final desire and destination of the Christian to be embodied and with the Lord forever in the new heavens and earth that are yet to come (Jn 14:3; 17:24; 2 Pt 3:10-13; see comments 2 Co 5:1-8). **18 Comfort one another:** The hope of the Christian is to dwell in eternal bliss with loved ones in the presence of the Lord (5:11; Hb 3:13; 6:18,19; 10:25). In order to comfort one another with these thoughts, Christians must talk about them. Though we do not fully understand that which will be, we must discuss our living hope in order to bring comfort to ourselves in a world of sin and suffering.

## Chapter 5

### PREPARATION FOR HIS COMING

**1 Times and the seasons:** Paul continues here the discussion concerning the final coming of Jesus. He, Silas and Timothy had already talked with them concerning these things while they were in Thessalonica. It is evident, therefore, that when one presents the gospel and nurtures new converts, in the teaching there must be discussion concerning the coming of Jesus. The gospel emphasizes the death of Jesus for our sins (See comments 1 Co 15:3). However, the gospel also includes the resurrection of Jesus for our hope (See comments 1 Co 15:4,5,20-22). **2 Day of the Lord:** This is judgment language that is taken from the Old Testament. The day of the Lord was a time in which judgment came upon nations in time (Lk 21:34; compare Rv 3:3; 16:15). However, reference here is to end-of-time judgment (vs 4; 2 Pt 3:10). **Thief:** The judgment of the Lord comes as a thief upon those who are not prepared

then sudden destruction comes upon them as birth pains upon a woman with child. And they will not escape.

**4** But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that the day should overtake you as a thief.

**5** You are all the children of light and the children of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness.

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

**7** For those who sleep, sleep in the night. And those who are drunken, are drunken in the night.

**8** But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love,

and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

**9** For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

**10** who died for us, so that whether we are awake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

**11** Therefore, comfort one another and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

**12** ¶ And we urge you, brethren, to know those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you,

**13** and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Live in peace among yourselves.

for the Lord's coming (2 Pt 3:3,7; see comments Mt 25:1-13). Christians are prepared. Therefore, the coming of the Lord is not unexpected to them (See 2 Pt 3:11-13).

**3 Sudden destruction:** This destruction is upon the unbeliever who is not expecting the coming doom of this world (Is 13:6-9; see comments Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9; 2 Pt 3:10-13). **Will not escape:** Since Jesus is the Lord of all, He will bring all into accountability and judgment (2 Co 5:10; Ep 1:20-22). The wicked will not escape accountability for their sins. **4 Not in darkness:** Christians are not uninformed concerning that which is coming. Paul, Silas and Timothy had revealed to the new converts in Thessalonica the fact that Jesus is coming again in order to reward the saints, but condemn the unbelieving (See At 26:18; Rm 13:12; Ep 5:8; 1 Jn 2:8).

**5 Children of light:** God is the eternal light that brings truth to all. Those who have obeyed the gospel, therefore, are sons of the eternal life of God. Therefore, those who are walking in the will of God are walking in the light (Ep 5:8; 2 Co 6:15; 1 Pt 2:9; 1 Jn 1:7-9).

**6 Watch:** Since Christians are sons of God who are walking in the light of His will, then they must not allow themselves to become indifferent to the coming of the Lord. Since they were delivered out of the darkness of sin, they must not stray back into the ignorance of unrighteousness (Rm 6:17,23; 1 Tm 5:6). Their soberness about that which is coming encourages them to live in a manner that is pleasing to God. Those who are not sensitive to the coming of the Lord, will become lazy and indifferent concerning their Christian responsibilities. Therefore, in reference to the coming of the Lord, Christians must watch with responsibility (See Mt 25:13; Mk 13:35; 1 Pt 5:8).

**7 Sleep in the night:** Those who do wickedness, do their evil in the cover of darkness. They do such because they think that their evil is concealed. However, their evil behavior is known by God (See Lk 21:34).

**8** Paul's metaphors here are given in order to explain that which guards the Christian from becoming unfaithful. **Breastplate of faith and love:** Faith and love are active in the Christian's life because of his hope of heaven (See comments Ep 6:10-20). **Helmet:** In contrast to the behavior of unbelievers, the righteous are to protect themselves by being perceptive to the hope that is before them. Their sensitivity to their hope of heaven motivates them to continue in the will of God (Hb

6:18,19). **9 Appointed ... to obtain salvation:** The purpose for the creation of the world was to bring free-moral individuals into eternal dwelling with God. God did not create the world, therefore, for the purpose of condemning the wicked to destruction. He desired to bring those into eternal dwelling who would free-morally choose to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Th 2:13; see comments Jn 3:16,17). However, those who reject the opportunity to obey the gospel will suffer the consequences of their rejection (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9).

