

The First Epistle To The Thessalonians



Sermon Outlines

MARK A. COPELAND

The First Epistle To The Thessalonians

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MarkCopeland@aol.com

Introduction To First Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1:1

INTRODUCTION

1. A wonderful hope of the Christian is the promise of the Lord's return...
 - a. A promise given when Jesus ascended into heaven - **Ac 1:9-11**
 - b. A promise designed to motivate Christians to live holy and godly lives - **2 Pe 3:10-14**
2. How then should we live as we anticipate the Lord's return? This question is addressed in Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians...
 - a. In which every chapter has some mention of the Lord's return
 - b. In which we find practical instructions for holy and godly living

[That we might be ready for the Lord's return, we begin this series of sermons based on **First Thessalonians**. In this lesson, we shall consider some background information on this epistle...]

I. THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE (1:1a)

A. PAUL...

1. Known formerly as Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of the church - **Ac 9:1-2**
2. Who became known as the "apostle to the Gentiles" - **Ac 9:15**
3. Author of half of the books of the New Testament

B. JOINED BY SILVANUS AND TIMOTHY...

1. Silvanus, also known as Silas
 - a. Originally an emissary from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem - **Ac 15:22,27**
 - b. Identified as a prophet, who exhorted the brethren in Antioch - **Ac 15:32**
 - c. Who remained in Antioch, later became Paul's traveling companion - **Ac 15:34, 40-41**
 - d. Who suffered mistreatment and imprisonment with Paul in Philippi - **Ac 16:19-25**
 - e. Who together with Paul established the church in Thessalonica - **Ac 17:1-4**
2. Timothy, also known as Timotheus
 - a. A young disciple who traveled with Paul - **Ac 16:1-3**
 - b. Who is mentioned with Paul in many of his letters - e.g., **2 Co 1:1; Ph 1:1**
 - c. The recipient of two letters from Paul - **1 Ti 1:1; 2 Ti 1:1**
 - d. Who suffered imprisonment himself - **He 13:23**
 - e. Who had just returned from a trip to Thessalonica - **1 Th 3:1-2,6**

[These three men had a vested interest in the welfare of the church in Thessalonica. Speaking of that church, let's now focus on...]

II. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE EPISTLE (1:1b)

A. THE CITY OF THESSALONICA...

1. It was the capital and largest city of the Roman province of Macedonia
2. Located on the Egnatian Way, a major road from Rome to the eastern provinces
3. The city served as a center of trade and commerce
- Today, it is known as Thessaloniki (formerly Salonica)

B. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS...

1. Its establishment is recorded in **Ac 17:1-9**
 - a. On his second journey, Paul and his companions had just left Philippi
 - b. Traveling through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrived at Thessalonica
 - c. Paul immediately located the synagogue and used their Sabbath gathering as an opportunity for evangelism
 - d. For three weeks he reasoned with the Jews, converting some and a number of prominent Gentiles
 - e. Unbelieving Jews soon caused a disturbance, forcing Paul to leave
2. Despite such ominous beginnings, a strong church was established
 - a. It quickly gained a good reputation - **1 Th 1:8**
 - b. It was mostly Gentiles - **1 Th 1:9**
 - c. Members included Jason (**Ac 17:9**), Aristarchus and Secundus (**Ac 20:4**)

[The reputation of this church is even more remarkable when we consider how young it was. The young age of the church becomes apparent when we consider...]

III. THE PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING

A. THE PLACE...

1. The letter itself indicates it was not written long after Paul's departure
 - a. Paul had only been gone a short time - **1 Th 2:17-18**
 - b. He had sent Timothy from Athens, who had returned - **1 Th 3:1-6**
2. From Luke's record in Acts, it is evident Paul wrote this epistle soon after arriving in Corinth on his second missionary journey
 - a. For Paul did not stay long in Athens - **Ac 17:16-18:1**
 - b. And Timothy came back from Macedonia after Paul arrived in Corinth - **Ac 18:5**
- So the place of writing is most likely **Corinth**

B. THE DATE...

1. Writing soon after his arrival in Corinth, this would place the date around **50-52 A.D.**
2. This would make First Thessalonians one of Paul's earliest known writings, if not the first

[Now let's examine...]

IV. THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THE EPISTLE

A. THE PURPOSE...

1. Paul had been anxious about the condition of the church
 - a. Occasioned by his abrupt departure - **Ac 17:10**
 - b. He wanted to return, but was hindered - **1 Th 2:17-18**

- c. His anxiety prompted him to send Timothy to encouraged them - **1 Th 3:1-3**
2. Timothy had brought back good news! - **1 Th 3:6-8**
 - a. Of their faith and love, and of their desire to see Paul again
 - b. Their steadfastness comforted Paul greatly
3. From the content of the letter (see below), it becomes apparent that Paul had a threefold purpose in mind as he wrote this letter:
 - a. To praise them for their steadfastness under persecution
 - b. To instruct them concerning holy living
 - c. To correct any misunderstanding, especially regarding the second coming of Christ

B. THE CONTENT...

1. The epistle is unique in that every chapter ends with a reference to the second coming of Christ - **1 Th 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23**
2. Here is a brief outline of the epistle:
 - a. Personal reflections (**1-3**)
 - 1) Regarding their condition - **1:1-10**
 - 2) Regarding his conduct - **2:1-12**
 - 3) Regarding his concern - **2:13-3:13**
 - b. Apostolic instructions (**4-5**)
 - 1) Walk in holiness - **4:1-8**
 - 2) Walk in love - **4:9-10**
 - 3) Walk in diligence - **4:11-12**
 - 4) Walk in hope - **4:13-18**
 - 5) Walk in light - **5:1-11**
 - 6) Walk in obedience - **5:12-28**

CONCLUSION

1. With such an emphasis on steadfastness and holy living, an appropriate **theme** for this epistle would be: **“Holiness In View Of The Coming Of Christ”**
2. In keeping with such a theme, I offer the following passage as the **key verses** of the epistle:

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” - 1 Th 3:12-13

As we proceed through this epistle, it will be my prayer and aim that our study will lead to greater faithfulness and holiness in our service to God as we wait for the coming of Jesus!

