

## 1 Thessalonians

The city of Thessalonica was one of the richest port cities of the day. Thessalonica is in the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea. Today, it is part of Greece. In Paul's day, it was a major seaport of the Roman province of Macedonia. Thessalonica was one of three most important shipping centers of the day – Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus.



Thessalonica was located on the Roman trade route from Rome to the Orient. That meant there was a constant exchange of goods and people. The population has been estimated at around 200,000. Most of those were native Greeks, but there were also Romans, Asians and Jews living there.

Although Thessalonica was under Roman rule at this time, it had been granted status as a free city, which meant there were no Roman troops stationed there, and the citizens were allowed to govern themselves.

Paul and Silas first preached the gospel in Thessalonica during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 17). They had been led to Thessalonica by a divine vision (Acts 16:9-10). They probably stayed there for about 2 months. The non-Christian Jews in Thessalonica hired troublemakers to falsely accuse Paul, and run him out of town.

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians to praise the Thessalonian believers for their dedication even during persecution. He also wanted to answer some questions they had asked. Paul also wrote to correct some wrong information and false claims that were circulating through the church.

Paul wrote the epistle while he was in Corinth (see Acts 17 and 18) in the early 50s. (Between 50 and 54). 1 Thessalonians was one of the earliest of Paul's epistles.

The emphasis of 1 Thessalonians is on the Rapture: the coming of Christ to take His church out of this world. In 2 Thessalonians, the emphasis is on the coming of Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom.

**1:1 From Paul, Silas, and Timothy. To the church in Thessalonica, the church in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.**

At the time this letter was written, it was the custom to begin your letter with these three elements: the name or names of the author, the name(s) of the addressee, and a word of formal greeting.

Although the letter was sent from Paul, Silas, and Timothy, Paul was the main writer of the letter. He addresses himself in the singular (I) in other places in the letter.

Paul was Saul of Tarsus. His Hebrew name means "asked for." His Roman name, Paul, which he was more commonly known by, means "little."

Silvanus is the Roman form of Silas. Luke referred to him as Silas in Acts 15:22, etc. Silas had gone with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15-18).

Paul led Timothy to the Lord most likely on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). Timothy had recently returned from a trip to Thessalonica with news of the conditions in the church there (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, 6).

No doubt Paul, Silas and Timothy were the best known and respected missionaries in Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians is addressed **to the church in Thessalonica**. The church is the people – not the building. The Greek word *ekklesia* refers to any gathering or assembly, and shows the relationship of believers to one another and to Christ. So this letter was addressed to the body of believers (not to individual believers) who lived in the city of Thessalonica.

The church is described as being **in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. Forget anything you might be thinking about the Trinity, or about two

separate persons. Paul is reemphasizing that God is the Father, who gives security, love and strength, and He is the Lord – the sovereign One who is to be obeyed. He is “Jesus,” the human name for the Lord, from the Greek form of “Joshua,” which means “Savior.” “Christ” is the Greek translation of the “Messiah” of the Old Testament and means “Anointed One.”

The short greeting that follows is common throughout Paul’s epistles. **Grace and peace.** **Grace** is equivalent to “greetings” or “rejoice.” The Greek **peace** is equivalent to the Hebrew *shalom* which means “favor,” “prosperity,” and “well-being.”

These two words of greeting always appear in this same order throughout the New Testament. Theologically God’s grace is the basis for and leads us to peace.

### **1:2 We always thank God for all of you and mention you when we pray.**

In general, the first three chapters of 1 Thessalonians are personal, and the last two are practical.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy rejoiced together in what God had done in the lives of the Thessalonians. They continually and frequently gave thanks. The Thessalonians were a constant source of joy to them. These apostles had suffered labor pains in giving birth to the church, and the infant church at Thessalonica was deeply rooted in their hearts.

Paul must have had an enormous prayer list! You might be surprised if you look through his epistles at all the churches and individuals he was praying for. I don’t think many leaders today spend that much time in prayer.

**Acts 6:4** Then we can continue to pray and to teach the word of God.

### **1:3 We continually recall before God our Father the things you have done because of your faith and the work you have done because of your love. And we thank him that you continue to be strong because of your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Here are three important characteristics of believers: **the things you have done because of your faith** – they had turned from idols to the true God. Faith in God had brought true repentance. (1:9) note that the faith brought repentance, not vice versa.

**the work you have done because of your love** – they were serving the living and true God in the midst of persecution (1:6) Serving the Lord is not always easy. We often get tired *doing* the work, but not tired *of* the work.

**continue to be strong because of your hope** – literally “bearing up patiently under a heavy load.” They were waiting for God’s Son from heaven (1:10). If you put your hope in man, you’re going to be disappointed. It is only when we put our hope in God that we can “bear up patiently.”

**Isaiah 31:1** How terrible it will be for those people who go down to Egypt for help. They think horses will save them. They think their many chariots and strong horsemen will save them. But they don’t trust God, the Holy One of Israel, or ask the Lord for help.

**Psalms 20:7** Some trust in chariots, others in horses, but we trust the Lord our God.

These three qualities, (faith, hope, and love) should be obvious in every Christian.

**1 Corinthians 13:13** So these three things continue forever: faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love.

Notice that each of these qualities is focused on Christ. Jesus is always supposed to be the focus of the church.

#### **1:4 Brothers and sisters, God loves you, and we know he has chosen you,**

Paul referred to his fellow Christians as **Brothers and sisters**. (*adelphoi*) He used that term 15 times in 1 Thessalonians, and 7 times in 2 Thessalonians. Paul was an apostle. The top of the line in church authority. But he didn’t consider himself superior to others, but spoke with great humility, recognizing that before God, we are equally redeemed.

Paul had been a proud Pharisee. Now he referred to Gentiles as equals before God.

**God loves you.** He doesn’t just put up with us because we’re His family, and He is stuck with us. He loves us.

The proof of God’s love for us is that He chose us. The word indicates selection, or election. Like we do at the market when we select which of the fruits or berries we want. Or what we do in November every 4 years, when we elect who we want for our next president.

**Ephesians 1:4-6** That is, in Christ, he chose us before the world was made so that we would be his holy people—people without blame before him. <sup>5</sup> Because of his love, God had already decided to make us his own children through Jesus Christ. That was what he wanted and what pleased

him, <sup>6</sup> and it brings praise to God because of his wonderful grace. God gave that grace to us freely, in Christ, the One he loves.

Clearly, we are also individually responsible to decide to trust in Jesus Christ. (John 3; Romans 5). The Bible makes it clear that both election and choice are true. But to fully understand how that all works seems to be beyond the capabilities of the human mind.

**1:5 because the Good News we brought to you came not only with words, but with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with sure knowledge that it is true. Also you know how we lived when we were with you in order to help you.**

**the Good News** –it is the message that we preach. It is the good news of the grace of God.

**Acts 17:2-3** Paul went into the synagogue as he always did, and on each Sabbath day for three weeks, he talked with his fellow Jews about the Scriptures. <sup>3</sup> He explained and proved that the Christ must die and then rise from the dead. He said, “This Jesus I am telling you about is the Christ.”

**came not only with words** – Paul didn’t preach his own thoughts or any human philosophy.

**1 Corinthians 2:1-5** Dear brothers and sisters, when I came to you, I did not come preaching God’s secret with fancy words or a show of human wisdom. <sup>2</sup> I decided that while I was with you I would forget about everything except Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. <sup>3</sup> So when I came to you, I was weak and fearful and trembling. <sup>4</sup> My teaching and preaching were not with words of human wisdom that persuade people but with proof of the power that the Spirit gives. <sup>5</sup> This was so that your faith would be in God’s power and not in human wisdom.

The message brought by Paul was brought home to their hearts by the **power** of the **Holy Spirit**.

**John 16:8** When the Helper comes, he will prove to the people of the world the truth about sin, about being right with God, and about judgment.

The gospel message had radically changed Paul’s life, and it has the power to radically change our lives.

The Thessalonians had observed Paul (and those who ministered with him), and knew they were living testimonies to the truth of the gospel.

It’s not enough to preach the gospel; we must live it. We are to be living epistles.

**2 Corinthians 3:1-3** Are we starting to brag about ourselves again? Do we need letters of introduction to you or from you, like some other people? <sup>2</sup> You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. <sup>3</sup> You show that you are a letter from Christ sent through us. This letter is not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. It is not written on stone tablets but on human hearts.

**1:6 And you became like us and like the Lord. You suffered much, but still you accepted the teaching with the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit.**

The result of responding to the gospel is a changed life. They became **like us and like the Lord** - like their spiritual parents, and like the Lord. That should be a normal Christian experience.

Everyone needs teachers, especially new converts.

Personally, I'd prefer others were copying only the Lord, and not me. I know the mistakes I make. But that really isn't an option that God has given us. As we mature in the Lord, we are supposed to grow into the role of being a model of Christ. People are supposed to be able to look to us. That serves as a reminder to me that I need to be crucifying my flesh every day. In that sense, we don't ever get a "day off."

There should be no difference between copying "us" and copying the Lord. We are supposed to live and act like Him.

**1 Peter 2:21** This is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and gave you an example to follow. So you should do as he did.

**still you accepted** indicates a warm welcome. The Thessalonians had grabbed hold of the gospel with joy, even though it meant facing persecution.

The Thessalonians had welcomed the gospel message despite **suffering much**. These converts must have had serious opposition to their faith. But they hadn't let that stop them. In spite of all the trials they had to face, they had **the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit** to comfort them.

Joy isn't determined by the circumstances you find yourself in. It is determined by your relationship with Christ.

**1:7 So you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Southern Greece.**

The word **example** is from a root which means "strike" or "hit." It means an impression left by a blow – like from a block print, a rubber stamp, or a typewriter.

So Paul was saying that the Thessalonian believers became like a stencil by which these other believers would be drawn.

It's one thing to have a good testimony among your close circle of friends. It is quite another to have that testimony throughout the entire region, (essentially all of southern Greece).

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he pointed out these Thessalonian believers as an example of benevolence. (Thessalonica was the largest city and the capital of the province of Macedonia).

**2 Corinthians 8:1-2** And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace God gave the churches in Macedonia. <sup>2</sup>They have been tested by great troubles, and they are very poor. But they gave much because of their great joy.