**10 Wake or sleep:** When a saint lives, he lives with the Lord (Rm 5:17). When a saint dies, he is living with the Lord (2 Co 5:8). Therefore, whether living or in death, we live with the Lord. **11 Comfort ... edify:** It is the responsibility of Christians to comfort one another with discussions concerning the end of all things and our hope of life. In other words, discussions concerning the end of things should not be for the purpose of terrifying Christians. Revelations concerning the end of all things of this world are revealed for the purpose of bringing comfort to Christians. One's teaching on these matters, therefore, should be of a nature that brings comfort to the hearts of those who hear (4:18; Rm 15:2; Hb 10:25).

#### INSTRUCTIONS ON HOLY LIVING

**12 Know those:** Emphasis here would be similar to the exhortation that Paul gave to the Corinthians that the church submit to the service of those who minister to the needs of the church (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16). The church must submit to the ministry of those who have dedicated themselves to the ministry of the word. In other words, the church must submit to the service and instruction of those who teach. The church must submit by listening. Emphasis here is not to dictatorial control of any one individual. The emphasis is on "those." The word "those" indicates a plurality of ministers, not a single figure who supposedly has authority over the flock of God (See comments 1 Pt 5:1-6). **13 Esteem them:** In order that those who minister the word of God might carry out their responsibilities of admonition through teaching of the word of God, the church must consider their work as a great work for the Lord (See comments Hb 13:17). Christian leaders who are laboring for the Lord deserve the respect and admira-

**14 ¶** Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly. Comfort the fainthearted. Support the weak. Be patient toward all *men*.  
**15** See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always follow what is good, both among yourselves and to all.  
**16 ¶** Rejoice always.  
**17** Pray without ceasing.  
**18** In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.  
**19 ¶** Do not quench the Spirit.  
**20** Do not despise prophecies.  
**21** Prove all things. Hold fast to what is good.

**22** Abstain from all appearance of evil.  
**23 ¶** Now may the God of peace sanctify you wholly. And may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**24** Faithful *is* He who calls you, who also will do *it*.  
**25 ¶** Brethren, pray for us.  
**26 ¶** Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.  
**27** I charge you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren.  
**28 ¶** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

tion of the church. **Live in peace:** There should be no competition between those who are servants of the church. Therefore, the church should not place ministers of the church in a competitive role of leadership. No work of the leaders of the church must be viewed in a manner by which workers are placed in competitive roles with one another. Peace must always prevail (Mk 9:50; Rm 12:18; 2 Co 13:11).

**14 Warn ... unruly:** Those members who are idle, and thus go about generating discord among the flock, must be admonished and warned that their actions will cause division (See 2 Th 3:10,11; 1 Tm 5:13). **Faint-hearted:** These are those who still lack boldness, and thus still lack the confidence that comes with growth in faith (Hb 12:12). **Weak:** These are new converts who are still struggling with past religious practices out of which they are growing (See comments Rm 14; 1 Co 8:7). **Be patient:** Regardless of the spiritual state of growth at which any church is, the attitude that keeps the flock of God together is patience with one another (Gl 5:22). Christians must be patient with one another in all things in order to preserve the unity of the church (See comments Cl 3:12-16). **15 Evil for evil:** The spirit of retaliation should never exist in the community of God (Lv 19:18; Rm 12:17). If there is a spirit of retaliation among disciples, division will occur in the absence of patient forgiveness (See comments Mt 18:21-35). **Follow what is good:** Disciples must take every opportunity to do good (See comments Gl 6:10; Rm 12:9). **16** The disciple has reason to rejoice because of the hope that is set before him. Paul encourages the Christians of Thessalonica to maintain an attitude of rejoicing as a behavioral principle of their lives (2 Co 6:10; Ph 4:4). **17 Pray:** Emphasis here is not on a continued action of prayer, but on a continued attitude of prayer. In other words, the Christian should be in a state of mind that he can at all times take part in the action of praying to the Father (Lk 18:1; Rm 12:12; Ep 6:18; Cl 4:2). **18 Give thanks:** Since all that the Christian has is the result of God's blessing, then it is reasonable to conclude that Christians should give thanks to God for all they are and have (Ep 5:20; Ph 4:6; Cl 4:2,3). **19,20 Do not quench ... do not despise:** The Holy Spirit was instructing them through His inspiration of the prophets among them. If they rejected the teaching of the prophets, they would be quenching the work of the Spirit to edify the church through the teaching of the word of God. They would be despising His work. Paul's admonition

here is in reference to the work of those in verse 12,13 who had given themselves to teaching of the word of God. If the disciples refused to listen to the teaching of the word of God through the inspired prophets, then they would be refusing to listen to the instructions of the Spirit (Ep 4:30; see comments 1 Co 12,14; 2 Tm 1:6). **21 Prove:** Through the testimony of the word of God, every teacher must be proved (See comments 1 Jn 4:1; see Rv 2:2). Since the prophets spoke by the inspiration of the Spirit in the first century, then through the gift of discerning spirits the disciples were to determine if the prophet were false or true (1 Co 12:10; 14:29). Once tested, then the church must hold to that which is true (2 Co 13:5; Ph 4:8). **22** In this statement Paul affirms that false teachings are evil. Therefore, the church must reject any false teachings as evil.

#### PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS

**23 Sanctify:** Sanctification is a continuing process by which the Christian is mentally separated from the world of sin (3:13). Through the help of God, one must continually separate his thinking and behavior from that which is of this world (See comments Cl 3:1,2). **Spirit, soul, and body:** The physical body is the dwelling place of the God-created spirit (Zc 12:1; Ec 12:7). It is the spirit of man that illuminates the soul of man which is the emotional and intellectual part of man. Man is thus spiritual in the sense of possessing both spirit and soul. He is physical in that the real person is resident in a physical body that is of the dust of the earth. **Preserved blameless:** One can be preserved blameless only by being in contact with the continual cleansing of the blood of Jesus (1 Co 1:8,9; Cl 1:28; 1 Jn 1:7-9). **24 Faithful:** Christians have been called out of the world by Jesus who is faithful to fulfill His promises (1 Co 1:9; see 1 Co 10:13; 2 Th 3:3). **25** Since Paul was undergoing persecution in Corinth at the time he wrote this letter, he asked the Thessalonians to pray for him and his fellow workers. **26 Holy kiss:** Any one group of disciples must accept into their fellowship all who have obeyed the gospel. The holy kiss was an affectionate cultural signal that portrayed a warm greeting of those one would accept into his home (Rm 16:16). **27 This letter be read:** This charge of Paul is the foundation upon which brethren made copies of the Scriptures. Once the epistle was read among the Thessalonian brethren, copies would be made for it to be distributed among other churches (See Cl 4:16). As a result of this

charge, therefore, we have the New Testament today because the first century brethren made copies of the inspired letters of the inspired writers for distribution

among other house groups. **28 Grace:** God's grace continues with every member of the church as he or she walks in the light of the gospel.

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## Paul's Letter Of 2 Thessalonians

### Author

The author of this epistle is Paul, the apostle, who also wrote 1 Thessalonians (See "Author" in introduction to Rm and 1 Th). However, as 1 Thessalonians, the letter comes from Paul, Silas and Timothy because all three worked in the establishment and early edification of the Thessalonian disciples (1:1). Therefore, when considering the pronoun "we" in the letter, one must consider the fact that Paul, Silas and Timothy worked in Thessalonica. Though the message is personally from Paul (3:17), Paul wants the Thessalonians to know that three evangelists are involved in the sending of the message.

### Date

This letter was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians which was written from Corinth. Therefore, Paul possibly wrote this letter sometime between A.D. 50 and 52.

### Theme

The theme of the letter is expressed in 2:15. *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions that you were taught, whether by word or our letter."* It was Paul's intention through the letter to exhort the Thessalonians to stand firm on the inspired teachings which they had already been taught.

### Purpose

The Thessalonians were going through persecution as they preached the gospel in their area. In their desire for relief from persecution, they had come to some wrong conclusions concerning the final coming of Jesus. Therefore, Paul wrote in chapter 1 a message of comfort for them in their time of persecution (See 1 Th 2:14-16). In chapter 2 he wrote in order to correct some misconceptions concerning the final coming of Jesus (See 1 Th 4:13 - 5:11). In chapter 3 he wrote in order to help the church deal with some who had resigned from their jobs and were in a disorderly manner living off the rest of the disciples (See 1 Th 4:9-12). Since some of the first converts were possibly wealthy (At 17:4), it would have been easy for some to take advantage of the wealth of others. Paul was informed concerning this disorderly conduct, and thus, he wrote to stop the feeding of the lazy brethren in order to encourage them to return to their jobs (3:6-12).

### Historical Background

The church was established through the preaching of Paul, Silas and Timothy. The first letter had already been delivered and written to them. As a follow up to the first letter, this letter was written in order to continue the nurturing of the saints in the behavior of Christian principles. We do not know who delivered this letter. Possibly, Paul sent either Silas or Timothy back to Thessalonica in order to deliver this message and continue the nurturing of the congregation (See "Historical Background" in introduction to 1 Th).

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### Chapter 1

**1 ¶** Paul and Silas and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and

the Lord Jesus Christ:

**2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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### Chapter 1

#### GREETINGS

**1,2** Since Paul, Silas and Timothy worked together to establish this church, then this letter is from all three

preachers. All three had the gift of teaching, and thus, we would assume that the Holy Spirit spoke through all three in order to deal with some specific problems that prevailed in the church. However, in 3:17 Paul informs us that the letter comes specifically from him. If either