Are you ready for His coming? Even if you should die before He returns, are you ready to face Him in the Judgment? Let the apostles of Christ tell you what you need to do be ready for that day - cf. **Ac 2:36-38; 17:30-31** Only then can it truly be said: **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th 1:1c)**

Their Faith, Love, And Hope

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

INTRODUCTION

1. As noted in our previous study, the beginning of the church in Thessalonica is recorded by Luke in **Ac 17:1-10...**
 - a. On his second missionary journey, Paul and his companions had just left Philippi
 - b. Traveling through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrived at Thessalonica
 - c. Paul immediately located the synagogue and used their Sabbath gathering as an opportunity for evangelism
 - d. For three weeks he reasoned with the Jews, converting some and a number of prominent Gentiles
 - e. But unbelieving Jews soon caused a disturbance, forcing Paul to leave
2. We also noted that the epistle commonly called **1st Thessalonians ...**
 - a. Was written not long after Paul had left Thessalonica
 - b. Probably from Corinth, sometime during 50-52 A.D.
3. What was the church in Thessalonica like?
 - a. Without Paul, did the young church survive?
 - b. Had persecution discouraged the new converts?
 - These were some of the concerns that prompted Paul to send Timothy - cf. **1 Th 3:1-6**

[Timothy brought back news that was certainly encouraging, and in Paul's opening remarks we learn about "**Their Faith, Love, And Hope.**" First we notice that Paul is thankful to God for...]

I. THEIR WORK OF FAITH

A. THEY HAD A WORKING FAITH...

1. In other words, a faith that was alive! - cf. **Ja 2:20,26**
2. Their faith was likely centered in the person of Jesus Christ - cf. **Co 1:4**
3. It was likely prompted by love - cf. **Ga 5:6; Jn 14:15**
 - In his second letter to them, Paul would remark about how their faith continued to grow exceedingly - **2 Th 1:3**

B. WHAT ABOUT OUR FAITH...?

1. Is our faith a living faith?
 - a. A faith manifesting itself in obedience to the word of God?
 - b. Or are we like some who believe, but do not obey Jesus?
 - 1) Such as some of the Jewish rulers who believed in Jesus - **Jn 12:42,43**
 - 2) Such as the demons who believe, but only tremble - **Ja 2:19**
2. Is our faith strongly centered in Jesus Christ?
 - a. A faith produced by the word of God? - cf. **Ro 10:17**

- b. A faith that leads to life in Jesus Christ? - cf. **Jn 20:30-31**
- If our faith is like that of the Thessalonians, then it too will “grow exceedingly”, evidenced by our faithful service to the Lord!

[Paul was also thankful to hear of...]

II. THEIR LABOR OF LOVE

A. THEY HAD A WORKING LOVE...

- 1. A love that was not in word only, but in deed and truth! - cf. **1 Jn 3:18**
- 2. Their love was likely directed toward their brethren in Christ - cf. **Co 1:4**
- 3. Paul would later commend their brotherly love - **1 Th 4:9-10**
- In his second letter, Paul would remark about how their love continued to “abound” - **2 Th 1:3**

B. WHAT ABOUT OUR LOVE...?

- 1. Is our love in word or tongue only, or in deed and truth?
 - a. Do we “walk the walk”?
 - b. Or do we just “talk the talk”?
- 2. Is our love directed toward our brethren in Christ?
 - a. Which is a mark of true discipleship - **Jn 13:34-35**
 - b. Which is an indication of spiritual life - **1 Jn 3:14,18-19**
- If our love is like that of the Thessalonians, then it too will “abound”, evidenced by serving one another in love - cf. **Ga 5:13**

[Finally, we note Paul’s gratitude for...]

III. THEIR PATIENCE OF HOPE

A. THEY HAD A HOPE THAT GAVE THEM PATIENCE...

- 1. A strong hope is that which gives one patience - cf. **Ro 8:25**
- 2. Their hope was likely focused on what was laid up for them in heaven - cf. **Co 1:5**
- 3. Peter referred to this hope as an inheritance “incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” - **1 Pe 1:3-4**
- Paul would later encourage them to wear this “hope” as a helmet - **1 Th 5:8**

B. WHAT ABOUT OUR HOPE...?

- 1. Do we have a strong hope?
 - a. A hope that comes from reading the Scriptures? - cf. **Ro 15:4**
 - b. A hope that spurs us to be diligent, living holy and godly lives? - cf. **2 Pe 3:10-14**
 - c. A hope that prompts people to wonder why we have it? - cf. **1 Pe 3:15**
- 2. Is our hope focused our “inheritance” laid up for us in heaven?
 - a. That city whose builder and maker is God? - **He 11:10,16; 13:14**
 - b. The new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells? - **2 Pe 3:13**
 - c. Which is beautifully described by John? - **Re 21:1-7**
- If our hope is like that of the Thessalonians, then we too shall let it be a “helmet” protecting

our minds from the distractions of this world which is passing away! - cf. **1 Jn 2:17**