The way you manage your money is one of the most revealing evidences of your commitment to Christ.

**1:8 And the Lord's teaching spread from you not only into Macedonia and Southern Greece, but now your faith in God has become known everywhere. So we do not need to say anything about it.**

This verse explains how the Thessalonians' testimony was spread. It wasn't through any kind of organized evangelistic campaign. It was by one-on-one, word of mouth evangelism.

The word here translated as **spread from you** implies a reverberation, or an echo. As though the words of these Thessalonian believers were being broadcast throughout the region. Most likely this "broadcasting" was done by travelers passing through the city, and bringing the message to their home towns.

Although the Christians in Thessalonica were still just babes in Christ, their faith, love and hope were already a model for others.

**1:9 People everywhere are telling about the way you accepted us when we were there with you. They tell how you stopped worshipping idols and began serving the living and true God.**

Other people are telling Paul about what happened when Paul visited Thessalonica! The stories were not relayed by missionaries, but by ordinary travelers who had seen the believers and were impressed. The events of his visit were well known, not because Paul had been telling the story, but because of the powerful witness of others.

Turning to God from idols suggests that the Thessalonians had been pagan Gentiles. They had worshipped idols of wood, stone and natural phenomena. Now they were worshipping the **living and true God**. Throughout the Old Testament, the one true God was distinguished from all the other so-called gods as the “living God.”

**1:10 And you wait for God’s Son, whom God raised from the dead, to come from heaven. He is Jesus, who saves us from God’s angry judgment that is sure to come.**

**Wait for God’s Son** – Paul was hoping for the Lord’s return to happen at any moment. “**Wait for**” indicates an eager and expectant looking forward to the return. We don’t wait sitting down, or with our noses pressed against the window. We are serving Him faithfully right up until the moment of His return.

**Heaven** here is plural, indicating the atmosphere, or awaiting Jesus’ return through the clouds, or literally “out of the heavens.” (As opposed to heaven singular, which would indicate Jesus coming from His throne.) Either way, our focus is not supposed to be on where He is coming from, but on Him who is coming! He is the object of our hope. We’re waiting for Jesus Himself, rather than anything that will accompany Him or characterize His return. He Himself is the one who fills us with hope.

There are lots of reasons we should be excited about Jesus’ coming, but here Paul emphasized our escape from **God’s angry judgment that is sure to come**.

The **angry judgment** of God will be poured out on unrighteous people because of their failure to trust in Christ.

**Romans 1:18** God’s anger is shown from heaven against all the evil and wrong things people do. By their own evil lives they hide the truth.

That angry judgment will be poured out on several occasions:

1. The great white throne judgment of Revelation 20:11-15
2. The time of Jacob’s trouble of Jeremiah 30:4-7
3. The Great Tribulation of Revelation 7:14

Chapter 1 (and all the chapters in 1 Thessalonians) ends with a reference to the return of Jesus Christ. Even though the chapter breaks were not part of what Paul wrote, (they were added in the 13<sup>th</sup> century) we still find no fewer than five encouragements of the return.



## **2:1 Brothers and sisters, you know our visit to you was not a failure.**

Some people were spreading rumors about Paul. They said he had wrong reasons for coming to Thessalonica.

Paul starts to defend himself. He reminded the Thessalonians that they were there when Paul was ministering. They should know personally that the rumors are not true.

The **you** is strongly emphasized in the Greek. Paul is asking the brethren to carefully remember his visit.

Paul's visit had not been **a failure**. It was not a waste of time. He had not come just to entertain them for a few days and then leave them.

In fact, Paul's visit had been very successful. The Thessalonians' lives were changed. That was proof of the success of his visit.

## **2:2 Before we came to you, we suffered in Philippi. People there insulted us, as you know, and many people were against us. But our God helped us to be brave and to tell you his Good News.**

Paul said he had been treated shamefully in Philippi.

**Acts 16:22-24** The crowd joined the attack against them. The Roman officers tore the clothes of Paul and Silas and had them beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup> Then Paul and Silas were thrown into jail, and the jailer was ordered to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> When he heard this order, he put them far inside the jail and pinned their feet down between large blocks of wood.

Even after that experience in Philippi, they came to the synagogue in Thessalonica and preached the same message. That seems to me to be the very definition of being **brave**. This bravery was a sign of God at work among them, and proof that they were really doing God's work.

The Greek words translated **many people were against us** means conflict, agony, or struggling under great strain with great conflict. But still they were able to **tell you his Good News**. This was not the kind of witnessing you might do at Starbucks!

In verses 3-6 Paul is going to tell us about what he preached in Thessalonica. It wasn't the words he spoke, but the life he lived which preached the loudest.

Regardless of your ministry in the church, you are a preacher. Your life is preaching every day. Does the message of your life match the message of your words?

**2:3-4 Our appeal does not come from lies or wrong reasons, nor were we trying to trick you. <sup>4</sup> But we speak the Good News because God tested us and trusted us to do it. When we speak, we are not trying to please people, but God, who tests our hearts.**

Paul's message was truth; not error. His reason for ministering was clean; not impure. (He wasn't being greedy.) His method was straightforward; not with tricks or lies. He didn't lower his standards to put up with the prejudices and passions of the old nature.

**Trick you** is from a Greek word used of a fishing lure to catch fish. It brings to mind the moving stage lights, fog machines and mirror balls which have been used in "seeker-sensitive" services to lure the unsaved to the altar. If those methods really draw people out of their lifestyle of sin into a relationship with Christ which lasts, then so be it. But I'm siding with Paul on this one. I want to present no flash, only substance.

God proved that Paul's message was genuine (**God tested us and trusted us**). Paul saw himself as a servant entrusted by God to carry His message of salvation to lost men and women.

Paul didn't choose the work; God selected him to announce the gospel. Since Paul realized that he was under the constant inspection of the Lord, he wouldn't dare misrepresent the Word or serve with wrong motives.

**2:5-6 You know that we never tried to influence you by saying nice things about you. We were not trying to get your money; we had no selfishness to hide from you. God knows that this is true. <sup>6</sup> We were not looking for human praise, from you or anyone else,**

Paul's message did not change to try to gain something for himself. He was not looking for praise from anyone but God.

This is the only New Testament use of the word translated **influence you by saying nice things**. It was common practice among the Hellenistic (Greek) speakers of the day to use flattery. Once again, Paul was showing how different he was and his message from the common.

It probably just seems right that preachers should not use flattering speech to try to win favor with a congregation, but I think flattery is more common than not. We have become so used to a consumer mentality, that if the message isn't exactly what we want to hear, we're ready to change the channel. It might seem wise for

a preacher to change the presentation so as not to offend the audience. But Paul refused to water down the message.

At what point does “changing your message to fit your audience” become flattering speech?

**2:5 ...not trying to get your money** - Paul called God as his witness, since no human can really know your motives.

Paul was not preaching the gospel in order to gain some fame or wealth for himself.

Greed is not limited to money. I think it's just as common to be tempted to become greedy for fame, honor, respect, recognition or position. We need to search our hearts to uncover any greediness there.

Paul didn't even take financial support from the Thessalonians. Instead he paid for his own way, like he had done in Corinth (1 Corinthians 9 and 2 Corinthians 11).

**2:7 even though as apostles of Christ we could have used our authority over you. But we were very gentle with you, like a mother caring for her little children.**

Certainly Paul, Silas and Timothy had a right to be respected by the Thessalonians, but they chose to minister, instead of being ministered to. They cared for their converts like a nursing mother **caring for her little children**. This is a good instruction for anyone who is responsible for a congregation. A professional nurse would know how to care for the needs of an infant, but they might not have nearly the same concern for the child as its mother will.

A nursing mother's love for her child makes her want to care for it. If a nursing mother does not feed herself, she cannot feed her baby. If she eats certain foods, her baby will get sick.

The spiritual diet of a parent Christian is vitally important to the health of a newer Christian.

Paul loved the Thessalonians with a mother's love. He would have sacrificed his own life for them if that had been necessary.

**John 10:12** The worker who is paid to keep the sheep is different from the shepherd who owns them. When the worker sees a wolf coming, he runs away and leaves the sheep alone. Then the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them.

**2:8 Because we loved you, we were happy to share not only God's Good News with you, but even our own lives. You had become so dear to us!**

The Apostles had been accused of being greedy (v5), but in fact, they were delighted to give whatever they had in order to help the beloved Thessalonians.

Genuine love can be seen in giving to people – not only to their spiritual needs, which are primary, but also to their physical needs.

Paul had a genuine love for the Thessalonians, and was willing literally to give his life for them.

**2:9 Brothers and sisters, I know you remember our hard work and difficulties. We worked night and day so we would not burden any of you while we preached God's Good News to you.**

**Hard work and difficulties** – the apostolic calling is not a life of ease and comfort. The Greek word indicates strenuous work that produces weariness and fatigue.

Paul probably worked on making tents like he did in other cities.

**Acts 18:3** Because they were tentmakers, just as he was, he stayed with them and worked with them.

Paul probably preached the gospel and taught as much as he could, both in the daytime and in the evenings. This is more proof that Paul's ministry was not motivated by greed.

**2:10 When we were with you, we lived in a holy and honest way, without fault. You know this is true, and so does God.**

**holy** – morally good; careful in your duty to God

**honest** – just; correct; careful in your duty to man

**without fault** – able to stand up to the careful examination of critics, because their behavior was right.

That doesn't mean that Paul's enemies didn't blame him – because they did. But the charges didn't stick.

People will say ugly things about you, but the important thing is to make sure the criticisms are not true.

Living a holy life is very important. It has nothing to do with getting your salvation, but it has everything to do with the salvation of people around you, because they are watching you.

Could your behavior stand up to these standards? We're called to nothing less!

**2:11-12 You know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. <sup>12</sup> We encouraged you, we urged you, and we insisted that you live good lives for God, who calls you to his glorious kingdom.**

Paul likened his conduct with them to the unselfish care of a nursing mother in verse 7, and here to that of a father. The suggestion is that they trained and instructed the Thessalonians as a responsible father disciplines his children.

The training included strong positive appeals (**we urged you**), soothing persuasion (**we encouraged you**) designed to cheer up and to inspire correct behavior, and solemn, earnest urging (**we insisted**).

**Live good lives for God** (living in a way that measures up to the God we serve) is the highest calling for all of us. It seems like an impossible goal, but God has called us to it, so in Him it must be possible.

**Philippians 1:6** God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again.

We have been called to share His **glorious kingdom**.

**2:13 Also, we always thank God because when you heard his message from us, you accepted it as the word of God, not the words of humans. And it really is God's message which works in you who believe.**

When the Thessalonians heard Paul preaching, they recognized that it wasn't just human words. Paul's message had its source in God.

They sensed the supernatural truthfulness of the gospel Paul preached as the Holy Spirit brought this conviction home to their hearts.

The Word of God has power to change lives. Not only to change us at the point of salvation, but to change us from day to day as we continue to believe.

**Believe** – the Greek tense indicates continuing action – **And it really is God's message which works in you who *continue to believe***. The Word of God is like a good medicine which continues to benefit us as long as we continue to take it.

**2:14 Brothers and sisters, your experiences have been like those of God's churches in Christ that are in Judea. You suffered from the people of your own country, as they suffered from the Jews**

Paul now calls them brothers. He reminds them that when we take a stand for Jesus, and allow Him to change our lives, others will criticize us.

It's tempting to think that when we experience persecution and troubles, it is a sign that God has abandoned us. That is absolutely not true. God has promised He will never leave us.

**1 Peter 4:15-16** Do not suffer for murder, theft, or any other crime, nor because you trouble other people. <sup>16</sup> But if you suffer because you are a Christian, do not be ashamed. Praise God because you wear that name.

Many Christians pray for revival (and God knows, we need it!). But I don't know any prayer groups who are praying for suffering. But suffering brings us together as brethren, and draws us closer to God. And suffering is one of the conditions that makes us ready for revival.

**2:15-16 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and forced us to leave that country. They do not please God and are against all people. <sup>16</sup> They try to stop us from teaching those who are not Jews so they may be saved. By doing this, they are increasing their sins to the limit. The anger of God has come to them at last.**

The Thessalonians were not the only ones suffering. Their persecutors had **killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets**. The Apostle Paul and his co-workers had also been driven out by the Jews.

Persecuting believers is the same as persecuting God. Paul knew what he was talking about – he had been one of the chief persecutors before his conversion.

The worst effect of unbelief is not just that it damns the unbeliever, but that it blocks the salvation of others. Unbelievers try to extinguish the light of God's Word, and in so doing, cause others to stumble. They bring God's **anger** on themselves.

**they are increasing their sins to the limit.** The implication is that we (individually or as a group) can collect only a certain amount of sin before His judgment falls on us. God permits sin to run its full course.

**2:17 Brothers and sisters, though we were separated from you for a short time, our thoughts were still with you. We wanted very much to see you and tried hard to do so.**

Again, Paul refers to the Thessalonians as **brothers and sisters**. He explains that he left Thessalonica not by choice, but by being **separated from you**. The verb literally means “to be orphaned.” To Paul, it was as though his family had been torn apart. He hoped the separation would only be **for a short time**.

Paul reminded them that even though they were “out of sight,” they were *not* “out of mind.” He still felt a strong desire to with them, even in the face of great persecution.

**2:18 We wanted to come to you. I, Paul, tried to come more than once, but Satan stopped us.**

Regardless of who was preventing Paul’s return, the ultimate responsibility for the block was Satan. Satan uses people to do his bidding. Paul wasn’t blaming the people, he recognized the real mover behind the movement.

It is unusual for Paul to insert his own name. Perhaps he was emphasizing that he personally had repeatedly tried to return.

**2:19 You are our hope, our joy, and the crown we will take pride in when our Lord Jesus Christ comes.**

The Thessalonians were his hope and joy. The Philippian believers were the only others who received such warm words of personal love from Paul.

The Thessalonians filled his life with sunshine. “When life is over, and we stand in the presence of our Lord Jesus, you Thessalonians will be our source of glory and joy. You mean that much to us.

**2:20 Truly you are our glory and our joy.**

One of the greatest things we can look forward to is when Christ comes to take His church home, and he will be able to see these people whom he had labored for in the Lord receiving their crowns of eternal life.

## **1 Thessalonians 3:1 When we could not wait any longer, we decided it was best to stay in Athens alone**

Because they **wanted very much to see you and tried hard to do so** (2:17), Paul again stated his sincere concern for the Thessalonians.

When Paul and Silas were forced to leave Thessalonica, they went to Berea. The Jews who opposed Paul heard about that, and came to Berea to stir up trouble. Paul's friends then escorted him south to Athens. There Paul left word for Silas and Timothy to join him, but before they arrived, Paul left for Corinth. (Acts 17:13-15)

Paul was unable to return to Thessalonica, so he and Silas decided to send Timothy.

Timothy and Silas rejoined Paul after their missions, (Timothy went to Thessalonica while Silas went to Philippi). They all met up in Corinth, the next city on Paul's itinerary. (Acts 18:1, 5)

## **1 Thessalonians 3:2-3 and send Timothy to you. Timothy, our brother, works with us for God and helps us tell people the Good News about Christ. We sent him to strengthen and encourage you in your faith<sup>3</sup> so none of you would be upset by these troubles. You yourselves know that we must face these troubles.**

Paul's introduction of Timothy seems to suggest that the young man needed more than Paul's normal authorization. Maybe because of his youth he was not recognized and respected the same as the older missionaries.

Paul called Timothy **our brother**, suggesting equality with the other apostles.

Timothy's mission was to **strengthen and encourage** – to make them firm and solid in the faith by providing what they needed to fight the good fight of faith.

**3:3 so none of you would be upset** ... the Greek word here translated **upset** is used of a dog wagging its tail. You can see the image of the Thessalonians going back and forth because of their persecutions.

Trials are not a symptom of God's punishment. They are an expectation for all of us. They often come to help us stand strong instead of being blown away.

**2 Timothy 3:12** Everyone who wants to live as God desires, in Christ Jesus, will be persecuted.



**1 Thessalonians 3:4 Even when we were with you, we told you we all would have to suffer, and you know it has happened.**

Paul isn't trying to point out his "prophetic accuracy," he is trying to comfort the Thessalonians.

**1 Thessalonians 3:5 Because of this, when I could wait no longer, I sent Timothy to you so I could learn about your faith. I was afraid the devil had tempted you, and perhaps our hard work would have been wasted.**

Paul had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica because he was genuinely concerned for their spiritual health. Were they still trusting God or had they abandoned Him and returned to paganism?

There is disagreement among theologians as to whether Paul's concern was that they had lost their salvation, or not. It's hard to think that the devil would stop at anything less than turning you away from heaven.

**1 Thessalonians 3:6 But Timothy now has come back to us from you and has brought us good news about your faith and love. He told us that you always remember us in a good way and that you want to see us just as much as we want to see you.**

Timothy had brought good news, that the Thessalonians' faith had not become weak, and it was having fruit in love.

A clear picture of the love of and for the Thessalonians is seen here in their mutual longing to see each other.

**1 Thessalonians 3:7 So, brothers and sisters, while we have much trouble and suffering, we are encouraged about you because of your faith.**

Timothy's report had been sweet relief for Paul. As brothers in Christ, we are bound together by our mutual faith in Him as well as by our love for one another.

**1 Thessalonians 3:8 Our life is really full if you stand strong in the Lord.**

**Our life is really full** indicates that as believers we enjoy life.

**If** could be translated "since." Even in the midst of troubles, we can still enjoy life.

**1 Peter 4:12-13** My friends, do not be surprised at the terrible trouble which now comes to test you. Do not think that something strange is happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But be happy that you are sharing in Christ's sufferings so that you will be happy and full of joy when Christ comes again in glory.

Whether this passage is translated as “if you stand” or “since you stand”, the implication is that you have a choice to make. Whether it has anything to do with losing your salvation or not, it is a serious choice – to stand strong in the Lord.

Standing strong in the Lord strengthens us so we can withstand the storms of life. Even if you have trouble it is going to work out for your good.

**1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 We have so much joy before our God because of you. We cannot thank him enough for all the joy we feel. <sup>10</sup> Night and day we continue praying with all our heart that we can see you again and give you all the things you need to make your faith strong.**

Essentially Paul is saying “We can’t thank God enough for you.” Paul didn’t take any credit for their growth in God – he gave all the honor to God.

Just knowing all was well with the Thessalonians was not enough. Paul still earnestly wanted to be with them.

**all the things you need to make your faith strong** indicates the Thessalonians still needed to grow and mature. Their need was not because they had failed in any way, but just that maturity requires time! (“We grow too soon old, and too late smart.”)

**1 Thessalonians 3:11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus prepare the way for us to come to you.**

Paul has already told the Thessalonians how much he wanted to see them again, now he addresses this request to God in prayer.

**Our one and only God who is our Father Himself and who is our Lord Jesus**

...

**1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 May the Lord make your love grow more and multiply for each other and for all people so that you will love others as we love you. <sup>13</sup> May your hearts be made strong so that you will be holy and without fault before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.**

The Thessalonians were noted for their love. Here Paul prayed that their love would **grow** and that they would have more than enough.

Genuine Christian love is one of the few things you can never have too much of.

Paul did not pray that they would be sinless – that would be impossible. He prayed that they would be **without fault**. After they sinned, they would deal with it as God requires and so be free from any reasonable charge by their fellow Christians.

They **will be holy** – separated to God in their hearts and actions.

Paul prayed that when Jesus Christ returns, He will find them without fault before men and holy before God.

**when our Lord Jesus comes** *Parousia* literally means “presence.” The word was commonly used in New Testament times to describe the visitation of royalty or of some other important person. Thus the word signals no ordinary coming. The New Testament writers used the word to describe Christ’s second coming, when He will return to earth in His ultimate, glorious visitation as the King over all.

The Lord will be coming **with all his holy ones**. Those are the Christians who have gone to be with Christ. This could also refer to the angels, in which case it would mean both His saints and His angels.