CONCLUSION

1. This “triad” of faith, love, and hope is a common refrain of Paul...
 - a. He wrote of them in his epistle to the Colossians - **Co 1:4-5**
 - b. Also in his first epistle to the Corinthians - **1 Co 13:13**
-- But he likely first wrote of them in this epistle to the Thessalonians

2. While they do not constitute all the graces to be found in Christians (cf. **Ga 5:22-23; 2 Pe 1:5-8**)...
 - a. They certainly are among the most important - **1 Co 13:13; Co 3:14**
 - b. Where found, the others will likely follow

May the remarkable faith, love and hope of the church of the Thessalonians, who were but recent converts, inspire us to grow in our own faith in Christ, our love for the brethren, and our hope for the inheritance reserved in heaven!

Their Election By God

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

INTRODUCTION

1. As Paul contemplated the condition of the church at Thessalonica, he had much for which to be thankful - **1 Th 1:2-3**
 - a. They had a faith that worked
 - b. They had a love which labored
 - c. They had a hope that gave them patience
2. He also took consolation in knowing that they were “chosen”...
 - a. He refers to their “election by God” - **1 Th 1:4**
 - b. As evidence, he reminds them of how God had worked through such men as Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy - **1 Th 1:5**
3. In some way, these Thessalonians had become part of God’s chosen people...
 - a. A special people as described in **1 Pe 2:9-10**
 - b. Just as the nation of Israel had been chosen by God - **Deu 10:15**
4. Several questions naturally come to mind regarding the Thessalonians and their election by God...
 - a. When did God make His choice?
 - b. Were the Thessalonians chosen individually, or as part of a corporate or general choice?
 - c. Was their election by God final, i.e., was it impossible for them to lose their privilege of being God’s chosen people?-- And how might the answers to these questions relate to our own election by God?

[Let’s first focus our attention on the idea of...]

I. THEIR ELECTION BY GOD

A. THE “WORD” TRANSLATED ELECTION...

1. Comes from **ekloge**, meaning “**the act of picking out, choosing**”
2. Related to the idea of being chosen, which comes from the Greek **eklegomai** and means “**to pick out, choose, to pick or choose out for one’s self**”

B. THE “TIME” OF GOD’S ELECTION...

1. God made His choice “*before the foundation of the world*” - **Ep 1:4**
2. Just as with Christ Himself, who was foreordained “*before the foundation of the world*” - **1 Pe 1:20**

C. THE “OBJECTS” OF GOD’S ELECTION...

1. When God made His “choice” before the world began...
 - a. Did He chose certain individuals to become His elect?

- b. Or was His choice more general in nature?
- 2. Two popular answers to this question:
 - a. The **Calvinist** believes that this choice was...
 - 1) Individual (only certain select individuals have been chosen)
 - 2) Dependent solely upon God's gracious and mysterious will, without any foreknowledge of good or evil on the part of those selected
 - 3) Unconditional and final (there is no possibility of apostasy)
 - b. The **Arminian** believes that this choice was...
 - 1) Individual (certain select individuals have been chosen)
 - 2) Based upon foreknowledge of those souls who would respond to the gospel and persevere in the faith
 - 3) Unconditional and final, in the sense that God already knows those who will persevere to the end
- 3. Paul says simply that God "chose us in Him" (i.e., Christ) - cf. **Ep 1:4**
 - a. I understand this election by God to have been **general**, not particular; **corporate**, not individual
 - b. To refer to the body of Christ, the church as a whole, which God chose for His divine and gracious purposes He planned to carry out in Christ
 - c. Just as Israel (as a nation) had been chosen by God to receive His blessings

D. THE "PROCESS" OF GOD'S ELECTION...

- 1. How did the Thessalonians become part of God's chosen people?
- 2. Paul explains in his second epistle - **2 Th 2:13-14**
 - a. *"through sanctification of the Spirit"*
 - 1) Here we see God's part, the sanctifying work of the Spirit
 - 2) This the Spirit did through the truth, or Word of God, which He revealed through the apostles - cf. **Jn 16:13; 17:17; Ep 6:17**
 - b. *"and belief of the truth"*
 - 1) Here we see man's part, as the Thessalonians heeded the Word of God
 - 2) Therefore when they heeded the preaching of the gospel, they were saved, and as such became God's elect!
 - c. This God accomplished by calling them through the gospel proclaimed by the apostles - **2 Th 2:14**

[Today, when a person heeds the gospel of Christ, they are "sanctified" (set apart) by the Holy Spirit as a result of believing the truth. According to God's choice made before the world began, all who obey Christ become part of that great body of the saved in Christ, God's elect! But is their participation in the blessings of the elect final...?]