**1 Thessalonians 4:1 Brothers and sisters, we taught you how to live in a way that will please God, and you are living that way. Now we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus to live that way even more.**

Paul moved this beyond a simple prayer to an urging / **encourage**. It's not a call to "obey" or "do the right thing." We aren't going to please God by keeping all the rules and saying all the right words. The only way we will ever please God is by surrendering our life to Him completely. Make the whole purpose of your life to be pleasing to Him. That means you're no longer living to please yourselves, your parents, your teachers, your families or your pastors. You are living only to please God.

Notice that Paul was not telling them they had to change and do something new. In fact he commended them for doing exactly that. Just do so even more.

**Galatians 6:9** We must not become tired of doing good. We will receive our harvest of eternal life at the right time if we do not give up.

Spiritual complacency contradicts a believer's confession.

**live** – this is the practical aspect of the hope of the coming of the Lord. We like to look forward to the day when we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. But in the meantime our feet are down here on the ground and we need to do some walking. We are to walk in a way that will please God.

**1 Thessalonians 4:2 You know what we told you to do by the authority of the Lord Jesus.**

Too often Christians want to hear *new* truths. Paul urged them to keep working on the old truths (the gospel of Jesus Christ). We need to go deeper, and press on to greater application of the truths we have already learned, but only partially applied.

**John 14:15** If you love me, you will obey my commands.

**1 Thessalonians 4:3 God wants you to be holy and to stay away from sexual sins.**

holiness means to be set apart for God's use: holy. Holiness is a process.

**Sexual sins** *porneia* is a broad term and includes any form of sexual practice that is outside of God's revealed will, including lust, adultery, premarital and extramarital intercourse, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, and other perversions. The Thessalonians lived in a pagan environment in which sexual looseness was not only practiced openly, but was also encouraged.

In Greek religions prostitution was considered a priestly privilege, and extramarital sex was sometimes an act of worship. To a Christian the will of God is clear: holiness and sexual sin are complete opposites.

**1 Thessalonians 4:4-5 He wants each of you to learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable. <sup>5</sup> Don't use your body for sexual sin like the people who do not know God.**

This is the same truth expressed in a positive way. If you **control your own body** with all its passions, you will be able to avoid sexual sins.

Self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23) We don't have to be controlled by our lust. We can choose to be controlled by the Spirit of God. That is a demonstration that we are living a holy life which will bring honor to God.

**1 Thessalonians 4:6 Also, do not wrong or cheat another Christian in this way. The Lord will punish people who do those things as we have already told you and warned you.**

In verses 4 and 5, Paul urged sexual purity for the sake of your own relationship with God. Now he is appealing on the basis of the other person involved in the immorality. (**another Christian** could refer to either male or female partners). Dishonest sexual involvement affects not only the consenting parties. Spouses are wronged and families, friends, and fellow Christians shamed. Ultimately, these sins like all others are sins against God.

**Do those things** most likely refers to all the various forms of sexual uncleanness not specifically mentioned here in the context, but included in the general category of **sexual sins**.

**The Lord will punish** – He is the one who punishes. It might look like your sins are being covered up, but I've lived long enough to see it often. The secret sins which we have tried to conceal, God has placed in the revealing light of His presence.

**Psalms 90:8** You have put the evil we have done right in front of you; you clearly see our secret sins.

Apparently Paul had taught them about living a pure and holy life on his first visit with them. Even though he didn't get a chance to finish all his teachings, it is unimaginable he would have taught anything about living for Christ without warning them about the consequences of sexual sins – especially in light of the widespread sexual sin among the pagan population of Thessalonica.

**1 Thessalonians 4:7 God called us to be holy and does not want us to live in sin.**

Another reason to avoid sexual sin is that it goes against God's calling for us as Christians. **4:6** warns of judgment to come. **4:7** looks back to the very purpose for which God created us: to call us to Himself, created in His likeness.

A holy life demonstrates God's supernatural power at work in us to overcome what is natural, and give glory to God. We might be like the prodigal son, and live in the pigpen for a season, but a true Christian won't stay there.

**1 Thessalonians 4:8 So the person who refuses to obey this teaching is disobeying God, not simply a human teaching. And God is the One who gives us his Holy Spirit.**

The commands to sexual purity did not come from human invention. They are from God Himself. Rejecting sexual purity is not just rejecting certain aspects of Paul's message; it is rejecting God.

"But I'm only human." That's why **God ... gives us his Holy Spirit.**

**Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ, because he gives me strength.

**1 Thessalonians 4:9 We do not need to write you about having love for your Christian family, because God has already taught you to love each other.**

Refusing to be involved in sexual sin points out something that believers are *not* to do. **love for your Christian family** is something believers *are* supposed to do.

Brotherly love is taught directly by God to His children. Christians quickly learn that there is a real kinship between believers, and they relate to other Christians in a way they do not relate to those outside God's family.

The Thessalonians had already learned to **love each other** even though they were new Christians.

**1 Thessalonians 4:10 And truly you do love the Christians in all of Macedonia. Brothers and sisters, now we encourage you to love them even more.**

Paul didn't need to remind them to love one another – they were already doing that. But he urged them to super abound; go beyond all measure.

This is an important aspect of evangelism. In a world that is filled with self-serving individuals, the genuine love of Christians should attract others to the faith.

J. Vernon McGee told of a poem which expresses the need for Christians to increase their love for one another:

To dwell above with saints in love  
Oh, that will be glory.  
But to stay below with the saints I know—  
Well, that's another story.

The true measure of a Christian is not how well he knows the Word, but how well he demonstrates the love of God to his brethren.

**John 13:35** All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other.

**1 Thessalonians 4:11 Do all you can to live a peaceful life. Take care of your own business, and do your own work as we have already told you.**

**A peaceful life** means quiet in the sense of restfulness rather than quiet as opposed to talkativeness. This is an inner quietness. Paul was telling the Thessalonians to be less frantic, not less exuberant.

**Take care of your own business** – mind your own business. Don't be nosy or gossipy. Do nothing to tear down your brethren.

**Do your own work** – be self-supporting so you are not a burden on your brethren. A man who is willing to work with his hands demonstrates his love for his brethren by being willing to humble himself to provide for his own needs so that he does not depend on others but provides for himself.

**1 Thessalonians 4:12 If you do, then people who are not believers will respect you, and you will not have to depend on others for what you need.**

When we do these things, we win the respect of non-Christians, and glorify God. People appreciate those who do not take advantage of them.

Paul discouraged believers from expecting financial support from your brethren simply because you are Christian. But he was also not promoting self-sufficiency. We are bound to one another as fellow-believers, but we must accept personal responsibility. That is a manifestation of mature Christian love for the brethren.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about those Christians who have died so you will not be sad, as others who have no hope.**

4:13-5:11 are devoted to instructions and exhortations dealing with Christ's return.

The rest of chapter 4 addresses the relationship of the Lord's return to believers who have died. This is the classic passage in the Bible on the rapture of the church.

Paul taught that the rapture was soon, meaning it is the next event on God's agenda. That does not mean it will happen today or tomorrow – though it could.

The main focus of this passage is not teaching about the rapture. Apparently Paul had already done that in the less than a month that he was in Thessalonica. The focus is on encouraging them that even those who are dead in Christ will be part of the rapture.

Today, we are nearly 2,000 years after Paul's lifetime, and there are literally millions of believers who have already gone before us. But for the Thessalonians, there were more believers still alive than already dead in Christ. This section is an encouragement that the dead in Christ will not be left out.

**Those Christians who have died.** This is not some kind of "soul sleep." Paul taught us that to be absent from the body means we are present with the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 5:8** So I say that we have courage. We really want to be away from this body and be at home with the Lord.

**Philippians 1:23** It is hard to choose between the two. I want to leave this life and be with Christ, which is much better,

This is the body "asleep" in the earth until it is resurrected, changed into a glorious body, and reunited with the soul.

**2 Corinthians 5:1-9** We know that our body—the tent we live in here on earth—will be destroyed. But when that happens, God will have a house for us. It will not be a house made by human hands; instead, it will be a home in heaven that will last forever. <sup>2</sup> But now we groan in this tent. We want God to give us our heavenly home, <sup>3</sup> because it will clothe us so we will not be naked. <sup>4</sup> While we live in this body, we have burdens, and we groan. We do not want to be naked, but we want to be clothed with our heavenly home. Then this body that dies will be fully covered with life. <sup>5</sup> This is what God made us for, and he has given us the Spirit to be a guarantee for this new life. <sup>6</sup> So we always have courage. We know that while we live in this body, we are away from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> We live by what we believe, not by what we can see. <sup>8</sup> So I say that we have courage. We really want to be away from this body and be at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Our only goal is to please God whether we live here or there,



The **others who have no hope** are the unbelievers. This does not mean Christians are not supposed to grieve over the loss of someone. Grief is a normal human emotion which even Jesus experienced.

**John 11:35** Jesus cried. [Over the death of Lazarus]

But our grief is different from the unbelievers', because we have hope of the resurrection.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16** The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And those who have died believing in Christ will rise first.

**1 Thessalonians 4:14** We believe that Jesus died and that he rose again. So, because of him, God will raise with Jesus those who have died.

The death and resurrection of Jesus are among the best-attested facts of history. Since we know these events took place, we can be equally certain that the dead in Christ will accompany Jesus on His return.

**1 Thessalonians 4:15** What we tell you now is the Lord's own message. We who are living when the Lord comes again will not go before those who have already died.

**The Lord's own message** – not from Paul's own imaginings. How Jesus got this information to Paul is not known.

This truth brings us comfort. Evidently the Thessalonians were concerned that believers who had died would miss the glory associated with the coming of the Lord.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16** The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And those who have died believing in Christ will rise first.

**For the Lord himself will come down** – He sent angels to announce the birth of Christ, but the rapture won't be the ministry of angels. It will be the Lord Himself.

**With a loud command...with the trumpet** these words are difficult to interpret. Who will shout? Who will blow the trumpet? Will it be Jesus' voice, or Michael's? or is God figuratively describing the call of God that will announce His coming? These events could be references to the same event, or they could be separate simultaneous announcements.

One thing is sure: Christ's return for His saints will be announced from heaven forcefully and dramatically.

**Those who have died believing in Christ** could include all the righteous dead since creation, or the righteous dead before Christ might not be raised to life again until the end of the Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:2). Though it appears that Paul's immediate concern was to reassure the Thessalonians that their recently-dead brethren will not be forgotten.