II. MAKING OUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE

A. GOD'S ELECTION IS UNCONDITIONAL...

- 1. God's election or choice was **general**
- 2. He chose to save people **"in Christ"**
- 3. That choice is unconditional and final
 - a. There is no way anyone can be saved without Christ

- b. As Jesus Himself said, “no one can come to the Father except through Me” - **Jn 14:6**
- c. As Peter would later say, “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” - **Ac 4:12**

B. OUR ELECTION IS CONDITIONAL...

- 1. Whether we as individuals remain in the body or church, (God’s elect) is conditional
- 2. We must be “*diligent to make your calling and election sure*” - **2 Pe 1:10**
 - a. Just as Israel (as a nation) had been chosen by God to receive His blessings
 - b. But Individually, the Israelites also had to “make their calling and election sure”
 - c. Remember the many Israelites who became God’s elect at Mount Sinai, but died later in the wilderness!
- 3. Thus we find many warnings in the Scriptures to remain faithful
 - a. Or fall just like many did in the wilderness - **He 3:12-19**
 - b. Or come short of our heavenly rest, like they failed to enter Canaan - **He 4:1-3,9-11**
- 4. Jesus Himself warned His disciples
 - 1) Be fruitful, or be cut off! - **Jn 15:1-6**
 - 2) Be faithful, to receive the crown of life! - **Re 2:10**

CONCLUSION

- 1. The faithful and fruitful lives of the Thessalonians gave Paul confidence concerning their election...
 - a. Their active faith, love and hope - **1 Th 1:2-3**
 - b. Their reception of Paul and the Word - **1 Th 1:6-7**
- 2. But whether they remained part of God’s elect was not final...
 - a. If it was, why even bother to worry about them? - **1 Th 3:1,5-6**
 - b. As long as they remained faithful, Paul was comforted - **1 Th 3:7**
- 3. Dear friends and brethren, what about us...?
 - a. Are we included among God’s elect?
 - 1) God’s choice regarding salvation is still sure and final
 - 2) Only in Christ Jesus is there salvation!
 - 3) Through the gospel, God is still calling people
 - Obey the gospel, and you will be set apart by the Spirit to become one of God’s chosen!
 - b. Are we being diligent to make our calling and election sure?
 - 1) Are we faithful and fruitful in our service to Christ?
 - 2) Will we persevere to the end, or fall short of our heavenly rest?

That we may experience the eternal blessings God has prepared for His Elect, let us heed the admonition of Scripture:

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.” (He 3:12-14)

A Church Worthy Of Imitation

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10

INTRODUCTION

1. A good role model is very important...
 - a. It demonstrates what can be done
 - b. It provides direction for what should be done
 - c. It inspires one to do what ought to be done
2. Christians are blessed to have many role models...
 - a. As individuals, we have many good role models in the Scriptures
 - b. As churches, we also have role models that ought to inspire any congregation
3. Among the many churches described in the New Testament, the church of the Thessalonians proved to be a congregation worthy of emulation...
 - a. Paul commended their example in **1 Th 1:7**
 - b. Even though they were a rather young church

[In **1 Th 1:6-10**, Paul mentions several things for which the Thessalonians were exemplary. To encourage us both individually and as a congregation of the Lord, we shall review why they were “A Church Worthy Of Imitation”. Note first that they were commended for...]

I. THEIR IMITATION OF PAUL AND THE LORD (6a)

A. NOTE THAT THEY WERE IMITATORS THEMSELVES...

1. Following after the example of Paul and the Lord
 2. Following after the example of other churches - **1 Th 2:14**
 3. Something Paul commanded the church in Corinth to do - **1 Co 4:16**
 4. He likewise commanded the Philippians to imitate or follow the example of others - **Ph 3:17**
 5. Even as he himself sought to imitate Christ - **1 Co 11:1**
- **Note well:** those who would be good examples to others must first be imitators!

B. HOW ABOUT US TODAY...?

1. Are we seeking to imitate others who are good examples?
 2. As disciples of Jesus, we should certainly seek to imitate Him! - cf. **Jn 13:13-15**
 3. As children of God, we should also imitate Him - **Ep 5:1**
 4. It is likely that we also have other role models worthy of emulation, both individuals and churches
- Focus on being good imitators, and we shall also be “A Church Worthy Of Imitation”!

[Next we notice that Paul commends them for...]

II. THEIR RECEPTION OF THE WORD (6b)

A. NOTE HOW THEY RECEIVED THE WORD...

1. First, it was *“in much affliction”*
 - a. They received the word despite persecution - cf. **Ac 17:1-10; 1 Th 3:1-4**
 - b. In this they were like the churches in Judea - **1 Th 2:14**
 2. Second, it was *“with joy of the Holy Spirit”*
 - a. Joy is a fruit of following after the Spirit - **Ga 5:22**
 - b. In response to prayer, God imparts joy to the believer through the Spirit - **Ro 15:13**
 - c. Especially when the Word is received in times of persecution - **Ac 13:49-52**
 3. Later, Paul describes further how they received the Word - **1 Th 2:13**
 - a. Not as the word of men
 - b. But as the Word of God
- An important part of becoming an example worthy of imitation is receiving the Word of God in the right way

B. HOW ABOUT US TODAY...?

1. How is our reception of the Word of God?
 - a. Do we receive the Word only when it is convenient?
 - b. Do we take advantage of opportunities to study God’s Word?
 - c. Is our attendance of worship and Bible study classes haphazard?
 - d. If we do not experience the joy the Holy Spirit imparts, could it be related to neglecting the Word of God?
 2. Are we **“A Church Worthy Of Imitation”** when it comes to the Word Of God?
 - a. If every one studied the Bible like we do...
 - 1) Would churches grow?
 - 2) Would churches have elders?
 - b. As individuals, are we receiving the Word properly?
 - 1) With meekness, aware of our need for the Word? - **Ja 1:21**
 - 2) Like newborn babes desire their mothers’ milk, knowing that the Word is necessary for spiritual growth? - **1 Pe 2:1-2**
- If we do not set the right example regarding our reception of the Word, then we will be following the example of those who were rebuked - cf. **He 5:12**

[The Thessalonians were not only good students and learners of the Word, they were also commended for...]

III. THEIR SPREADING OF THE WORD (8)

A. NOTE HOW THEY HAD PROCLAIMED THE WORD...

1. From them the Word had *“sounded forth”*
 - a. They did not keep quiet about their faith
 - b. They did not limit their evangelistic efforts to just being good examples of what it means to be a Christian
2. From them the Word spread to other places
 - a. Throughout Macedonian and Achaia (provinces of modern day Greece)
 - b. Also in every place (to regions beyond their own country)

3. Such was clear indication of their *“faith toward God”*
 - a. Not only the Word itself, but their own faith had become known to others
 - b. Implying that spreading the Word is an indication of faithfulness
- **“A Church Worthy Of Imitation”** will be one with an evangelistic focus that looks beyond the local community

B. HOW ABOUT US TODAY...?

1. Do we have a similar evangelistic focus?
 - a. Are we looking beyond the needs of our local community?
 - b. Are we working toward spreading the gospel in other places?
2. The need for such churches is still great today!
 - a. How shall people believe unless they have heard, and how shall they hear without preachers who are sent? - **Ro 10:14-17**
 - b. Just as Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas - **Ac 13:1-3**
 - c. Just as Gaius helped missionaries along the way - **3 Jn 5-8**
- Until a church grows to the point that it sounding forth the Word in other places by sending or supporting preachers, it has yet to become **“A Church Worthy Of Imitation”**

[Just as the Word of God and the faith of the Thessalonians spread and become known, so had news regarding...]

IV. THEIR SERVICE TO GOD (9)

A. NOTE THE CHANGE THAT LED TO THEIR SERVICE...

1. They had *“turned to God from idols”*
 - a. The word “turned” suggests a conversion
 - b. A dramatic shift from devotion to idols to devotion to God
 - c. Which Paul preached on other occasions - cf. **Ac 14:15**
2. This conversion made their service to God possible
 - a. One cannot serve both God and idols
 - b. To serve God, we must turn away from those things that would draw us away from God - cf. **Mt 6:24**
- Genuine, faithful service to God requires a true conversion, in which we turn away from things of the world as well as turn toward God

B. HOW ABOUT US TODAY...?

1. There are “idols” from which we need to turn away
 - a. E.g., covetousness is defined as idolatry - **Ep 5:5; Co 3:5**
 - b. We can be just as guilty of idolatry today, when we allow other things to distract our service to God
2. Is our service to God hindered by divided devotion?
 - a. Trying to serve God while still wanting to serve the world?
 - b. Wanting to love the things of the world while loving the Father?
- As John made clear, such divided devotion is not possible! - **1 Jn 2:15-17**

[Finally, the church in Thessalonica was **“A Church Worthy Of Imitation”** regarding...]

V. THEIR ANTICIPATION OF JESUS (10)

A. NOTE THAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR JESUS TO RETURN...

1. The word “wait” suggests they were looking for and anticipating His return - cf. **Ph 3:20**
2. This anticipation is one that all Christians are to have - **Ti 2:11-13; 2 Pe 3:11-12**
3. For Jesus will come for salvation to those who “*eagerly wait for Him*” - **He 9:28**
-- A church worth imitating will be one that always has the hope of Jesus returning

B. HOW ABOUT US TODAY...?

1. Are we eagerly waiting for Jesus to return?
 2. Does the return of Jesus even enter our minds?
 - a. When it does, do we hope that it will be delayed?
 - b. Or is our attitude like that of John, who prayed “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” - **Re 22:20**
- How we answer such questions reveals much about our spiritual condition, and whether we as a church are worthy of imitation!

CONCLUSION

1. Remember that the church in Thessalonica was very young...
 - a. It had been established only a short time before Paul penned these words
 - b. Yet Paul could write such complimentary words about them
2. It demonstrates what can happen when people totally give themselves to Jesus...
 - a. When they seek to imitate Jesus and His apostles
 - b. When they receive the Word, even in the middle of persecution
 - c. When they turn from the world, and turn to God in full devotion
 - d. When they let the promise of Jesus’ return motivate their lives

-- Through such a church the Word of God will be “trumpeted forth”, as well as the reputation of their faith...Will this be true of us?
3. In conclusion, we note that Jesus’ coming will deliver us from “*the wrath to come*”...
 - a. In his second epistle to this church, Paul described that wrath to come - **2 Th 1:7-10**
 - b. How does Jesus deliver us from that wrath?
 - 1) Through His death on the cross - **Ro 5:8-9**
 - 2) Through His life which reconciles us to God - **Ro 5:10-11**

Will Jesus deliver us from that wrath to come when He comes again? It all depends upon whether we accept the goodness of God that should lead us to repentance - cf. **Ro 2:4-10**

A Preacher Worthy Of Imitation

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous lesson we mentioned the value of a good role model...
 - a. It demonstrates what can be done
 - b. It provides direction for what should be done
 - c. It inspires one to do what ought to be done-- The church at Thessalonica certainly serves as “**A Church Worthy Of Imitation**”

2. In the second chapter of 1st Thessalonians, we find Paul reflecting upon...
 - a. His preaching while at Thessalonica - **1 Th 2:1-8**
 - b. His conduct while at Thessalonica - **1 Th 2:9-12**-- From which we learn that Paul certainly serves as “**A Preacher Worthy Of Imitation**”

[Just as churches would do well to emulate the church at Thessalonica, so preachers would do well to imitate the example of the apostle Paul while he worked with them. But not just preachers; all Christians would benefit by imitating the example of Paul. Consider therefore...]