There has been some concern about the dead who were cremated, lost at sea, or had their bodies scavenged by animals. How will they be raised? The God who created everything in the universe out of nothing will surely be able to reassemble our bodies!

**1 Thessalonians 4:17 After that, we who are still alive will be gathered up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever.**

Immediately after the dead in Christ are raised, the living in Christ will be caught up. By using the word **we**, Paul thought he would still be alive at the time of the Rapture.

After both the dead and the living are caught up, **we will be with the Lord forever**. The "where" is not important. The important thing is that we are **with the Lord**.

We are not given a lot of clear information about where we will be after death or rapture. That hasn't stopped many people from speaking with absolute certainty about what it will be like. I believe the fact that we are not told much about it is to keep our focus on the important consideration, which is that wherever we are, we will be with the Lord. Nothing else will matter!!!

The events described here and in the parallel passages in 1 Corinthians 15 are significantly different from the events of the second coming – Christ's return to the earth to set up His earthly kingdom. (Revelation 19:11-21). The Rapture is a separate event from the Second Coming. Some have described it as if we were caught up, and then immediately came back down in Christ's Second Coming. Those are separate events, and it appears there is a great battle (Armageddon) in between the events.

**1 Thessalonians 4:18 So encourage each other with these words.**

Not only do Christians not grieve like unbelievers, but we can actually look forward eagerly to that great day. This is our hope: to be united with Him forever.

**Encourage** also indicates to instruct and to exhort one another and to talk about these things.

**1 Thessalonians 5:1 Now, brothers and sisters, we do not need to write you about times and dates.**

**Times and dates** – the period of time with chronological accuracy and the critical moment, the exact time, the right point of time, the decisive moment.

**Brothers and sisters** – continues the affectionate tone.

Apparently Paul had already taught them about the day of the Lord. He is not so much informing them as urging them to live in the light of what they already know.

**1 Thessalonians 5:2 You know very well that the day the Lord comes again will be a surprise, like a thief that comes in the night.**

God marks days from sundown to sundown. So a day starts with the night.

**Genesis 1:5** God named the light “day” and the darkness “night.” Evening passed, and morning came. This was the first day.

The day of the Lord begins with (night) the great tribulation and moves into the light, the glorious millennial reign of Christ when the sun will shine with healing in its rays. (Malachi 4:2)

In the Old Testament, the phrase the day of the Lord is used for any period where God brings judgment on the earth. Some of those days have already been fulfilled. Here, Paul is using the expression to refer to Christ’s return and the coming judgment.

The day of the Lord should not come like a thief for those of us who have been waiting and looking for Him. But this period of history will come as a surprise to those on the earth at the time, like a thief is a surprise to a sleeping homeowner. The point is that it will take place suddenly and unexpectedly, not necessarily at night. Obviously it will be night in some parts of the world, while it is day in others.

**Matthew 24:43-44** Remember this: If the owner of the house knew what time of night a thief was coming, the owner would watch and not let the thief break in. <sup>44</sup> So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at a time you don’t expect him.

**1 Thessalonians 5:3 While people are saying, “We have peace and we are safe,” they will be destroyed quickly. It is like pains that come quickly to a woman having a baby. Those people will not escape.**

Note that Paul did not include himself or his readers in this group. When discussing the rapture, it was “we.” Here it is “they.” The world will be expecting **peace and safety**, but will instead get **destroyed quickly**. The destruction does not mean everyone and everything will be completely destroyed. It means their peace and security will be broken up because of the sudden outpouring of God’s anger on the earth.

The reference to labor pains suggests both unpredictable suddenness and great personal discomfort. The signs of His coming are visible (like a pregnancy), but the time of the labor is just guess work at best.

A pregnant woman **will not escape** labor pains (at least not without modern medical help), just like the world will not escape the great tribulation. A strong expression is used in the Greek (a double negative) to stress that trying to run away will be worthless. In a tsunami, you can head for high ground. In a tornado, seek shelter below ground. But there will be no escape from the sudden global effect of the day of the Lord.

**1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 But you, brothers and sisters, are not living in darkness, and so that day will not surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all people who belong to the light and to the day. We do not belong to the night or to darkness.**

The Christian is not in the dark. We are not in the same group as those who will be taken by surprise by these events. We know the day of the Lord is coming.

One reason we will not be surprised as if by a thief is the rapture will have already taken us out before this day comes.

As sons of light and day, we will not be surprised.

Paul brought himself into the picture here – **“We do not belong to the night...”**

Christ’s sudden coming should motivate all of us to fully surrender our lives to Christ.

**1 Thessalonians 5:6 So we should not be like other people who are sleeping, but we should be alert and have self-control.**

Christians should not be unconcerned about the reality of the Lord’s return. We should not be asleep on the job.

**Sleep** here is a different Greek word than was used in 4:13-15. Here it is a word that means spiritual tiredness and insensitivity.

**Other people** refers to the non-Christians. We should be **alert and have self-control**. Self-controlled and disciplined because of the great events to come.

Self-control can also refer to spiritual drunkenness – being overtaken by power, or by making money, or by the pleasures of this life. As Christians, we are to be self-controlled.

**1 Thessalonians 5:7 Those who sleep, sleep at night. Those who get drunk, get drunk at night.**

These are the normal characteristics of those who live in the dark.

**1 Thessalonians 5:8 But we belong to the day, so we should control ourselves. We should wear faith and love to protect us, and the hope of salvation should be our helmet.**

Since we **belong to the day**, we should live that way. We should **control ourselves** – be armed and ready for action with self-control.

A Roman breastplate covered a soldier from neck to waist, thus protecting most of his vital organs. That is the same protection offered by **faith and love**. Faith in God protects inwardly and love for people protects outwardly. If you believe in God, you will love others.

The **hope of salvation** guards our heads from attacks on our thinking. **Salvation** is deliverance from the anger to come.

Again we see the three together: **faith, love** and **hope**.

**1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 God did not choose us to suffer his anger but to have salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup> Jesus died for us so that we can live together with him, whether we are alive or dead when he comes.**

This is another reason believers should be prepared. God does not want us to experience His **anger**.

We will obtain full **salvation** when the Lord returns for us in the clouds. Once we are with Him, there is nothing more that can distract us.

What does the **alive or dead** here refer to? Alive or dead, or spiritually alert or lazy? The same Greek words used here are used in verse 6, so it appears the reference is to spiritually alert vs lazy. My own theological bent leads me to interpret these as alive or dead in Christ. If it is alive, it is a powerful argument for a rapture that happens before the tribulation.

Paul wrote that Christ **died for us**; not that He was killed for us.

**John 10:18** No one takes it away from me; I give my own life freely. I have the right to give my life, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father commanded me to do.

The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ is central and foundational to our belief. Apparently the Thessalonians knew this truth, since Paul simply stated it, without any explanation or elaboration.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11 So encourage each other and give each other strength, just as you are doing now.**

This section includes 22 commandments for us as Christians.

#1 encourage one another. Encourage one another in the faith.

#2 give each other strength. Edify one another with the Word of God. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to constantly repeat and reemphasize this truth to strengthen each other. We don't always need to hear something new; sometimes we just need to be reminded of the truths we have already learned.

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 Now, brothers and sisters, we ask you to appreciate those who work hard among you, who lead you in the Lord and teach you. <sup>13</sup> Respect them with a very special love because of the work they do. Live in peace with each other.**

#3 appreciate those who work hard among you...

The earlier parts of this letter dealt with the events in the future. Here, Paul is dealing with the "right now."

The ones who are working hard among you are probably the elders, since they are the ones responsible for watching over the church, and instructing them.

#4 respect them with a very special love

Hold them in the highest regard. This should be a continuing attitude. Paul taught that all the leaders should be held in high respect because of the nature of their responsibilities before God. Not just some respect, but the highest respect. That comes from an attitude of love, **because of the work they do**. Because of the nature of their work and because their work is given as a service to others.

#5 live in peace with each other.

The peace of God comes naturally when we obey commands 1-4. The emphasis here is on maintaining peace rather than initiating it. This command is in the

imperative mood. (In general, mood is the feature of the verb that presents the action of the verb.) Imagine the difference we could see in churches today if believers obeyed this command!

**1 Thessalonians 5:14 We ask you, brothers and sisters, to warn those who do not work. Encourage the people who are afraid. Help those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.**

#6 warn those who do not work

**Brothers and sisters:** all believers as well as the leaders are responsible to minister to each other.

**warn:** exhort, instruct, to put in mind, to caution, to reprove gently

**do not work:** Disordered, disorderly, undisciplined, unbridled, without law or order

Those who neglect their duties need to be stirred up to action.

#7 encourage people who are afraid

**afraid:** discouraged

#8 help the weak

**Weak:** feeble, physically, mentally or emotionally sickly

#9 be patient with everyone

**Patient:** be longsuffering, patiently endure

All Christians have faults! To be most effective in promoting positive change in people's lives, believers should respond to individuals according to each one's particular needs.

**1 Thessalonians 5:15 Be sure that no one pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to do what is good for each other and for all people.**

#10 don't pay back wrong for wrong

The opposite of patience is revenge. Revenge is not an option for us as Christians. Regardless of the offense we never have the right to repay wrong with wrong.

**1 Peter 3:9** Do not do wrong to repay a wrong, and do not insult to repay an insult. But repay with a blessing, because you yourselves were called to do this so that you might receive a blessing.

**Be sure that no one...** as the body of Christ, we are responsible to help each other grow in the Lord. This is not a caution only to ourselves, but to our fellow believers as well.

#11 try to do what is good

It is not enough to simply avoid doing evil. We must do good. That takes effort!

To do good to those who do evil to us is contrary to the natural man. The minute someone hits us, we just naturally want to hit him back.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Always be joyful. <sup>17</sup> Pray continually, <sup>18</sup> and give thanks whatever happens. That is what God wants for you in Christ Jesus.**

#12 rejoice always

God wants us to be joyful, and it would seem like something we would always want! But knowing our nature, God reminded us of this command.

This is not the same thing as being happy. Happiness depends on "happenings." Joy depends on God.

Our joy is not based on our circumstances, it is based on our position in Christ. Jesus is forever reigning, so we can forever rejoice!