I. THE MANNER OF HIS PREACHING

A. WITH BOLDNESS...

1. Paul preached with boldness - **1 Th 2:1-2**
 - a. Despite his previous persecution at Philippi
 - b. Despite the persecution at Thessalonica
2. Such boldness was not natural for Paul, or for others
 - a. Paul often experienced fear and trembling - **1 Co 2:3**
 - b. Timothy needed encouragement to be bold - **2 Ti 1:6-8**
3. But he found boldness “*in our God*”
 - a. For which reason he asked others to pray for him, that God would grant him boldness - **Ep 6:19-20**
 - b. Others also looked to God when in need of boldness - **Ac 4:29,31**-- To proclaim the word with all boldness, look to God for courage!

B. WITH TRUTH AND HONESTY...

1. Paul preached the truth, not error - **1 Th 2:3**
2. He did so with honesty, not through impure motives or trickery - **1 Th 2:3; 2 Co 4:2**
3. Note the need for both truth and honesty:
 - a. It is not enough to speak the truth, we must do so honestly
 - b. It is not enough to be honest, we must speak the truth-- Let's strive to have both truth and honesty! - cf. **2 Co 2:17**

C. PLEASING GOD, NOT MEN...

1. Paul was aware that God had trusted him with the gospel - **1 Th 2:4**
 - a. As an expression of grace - **Ep 3:8**
 - b. As an example of mercy and longsuffering - **1 Ti 1:11-16**
 2. Therefore it was God he sought to please, not man - **1 Th 2:4**
 - a. Knowing that it is God who tries the heart - **He 4:13**
 - b. Knowing that this is what made him a true servant of Christ - **Ga 1:10**
- Be concerned with pleasing God, not gaining the popularity of men!

D. WITHOUT FLATTERY OR COVETOUSNESS...

1. Paul did not resort to flattering words to gain an audience - **1 Th 2:5**
 - a. He undoubtedly knew that using flattery was dangerous - **Pro 29:5**
 - b. Flattery is a tool used by false teachers - **2 Pe 2:18**
 2. Nor did Paul resort to using covetousness, either to persuade or for his own personal gain - **1 Th 2:5**
 - a. Covetousness is another tool of false teachers - **1 Pe 2:1-3**
 - b. Paul was careful not to take advantage of his brethren, becoming wealthy off of them - **Ac 20:33; 2 Co 11:9; 12:17**
- Win souls through the truth, not flattery, and avoid any semblance of taking advantage of brethren for monetary gain

E. WITHOUT SEEKING FOR GLORY FROM MEN...

1. Paul was careful not to seek glory from them or from others - **1 Th 2:6**
 - a. As an apostle of Christ it would have been easy to do
 - b. He could have easily abused his authority, but he was careful not to
 2. Any such glory would have been vain glory - **Pro 25:27**
- True servants do not seek glory from men, but from God!

F. WITH GENTLENESS AND AFFECTION...

1. He was gentle, like a nursing mother with her children - **1 Th 2:7**
 - a. As he counseled Timothy to be towards those in error - **2 Ti 2:24-25**
 - b. As he instructed the spiritual to be toward those overtaken in a fault - **Ga 6:1**
 2. He had affection for them, which prompted him to share not just the gospel, but his own life - **1 Th 2:8**
 - a. Paul was a preacher who loved his brethren - cf. **Ph 1:8**
 - b. For which he joyfully sacrificed his life as necessary - cf. **Ph 2:17**
- Let gentleness and love for the brethren be apparent both in our preaching and in life!

[Indeed, one cannot separate our preaching from our life. So as we continue to learn what made Paul “**A Preacher Worthy Of Imitation**”, we focus our attention more closely on...]

II. THE MANNER OF HIS LIFE

A. LABORING NIGHT AND DAY...

1. Paul did not desire to be a burden, and so worked to support himself - **1 Th 2:9**
 - a. Not that it is inappropriate for preachers to be supported - **1 Co 9:7-14**
 - b. Paul chose to preach the gospel without charge as a way of demonstrating his

willingness to accept his calling as a steward - cf. **1 Co 9:6,15-18**

- c. So Paul often worked as a tent maker while preaching - e.g., **Ac 18:1-4**
2. His example should remind us of the sacrificial nature of our service
 - a. Some may choose to support themselves like Paul did
 - b. All should be available and accessible both night and day - **Ac 20:31**
 - c. Note also that we can serve by praying “night and day” - **1 Th 3:10; 1 Ti 5:5**
- The main point is that our service to God and one another is a not a 9-5 job!

B. DEVOUT, JUST, AND BLAMELESS...

1. “Devoutly” depicts the nature of his service - **1 Th 2:10**
 - a. It was “holy” (NIV)
 - b. It was “pure” (NRSV)
2. “Justly” describes his dealings with his fellow man
 - a. It was “upright” (NRSV)
 - b. It was “righteous” (NIV)
3. “Blamelessly” reflects his carefulness to be above reproach
 - a. Something he was always careful about - **Ac 24:16; 2 Co 6:3**
 - b. Even before he became a Christian - **Ph 3:6**
- All three of these graces are important; they impact our relationship to God, our relationship to our fellow man, and help keep our reputation pure

F. FATHERLY...

1. Paul was like a father to them - **1 Th 2:11**
 - a. Exhorting and comforting them (encouraging them) - e.g., **1 Th 4:1**
 - b. Charging them as necessary (commanding them) - e.g., **2 Th 3:6,12**
2. For he was concerned about their walk (life) as a Christian - **1 Th 2:12**
 - a. He wanted their walk to be worthy of God
 - b. For God had called them into His kingdom and glory

CONCLUSION

1. Certainly all preachers would do well to have the same kind of fatherly concern (and motherly gentleness and affection) that Paul had!
2. But not only preachers...how much better it would be if all members of the church served one another as Paul served his brethren!
 - a. With boldness, truth and honesty, seeking to pleasing God and not men
 - b. Without flattery, covetousness, or seeking glory from men
 - c. With labor night and day, seeking to be devout, just, and blameless-- With the gentleness and affection of a nursing mother, and the guidance and encouragement of a caring father

Yes, the apostle Paul is indeed “**A Preacher Worthy Of Imitation**”. For such reasons every Christian would do well to heed his admonition as found in another place:

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” (1 Co 11:1)

The Effective Word Of God

1 Thessalonians 2:13

INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen the character of the church in Thessalonica - **1 Th 1:3-10**
 - a. Their faith, love and hope
 - b. Their worthy example to others in Macedonia and Achaia
2. To some degree, the condition of the church may have been due to the diligent and caring nature of Paul's ministry while with them - **1 Th 2:1-12**
3. But it could not have happened without their willingness to receive the word of God...
 - a. Preached to them by Paul, Silas, and Timothy
 - b. Which they received, not as the word of men, but as the word of God-- Which worked effectively in them - **1 Th 2:13**

[In our text (**1 Th 2:13**), we are reminded of the effectiveness of God's Word for those who believe it. In this study, I wish to expand upon this thought in order to increase our appreciation for and reception of the Word of God in our lives...]

I. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOD'S WORD

A LIVING, POWERFUL, ABLE TO DISCERN...

1. The word of God is no dead letter - **He 4:12**
2. Just as Jesus' words were both spirit and life - **Jn 6:63**

B. PRODUCES FAITH...

1. As we hear (or read) it, it is able to develop faith in our hearts - **Ro 10:17**
2. This it does through the evidence it presents - cf. **Jn 20:30-31**

C. HAS POWER TO SAVE...

1. For it contains the gospel, God's power unto salvation - **Ro 1:16-17**
2. Which is able to save our souls - **Ja 1:21**

D. CAUSES ONE TO BE BORN AGAIN...

1. By the word of God, He has brought us forth - **Ja 1:18**
2. For the word of God is an incorruptible seed, by which one is born again - **1 Pe 1:22-23**

E. KEY TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH...

1. We grow by virtue of the word of God - **1 Pe 2:2**
2. Just as newborn babes grow by virtue of their mother's milk

F. HELPS TO OVERCOME SATAN...

1. John praised young men who overcame Satan through the Word of God - **1 Jn 2:14**
2. Of course, Jesus overcame Satan by appealing to the Word - **Mt 4:1-11**

G. POSSESSES POWER TO SANCTIFY...

1. As praised by the Psalmist - **Psa 19:7-11**
2. As prayed by Jesus - **Jn 17:17**

H. PRESERVES BOTH YOUNG AND OLD...

1. The young cleanse their way by taking heed to it - **Psa 119:9**
2. The elders were told they could guard against false teachers and apostasy with the help of God's word - **Ac 20:28-32**

[Such are the many benefits of the wonderful Word of God. It truly is “**The Effective Word Of God**”! But as indicated in our text, God's word must be properly received...]

II. FOR GOD'S WORD TO BE EFFECTIVE

A. MUST BE RECEIVED WITH FAITH...

1. For it is works in those who believe - **1 Th 2:13**
2. For it is God's power unto salvation to those who believe - **Ro 1:17**
3. For it does not profit those who do not receive it with faith - **He 4:2**

B. MUST BE RECEIVED WITH MEEKNESS...

1. The word must be received in meekness if it is to save - **Ja 1:21**
2. For such is the person God is willing to guide and teach - **Psa 25:9**

C. MUST BE RECEIVED BY DOERS...

1. Not just hearers of the Word - **Ja 1:22-25**
2. It is in obeying the Word that our souls are purified - **1 Pe 1:22**

D. MUST BE FERVENTLY DESIRED...

1. Like newborn babes longing for their mothers' milk - **1 Pe 2:2**
2. For the one who meditates on it day and night is truly blessed - **Psa 1:1-3**

E. MUST ABIDE IN US...

1. If we are to be strong, and overcome the wicked one - **1 Jn 2:14**
2. If we are not to sin against God - **Psa 119:11**

CONCLUSION

1. Is the living, powerful Word of God effective in our lives?
 - a. Is it producing faith, saving us by causing us to be born again?
 - b. Is it producing spiritual growth, manifested by overcoming Satan, living holy lives whether we are young or old?
2. If the Word of God is not making a powerful impact in our lives, could it be...

- a. We are not receiving it with faith and meekness?
- b. We are not receiving it with the intention of obeying it?
- c. We have not fervently desired it, so that it can not abide in us?