This is the shortest verse in the Greek New Testament. (14 letters, compared with John 11:35 Jesus wept, 16 letters)

#13 pray continually

Paul is commanding us to have continual, faithful fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily life. This does not mean pray constantly, but pray persistently and consistently.

#14 give thanks in everything

Verses 16 & 17 deal with how we use our time (always & continually). This verse deals with our circumstances. Give thanks to God in every circumstance of life.

Not thanks for everything, but thanks in everything.



These three exhortations are God's will for every Christian. Not the complete will of God, but a clear and important part of it. Joy, prayer and thanksgiving are the will of God for every believer.

**1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 Do not hold back the work of the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not treat prophecy as if it were unimportant.**

#15 do not hold back the work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is often thought of as fire. If we resist the Holy Spirit, His fire can be reduced or extinguished. We can resist His influence, or even say "no" to the Spirit of God. One of the ways to hold back a fire is to dampen it. When we refuse to listen to God we are holding back the Spirit.

The next verse might be a clue as to how the Thessalonians were holding back the Spirit.

#16 do not treat prophecy as if it were unimportant

Both Paul and Silas were prophets (Acts 13:1; 15:32).

Even so, we have a responsibility to test prophecy before accepting it. We must be careful never to put the words of humans on equality with the divinely inspired Word of God.

**1 Corinthians 14:29** Only two or three prophets should speak, and the others should judge what they say.

Some believe these prophecies were needed in the church before the New Testament was written, but are no longer needed, since we have a more sure word of prophecy. Some say that the current application of this verse is to not despise the scriptures. I believe in a God who knows how to say what He means!!

**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 But test everything. Keep what is good, <sup>22</sup> and stay away from everything that is evil.**

#17 test everything

To become skilled at detecting counterfeits, we must spend time studying the true. This is a command for every believer.

Don't be sucked in by a picture of pathetic looking orphans. Don't contribute to things you know nothing about. Christians should not be gullible. This also means that we are not to be taken in by flattery.

#18 keep what is good

Whatever is found to be in harmony with what has been given by the Holy Spirit in the Word should be kept.

#19 stay away from everything that is evil

Every kind and form of evil should be avoided. It is not always possible to avoid everything which might be *viewed* as evil by some. We can't change our lives to follow the ideas of others – we must be true to the Word of truth. But if you have a question in your mind whether something is alright to do or not, you would be wise not to do it.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may God himself, the God of peace, make you pure, belonging only to him. May your whole self—spirit, soul, and body—be kept safe and without fault when our Lord Jesus Christ comes.**

Paul had given some very high requirements for us, and we will need the presence of God in us to enable us to attain them.

Paul highlighted God's ability to produce peace. The church at Thessalonica had come to experience peace through the preaching of the gospel. And when Paul wrote this letter, the Thessalonians were enjoying peace with each other.

The God who had given them peace would be their resource for the future as well. We can only find that peace when we are truly set apart (sanctified) to Him in every area of our lives.

**Philippians 1:6** God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again.

Paul also prayed that there could be no genuine reason for blame against us until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. When every part of our lives is fully set apart for God, the result will be blamelessness.

**Spirit, soul, and body** does not mean there are three, and only three parts to us. We are described elsewhere as having two parts – body and spirit (James 2:26; 2 Corinthians 7:1), or body and soul (Matthew 10:28). And man is also said to have a heart, mind, conscience, and other parts. Paul is probably using these three terms here to identify the different aspects of personhood he wished to emphasize.

The **spirit** is the highest and most unique part of us that enables us to communicate with God.

The **soul** is the part of us that makes us aware of ourselves; it is the headquarters of our personality.

The **body**, of course, is the physical part through which the inner person expresses itself and by which we are immediately recognized.

**1 Thessalonians 5:24 You can trust the One who calls you to do that for you.**

He is faithful; trustworthy; dependable. He started the work in us, and He will finish it.

**1 Thessalonians 5:25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us.**

#20 pray for us. This is an emphatic request to *keep on praying*. All our success in God depends on prayer.

**1 Thessalonians 5:26 Give each other a holy kiss when you meet.**

#21 give each other a holy kiss.

It was common in Paul's culture as in many cultures today, to greet friends with a kiss on the cheek. The men greeted other men this way, and the women did the same with other women.

This kind of kiss communicated personal affection, not romantic love. By urging this practice Paul was encouraging an outward physical expression of true Christian love in a form that was culturally acceptable in his day. For us American readers, it might have read, "Give a handshake all around among the brothers and sisters."

**1 Thessalonians 5:27 I tell you by the authority of the Lord to read this letter to all the believers.**

#22 read this letter to all the believers.

The normal use of the Greek verb for "read" implies that it should be read aloud. Paul put his readers under oath (I tell you by the authority of the Lord), suggesting that God would discipline them if they disobeyed.

**1 Thessalonians 5:28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**

Obviously the grace of God is always with His children, but Paul's concern was that his readers experience and enjoy this grace. Everything we have in Christ is due to His grace! We are saved by grace, we live by grace, and we enjoy undeserved blessings from God by grace.

## 2 THESSALONIANS

Apparently Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to answer some questions they had asked. Perhaps those questions were brought to Paul by Timothy, though there is no evidence of that. Paul also wrote to correct some misinformation and false accusations that were circulating through the church.

Paul most likely wrote the epistle while he was in Corinth (see Acts 17 and 18) in the early 50s. (Between 50 and 54). 2 Thessalonians was probably written soon after 1 Thessalonians, making it one of the earliest of Paul's epistles.

The emphasis of 1 Thessalonians is on the Rapture: the coming of Christ to take His church out of this world. The emphasis of 2 Thessalonians, is on the coming of Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom (the Second Coming). Some people have insisted these two letters must have been written by different authors because they have such dramatically different views of end time events: 1 Thessalonians indicates the Lord is coming SOON, while 2 Thessalonians Indicates there will be a long period of tribulation before the Lord's coming.

This controversy is easily cleared up when you realize they are discussing two separate events: the rapture, and the second coming.

**2 Thessalonians 1:1-2 From Paul, Silas, and Timothy. To the church in Thessalonica in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

At the time this letter was written, it was customary to begin your letter with these three elements:

1. the name or names of the author,
2. the name(s) of the addressee,
3. and a word of formal greeting.

Although the letter was sent from Paul, Silas, and Timothy, Paul was the primary writer of the letter. He addresses himself in the singular elsewhere in the letter.

Paul was Saul of Tarsus. His Hebrew name means "asked for." His Roman name, Paul, which he was more commonly known by, means "little."

Silas had gone with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15-18).

Paul led Timothy to the Lord most likely on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). Timothy had recently returned from a trip to Thessalonica with news of the conditions in the church there (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, 6).

No doubt Paul, Silas and Timothy were the best known and respected missionaries in Thessalonica.

2 Thessalonians is addressed **to the church in Thessalonica.**

The church is the people – not the building.

The Greek word *ekklesia* refers to any gathering or assembly, and calls to mind the relationship of believers to one another and to Christ.

So this letter was addressed to the body of believers (not to individual believers) who lived in the city of Thessalonica.

The church is described as being **in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** Forget anything you might be thinking about the Trinity, or about two separate persons.

Paul is reemphasizing that God is our Father, who gives security, love and strength, and He is the Lord – the sovereign One who is to be obeyed.

He is “Jesus,” the human name for the Lord, from the Greek form of “Joshua,” which means “Savior.”

“Christ” is the Greek translation of the “Messiah” of the Old Testament and means “Anointed One.”

The short greeting that follows is common throughout Paul’s epistles. **Grace and peace.**

**Grace** is equivalent to “greetings” or “rejoice.”

The Greek **peace** is equivalent to the Hebrew *shalom* which means “favor,” “prosperity,” and “well-being.”

These two words of greeting always appear in this same order throughout the New Testament. Theologically God’s grace is the basis for and leads us to peace.

**2 Thessalonians 1:3 We must always thank God for you, brothers and sisters. This is only right, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love that every one of you has for each other is increasing.**

The Apostles had many reasons to continuously give thanks for this church. Paul speaks of his need to give thanks as though it were payment for a debt – which had to be paid!

Their faith had grown **more and more** (spiritual growth). Our Christian faith should keep growing all our lives. We should trust God more consistently and more extensively as we grow older in Christ. Faith is not a fixed thing. A growing faith indicates a growing Christian.

Not only were the Thessalonians growing spiritually, they were also growing in their relationships with other people. Their growth was demonstrated in their love for each other. You can't separate these two. When you grow in love for God, you will grow in love for one another.

Like well fertilized plants, [Miracle-Gro] this church had grown beyond what would have been normally expected. This was an exceptional church.

**2 Thessalonians 1:4 So we brag about you to the other churches of God. We tell them about the way you continue to be strong and have faith even though you are being treated badly and are suffering many troubles.**

The Apostles had spoken of the Thessalonian church as a model of perseverance and faith. The Thessalonians did not react like many Christians to persecution, by running away and trying to protect their comfort. They viewed their circumstances as God's will for them, and braced up under the pressure.

They were not trying to endure in their own strength. Their faith was proof that they were enduring by holding on to Christ. In spite of persecutions and afflictions – no doubt from both Jews and Gentiles alike – they endured.

Trouble is not something strange for us. The Word of God makes it clear that we are going to have trouble in this life. Peter expressed it like this:

**1 Peter 4:12-13** My friends, do not be surprised at the terrible trouble which now comes to test you. Do not think that something strange is happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But be happy that you are sharing in Christ's sufferings so that you will be happy and full of joy when Christ comes again in glory.

Let's not get too comfortable down here. If we do, we lose that sincere expectation of the Lord's return!

**2 Thessalonians 1:5 This is proof that God is right in his judgment. He wants you to be counted worthy of his kingdom for which you are suffering.**

Enduring trials does not make you worthy of heaven. You can't earn your way to heaven. But endurance *demonstrates* your worthiness. We are made worthy by God's grace, which we received as a free gift by faith in Jesus.

Trials and suffering expose what is already inside you.

**2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 God will do what is right. He will give trouble to those who trouble you. <sup>7</sup> And he will give rest to you who are troubled and to us also when the Lord Jesus appears with burning fire from heaven with his powerful angels.**

God is just. Whatever God does is absolutely right. He will give trouble to those who troubled the Thessalonians.

Relief will come when Jesus is revealed. (When the veil is removed from in front of Jesus Christ). He will be revealed in blazing fire – Christ will come with mighty angels, which will carry out His will. He is coming in judgment.

**2 Thessalonians 1:8 Then he will punish those who do not know God and who do not obey the Good News about our Lord Jesus Christ.**

God will punish two different groups of people: those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the gospel. It isn't popular to talk about hell and punishment, but it is a reality we all must face.

**2 Thessalonians 1:9 Those people will be punished with a destruction that continues forever. They will be kept away from the Lord and from his great power.**

Punishment will be everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. That's not annihilation. That is ongoing punishment.

It is not our job to give out justice. God who judges righteously will do that. You think it's too harsh? Take it up with the God who does all things right.

**2 Thessalonians 1:10 This will happen on the day when the Lord Jesus comes to receive glory because of his holy people. And all the people who have believed will be amazed at Jesus. You will be in that group, because you believed what we told you.**

The judgment will take place. This is not the rapture; no judgment happens at the rapture.

This is when Jesus Christ is revealed in power and great glory;  
when He will set up His earthly kingdom;  
when He will destroy the Armageddon armies which gathered against Him;  
when He judges the living Jews and Gentiles.

Christ will be glorified because of His people (not "by" His people). His glory will be mirrored in us.

Because the Thessalonians had believed the teachings of Paul, they were going to be admiring Him. This should be an encouragement for us, no matter what we might be facing today. God's got your back!

**2 Thessalonians 1:11 That is why we always pray for you, asking our God to help you live the kind of life he called you to live. We pray that with his power God will help you do the good things you want and perform the works that come from your faith.**

Paul and his companions had a habit of praying daily for the Thessalonians, so that their lifestyles would be consistent with their calling and destiny. The prayer is that we will demonstrate that worthiness. We could never become worthy by praying!

**... do the good things you want and perform the works that come from your faith** – not only the works we do, but the reasons we do them are judged by God.

**2 Thessalonians 1:12 We pray all this so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will have glory in you, and you will have glory in him. That glory comes from the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The final purpose of this prayer is that God be glorified, and that the glory be obvious in the lives of the Thessalonians both now and at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**The name of our Lord Jesus** stands for the person named: His character, conduct, reputation and everything else about Him. **The name** is not some magic formula.

**Our God and the Lord Jesus Christ** can also be translated, "our God and Lord, Jesus Christ." Whichever way is more accurate, remember we only have one God.



**2 Thessalonians 2:1 Brothers and sisters, we have something to say about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the time when we will meet together with him.**

The day of the Lord is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament as a time when God will bring judgment and blessing on the people of the earth. It begins sometime after the rapture, and includes the Tribulation and the Millennium.

1 Thessalonians taught that the Day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:2) Apparently some believers thought that meant that the day had already come. Other (false) teachers had come and reinforced that belief. Paul wrote this section of scripture to straighten out their understanding.

**The coming (*Parousia*, “presence”) of our Lord Jesus Christ and the time when we will meet together with him** refers to the rapture. There will be no judgment at that time. That will be the first time the whole church is together!

**2 Thessalonians 2:2 Do not become easily upset in your thinking or afraid if you hear that the day of the Lord has already come. Someone may have said this in a prophecy or in a message or in a letter as if it came from us.**

Apparently the false teaching (that the day of the Lord has already come) was coming to them from several sources: prophecy, messenger, and letter, supposedly from the Apostles. No wonder some of them believed it.

Just because someone says, “the Lord said,” doesn’t mean it is truth from God. The surest way for us to guard against false teaching is to KNOW the truth.

The Thessalonians were confused that perhaps the troubles they were experiencing at the time were the troubles promised at the day of the Lord, but then, what happened to the rapture and the second coming?

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Do not let anyone fool you in any way. That day of the Lord will not come until the turning away from God happens and the Man of Evil, who is on his way to hell, appears. <sup>4</sup> He will be against and put himself above any so-called god or anything that people worship. And that Man of Evil will even go into God’s Temple and sit there and say that he is God.**

We have to be on guard, and not allow anyone to deceive us. There isn’t some kind of heavenly shield over the church that will prevent falsehood from entering ‘His holy church.’ The job is given to us.

Paul referred to three events which must happen before the day of the Lord.

1. The turning away from God
2. The Man of Evil appears
3. What is stopping the Man of Evil will be removed (v.6, 7)

The **turning away**, literally falling away, the apostasy, will be a departure, a rebellion against, or abandoning of the truths which the church has held.

Technically there have been turnings away since the beginning of the church. (A brand starts to cool off the moment you remove it from the fire.) But Paul here is referring to a large-scale turning away.

The appearing of the Man of Evil is a significant act that will take place at a definite moment in history (according to the grammar used by Paul).

He will be fully associated with and characterized by evil, lawlessness or sin, and he is doomed to destruction. That destruction is the opposite of salvation – everlasting torment.

This appearing probably happens during the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (Daniel 9:27).

**2:4** this man will try to replace the worship of the true God and all false gods with the worship of himself, and will proclaim himself to be God.

He will set himself up on God's throne in the inner sanctuary of God's temple. This probably refers to a literal temple, but possibly it suggests occupying the most holy place of human worship, which rightfully belongs only to God.

This man is elsewhere called "a beast coming up out of the sea" (Rev. 13:1-10), "a red beast" (Rev. 17:3), "the beast" (Rev. 17:8, 16, and others), and as "antichrist" or "enemy of Christ" (1 John 2:18).

He will be a real human being, not a principle or a system or a succession of individuals. We have never yet seen such a person on the stage of human history.

**2 Thessalonians 2:5 I told you when I was with you that all this would happen. Do you not remember?**

This teaching is nothing new to the Thessalonians. Paul had taught them about the day of the Lord when he was with them in Thessalonica. Paul said that he, personally, had taught this truth. Probably emphasizing the truth of the message.

Paul did not think teaching on end-time events was too deep for new believers!

**2 Thessalonians 2:6 And now you know what is stopping that Man of Evil so he will appear at the right time.**

**You know what is stopping that Man of Evil** – apparently Paul had told them before, because he didn't restate it here. Something or Someone is stopping the

conclusion of evil. Part of the purpose of this stopping is to keep the Man of Evil from being revealed too early.

The only thing I can think of that can stop evil is the Holy Spirit. Governments can't. Moral or ethical codes can't. It seems to me that only the Holy Spirit can.

**2 Thessalonians 2:7 The secret power of evil is already working in the world, but there is one who is stopping that power. And he will continue to stop it until he is taken out of the way.**

**secret** – something not shown in the Old Testament. Here, it is the understanding of a future climax of evil in the world. Satan has always been the main leader of this movement.

The evil and deception that the Man of Evil represents already exists in the world. The lawlessness (evil) is already at work, but it is being held back (stopped). Who or what is stopping the evil? There have been several possible answers, but I believe the Holy Spirit is the only one with the power to withstand Satan to this degree.

The Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way when we, the church, the holders of the Holy Spirit, are snatched up to meet Him in the air – the rapture.

The comfort for the Thessalonians is that they can't be in the Great Tribulation now, because the Rapture must happen first, and the Rapture has not yet happened.

**2 Thessalonians 2:8 Then that Man of Evil will appear, and the Lord Jesus will kill him with the breath that comes from his mouth and will destroy him with the glory of his coming.**

This evil one is not named in scripture, but he will be known by his actions. He is the same one referred to in:

**2 Thessalonians 2:3** (the Man of Evil, who is on his way to hell)

**Daniel 9:26-27** (the appointed leader)

**Daniel 11:36-12:1** (the king...He will brag about himself and praise himself and think he is even better than a god and who will say things against the God of gods that no one has ever heard...)

This lawless one will be a world dictator. Nobody can stop him. No power on earth. He will have power to control mankind, but he will be no match for Jesus.

He will be destroyed by the breath of the Lord. Breath = *pneuma* also translated "spirit." The spirit that comes out of His mouth is the Word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword. The breath/word of God created the universe.

The lawless evil one and all his accomplishments will end when the Lord returns. It might look like he is doing great things, but they will all come to nothing.

The “reign” of the lawless evil one will apparently be seven years, from the time he makes a covenant with Israel soon after the Rapture, until his overthrow by Christ at His second coming at the end of the Tribulation.

**2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 The Man of Evil will come by the power of Satan. He will have great power, and he will do many different false miracles, signs, and wonders. <sup>10</sup> He will use every kind of evil to trick those who are lost. They will die, because they refused to love the truth. (If they loved the truth, they would be saved.)**

He will be empowered by Satan, characterized by Satan’s methods. Satan has always been trying to counterfeit God’s power.

**any different false miracles, signs, and wonders** – when people see these things, they will be in awe.

**Power** = *dunamis* a physical power whose source is supernatural. He will be quite the miracle worker and healer. He might even walk on water!

Everything he does will mislead people, especially those whose minds are blinded to the truth of who he is and what he is doing because they do not believe God’s Word.

The emphasis of this verse is not that everything he does will be **seen** as wickedness, but it will in fact be wicked.

The same three words used to describe the miracles of the Man of Evil (miracles, signs, wonders) are used of the miracles of Jesus (Acts 2:22) and of the apostles (Hebrews 2:4). It will seem to the unbelievers on earth at that time that he is indeed God.

Because these people refused to receive the love of the truth unto salvation, they are perishing. This seems to imply there is more to salvation than merely believing. (You need to obey.) if you love me, you will obey my commands. (John 14:15)

**2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 For this reason God sends them something powerful that leads them away from the truth so they will believe a lie. <sup>12</sup> So all those will be judged guilty who did not believe the truth, but enjoyed doing evil.**

God wants everyone to get saved and to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:4), but when people refuse to listen to the truth, He lets them follow falsehood, and

experience the consequences of that sin. He gives them a powerful delusion which comes from choosing error over truth. They choose to believe a lie, and God sends them the misunderstanding. This is powerful judgment from God!

The purpose of the misunderstanding is judgment on those who reject the truth, and delight in evil.

Exodus 9:12 says God hardened Pharaoh's heart. What really happened was that God forced Pharaoh to make a decision which revealed what was already in his heart. This misunderstanding may also be a revealing of what is already in man's heart.

**something powerful that leads them away from the truth** suggests that those who were unbelievers at the time of the Rapture, and thus did not go up, will most likely not "see the error of their ways" and repent. This seems to be a special judgment from God that will occur at this one time in history.

Who are the many saints which the Book of Revelation indicates will be living on the earth during the Tribulation? Revelation 7:4 says there will be 144,000 of them. Perhaps they are ones who did not hear and reject the Gospel prior to the Rapture, but heard and got saved after it. Or perhaps this is an indication of a mid-tribulation Rapture.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13 Brothers and sisters, whom the Lord loves, God chose you from the beginning to be saved. So we must always thank God for you. You are saved by the Spirit that makes you holy and by your faith in the truth.**

How often do we stop and thank God for our brothers and sisters? Paul felt an urgency to **thank God**.

As **brothers and sisters** they were loved by the Lord, even though they were being persecuted by their godless neighbors.

Notice that salvation is primarily God's work, but does involve our faith. God chose us **from the beginning**. ("Before the world was made" Ephesians 1:4). This choosing is not based on merit, or even on our love for Him. It is because of His love for us. (1 Thessalonians 1:4)

No matter how you interpret this calling, whether our response to His call has anything to do with our salvation or not, salvation is still offered to us by God, and not something we can earn, or decide to get for ourselves.

We are **saved by the Spirit... and by your faith** – set apart to Him, and faith is our contribution. Without faith, we have nothing.

Our faith is in **the truth**. Not in our “hope so.” The Word makes it clear for us. It is a sure Word. We can entrust our eternal life to the truth of the Word. Our **faith in the truth** indicates that we will believe the truth, and will study and know the truth.

**2 Thessalonians 2:14 God used the Good News that we preached to call you to be saved so you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**so you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ** –we will one day be seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father. We have been called and chosen, but now it’s up to us to live a holy life for Him.

We have been saved, we are being saved, and we shall be saved. It is all God.

**2 Thessalonians 2:15 So, brothers and sisters, stand strong and continue to believe the teachings we gave you in our speaking and in our letter.**

We are in constant danger of being swept downstream by the currents of ungodly culture. We easily let the truths we know and the relationship we enjoy with God grow cold. We need to **continue to believe** what we have been taught.

**teachings** refers to instructions passed on from one person to another. In this case Paul is referring to the revealed truth of God that contains no error.

The Word of God is what allows us to **stand strong** and be stable.

**In our letter** probably is 1 Thessalonians.

**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father encourage you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say. God loved us, and through his grace he gave us a good hope and encouragement that continues forever.**

Paul prayed that the Thessalonians would be encouraged and strengthened. God’s love and grace is the foundation for eternal encouragement.

They needed God’s grace to make them firm and stable in **every good thing you do and say** in defense and confirmation of the gospel.

**2 Thessalonians 3:1 And now, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the Lord's teaching will continue to spread quickly and that people will give honor to that teaching, just as happened with you.**

**And now** introduces the last major part of the letter. The Thessalonians needed prayer in their temptations, but they also needed to **pray** for others.

Prayer is not a gift of the Spirit, where some are more gifted than others. Prayer is something that every believer should do.

We can't pray for Paul today, but we can (and should) pray for our leaders. Pray for your pastor! If he is not led and protected by God, we are all going to suffer.

When you pray for others, your own burden becomes lighter. Paul requested prayer for two areas. The reason the gospel had been spreading through Paul was because of the blessings of the Lord. And he prayed for protection from those without faith.

**2 Thessalonians 3:2 And pray that we will be protected from stubborn and evil people, because not all people believe.**

Paul asked for prayer to protect them from the enemies of the gospel. They were doing harmful and wicked things to corrupt themselves and others.

**2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful and will give you strength and will protect you from the Evil One.**

I have let Him down several times, but He has never let me down.

Our confidence is in the Lord, not in our own abilities. God will give us the strength to resist temptation and withstand the trials which will come. We might fail the tests, but God will always be faithful.

The Word of God is what gives us strength.

This passage must have been especially comforting to the Thessalonians, since they were still experiencing severe persecution because of their faith.

**2 Thessalonians 3:4 The Lord makes us feel sure that you are doing and will continue to do the things we told you.**

Much of the confidence was based on the proven faithfulness of the Thessalonians. Since they were in Christ, the Lord will work in them to react correctly.

Paul believed that this Thessalonian church which had a wonderful testimony would continue to maintain that testimony.

**2 Thessalonians 3:5 May the Lord lead your hearts into God's love and Christ's patience.**

**lead** means "clear away the obstacles."

**Your hearts** are the place where spiritual renewal begins. That is where God plants His love and patience – the seeds of a harvest of good works.

As we consider **God's love and Christ's patience** (patient endurance), we are moved to love and trust Him more.

**2 Thessalonians 3:6 Brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ we command you to stay away from any believer who refuses to work and does not follow the teaching we gave you.**

On behalf of everything that Jesus Christ is, we should do as Paul said. This is a command, not a suggestion.

The first step in discipline is to warn those who are disobedient.  
The second step is to separate yourself from the lazy and the disorderly.  
The purpose of the separation is to demonstrate the spiritual gap that has been created when we are in direct disobedience to God.

**2 Thessalonians 3:7 You yourselves know that you should live as we live. We were not lazy when we were with you.**

Apparently Paul and his co-workers were industrious workers. We are urged to follow their example not only in spiritual things, but also in applying ourselves to labor without laziness.

Perhaps some of the Thessalonians who had believed the end was very near used that as an excuse to avoid working. Paul not only reinforced the truth that certain events must occur before the end comes, but he also rebuked those who were not working when they could.

**2 Thessalonians 3:8 And when we ate another person's food, we always paid for it. We worked very hard night and day so we would not be an expense to any of you.**

Paul was not saying that they never accepted a gift or a meal from others, but that they were self-supporting. They earned the bread they ate.



Both the Greeks and the Romans despised manual labor; typically they used slaves for all such tasks.

By contrast, the Jews regarded work as an evidence of good character and trained their children to work in a trade. Paul's trade was tent making.

This is an interesting concept for evangelists/missionaries: working day and night to support themselves, so as not to be a burden to anyone else. This appears to be a practice of Paul when initially establishing churches. When he returned to minister to them, he did take offerings for support.

**2 Thessalonians 3:9 We had the right to ask you to help us, but we worked to take care of ourselves so we would be an example for you to follow.**

The apostles had every right to receive compensation for their ministry, but they chose not to, for the sake of becoming an example to the others.

No matter what your position in the church is, you should strive to always be an example to others.

Paul did not imply that we should always live sacrificially, nor that the church should not be obligated to support its ministers. His point here is that Christians generally should not expect other people to take care of them but should support themselves as much as possible.

**1 Timothy 5:17-18** The elders who lead the church well should receive double honor, especially those who work hard by speaking and teaching, <sup>18</sup> because the Scripture says: "When an ox is working in the grain, do not cover its mouth to keep it from eating," and "A worker should be given his pay."

**2 Thessalonians 3:10 When we were with you, we gave you this rule: "Anyone who refuses to work should not eat."**

No Christian who is able but unwilling to work should be maintained by others who labor on his behalf. Note: this is for those unwilling to work, not for those unable to work.

**2 Thessalonians 3:11 We hear that some people in your group refuse to work. They do nothing but busy themselves in other people's lives.**

The verb "hear" indicates that they had heard more than once. Instead of tending to their own business of earning a living, they were meddling in the business of others. [An idle mind is the devil's playground] (first attributed to Jerome, 347-420).

**1 Timothy 5:13** Besides that, they learn to waste their time, going from house to house. And they not only waste their time but also begin to gossip and busy themselves with other people's lives, saying things they should not say.

**2 Thessalonians 3:12 We command those people and beg them in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and earn their own food.**

**Command:** give orders; instruct; direct all kinds of persons in authority

**Beg them in the Lord:** encouraging; summoning for a purpose; winning over to a plan

Command and beg on behalf of their connection to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because you belong to Him...

**Work in quietly** – not noisily or in disorderliness

Eat your own food - what you have earned yourself – not sponging off others.

**2 Thessalonians 3:13 But you, brothers and sisters, never become tired of doing good.**

Regardless of what others around you are doing, do what is right.

We may get tired doing the work of God, but not tired of the work of God.

Paul seems to be implying that those who won't work are separating themselves from God by their own behavior.

**2 Thessalonians 3:14 If some people do not obey what we tell you in this letter, then take note of them. Have nothing to do with them so they will feel ashamed.**

A disobedient person must be given special treatment if they fail to repent. No mention is made of public identification and discipline in the church, but the faithful were to have no social contact with an idle person until they repented.

The purpose of this was to make the offender feel ashamed of himself, so that he will repent.

The purpose of God's discipline is always to bring us to repentance, and ultimately to restoration to fellowship in the church.

**2 Thessalonians 3:15 But do not treat them as enemies. Warn them as fellow believers.**

Don't overdo the discipline. They were supposed to warn them, not condemn them. (hate the sin, not the sinner)

**2 Thessalonians 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.**

This is the fourth prayer by Paul for the Thessalonians recorded in 2 Thessalonians. Paul turned from correction to intercession. Without the Lord working, everything else will be ineffective.

God's peace is present when we are in right relationship with God.

The peace of God is available to us no matter what else is happening in our lives.

**The Lord be with all of you** does not imply that there are times when God is not with us. It is a prayer that we will maintain our fellowship with Him.

**2 Thessalonians 3:17 I, Paul, end this letter now in my own handwriting. All my letters have this to show they are from me. This is the way I write.**

Paul probably dictated his letters to a scribe who actually wrote them down for him.

Here, Paul wrote a greeting with his own hand. Probably he wrote something by hand in most of his letters to guarantee their authenticity to the readers.

Perhaps his handwriting was distinguishable and recognized by his readers. This would have been especially important since the church had already received other letters which claimed to be from Paul, but were not. This one has the genuine signature to serve as a distinguishing mark.

**2 Thessalonians 3:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.**

The same closing is used here as in 1 Thessalonians 5:28, except "all" is added. It sounds like a final appeal for unity in the church. That unity can only come by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.