If such is the case, then we haven't taken the Word of God seriously. We have treated it no differently than the word of men. May the church of the Thessalonians always serve to remind us how we ought to receive it...

“...you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” (1 Th 2:13)

The Sins Of The Jews

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

INTRODUCTION

1. In our text, Paul reveals how the Thessalonians suffered persecution - **1 Th 2:14**
 - a. It was at the hand of their own countrymen - cf. **Ac 17:5-10**
 - b. In this they were imitators of the churches in Judea, who were also persecuted by their countrymen - **Ac 8:1; 12:1-4**

2. Mentioning the Judaeian persecution, Paul lists the sins of the Jews - **1 Th 2:15-16**
 - a. This passage might be construed by some as anti-Semitic
 - b. But it really isn't, for it comes from the heart of one who loved his Jewish brethren - cf. **Ro 9:1-5; 10:1-2**

[A careful consideration of these verses and related passages can provide food for thought, especially regarding the grace of God, His longsuffering, and the danger of despising it. Let's begin our consideration by looking more closely at what this passage says about...]

I. THE SINS OF THE JEWS

A. THEY KILLED THE LORD JESUS...

1. Which Peter was not hesitant to proclaim - **Ac 2:23,36; 3:14-15; 4:10; 5:30**
2. Those who were personally involved accepted responsibility for this act - **Mt 27:25**

B. THEY KILLED THEIR OWN PROPHETS...

1. They killed prophets in the days of Elijah - **1 Kin 19:10**
2. They killed prophets, including Zechariah, despite the reforms of Jehoida the priest - **2 Chr 24:14-21**
3. As summarized by Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, and Stephen - **2 Chr 36:16; Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30; Ac 7:52**

C. THEY PERSECUTED THE APOSTLES...

1. In Jerusalem the apostles had been beaten and threatened - **Ac 5:40**
2. Ultimately there was the death of James, and the imprisonment of Peter - **Ac 12:1-5**
3. Paul had been persecuted in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra - **Ac 13:50; 14:1-6,19**
4. He had been run out of Thessalonica and Berea by the Jews - **Ac 17:5-10,13-14**

D. THEY DID NOT PLEASE GOD...

1. As rebuked by Moses in the wilderness - **Deu 9:7**
2. As described by God to His prophet Ezekiel - **Ezek 2:3**

E. THEY WERE CONTRARY TO ALL MEN...

1. **Tacitus** describes them as "cherishing hatred against all others"

2. **Juvenal** says “They would not even point out the way to any one except of the same religion; nor, being asked, guide any to a fountain except the circumcised.”
3. **Diodorus Sicuhs** describes them as “those alone among all the nations who were unwilling to have any intermingling with any other nation, and who regarded all others as enemies”
- As quoted by **Barnes** in his commentary on **1 Th 2:15**

F. FORBIDDING THEM TO SPEAK TO THE GENTILES...

1. As happened at Antioch of Pisidia - **Ac 13:42-51**
2. The idea that Gentiles could now be included among God’s people was abhorrent to many Jews, as indicated by their reaction in **Ac 22:21-22**
3. Even some Jewish Christians demanded that Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved - **Ac 15:5**

[In this manner the Jews as a nation of people had been filling up the measure of their sins, and the fullness of God’s wrath was about to come upon them (perhaps the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD - cf. **Mt 23:29-39**).

Now it is important to stress that these were not the words of an anti-Semite. Paul loved his brethren in the flesh (**Ro 9:1-5; 10:1-4**). They are simply facts of history, given objectively by a Jew who himself had been guilty of the same things! Consider how Paul described himself...]

II. THE SINS OF ONE JEW (PAUL)

A. HE HAD BEEN A BLASPHEMER...

1. Prior to his conversion - **1 Ti 1:12-13**
2. Compelling even others to blaspheme the name of Christ - **Ac 26:9-11**

B. HE HAD BEEN A PERSECUTOR...

1. Wreaking havoc of the church - **Ac 8:3; 9:1-2; 26:9-10**
2. An indication of his zeal for his Jewish faith - **Ph 3:6**

C. HE HAD BEEN AN INSOLENT MAN...

1. “a violent aggressor” (NASB), “injurious” (KJV) - **1 Ti 1:13**
2. “It does not mean merely doing injury, but refers rather to the manner or spirit in which it is done. It is a word of intenser signification than either the word ‘blasphemer,’ or ‘persecutor,’ and means that what he did was done with a proud, haughty, insolent spirit. There was wicked and malicious violence, an arrogance and spirit of tyranny in what he did, which greatly aggravated the wrong that was done.” - **Barnes**

CONCLUSION

1. So what is the point? Certainly Paul was not anti-Semitic...
 - a. What he says was not true of all Jews
 - 1) Many had become Christians (e.g., the apostles, Paul himself)
 - 2) There were churches “in Judea” - cf. **1 Th 2:14**
 - b. Any Jew who came to Christ would be “grafted” back in - cf. **Ro 11:23-24**

- c. The Gentiles as a group were not much better - cf. **Ro 1:18-32**

- 2. But there are important lessons to be learned...
 - a. The danger of even God's chosen people falling away - **He 3:12-4:2**
 - b. The wonderful grace of God for those willing to repent
 - 1) As seen in the life of Paul - **1 Ti 1:12-16**
 - 2) As still extended to the Jews - **Ro 11:1-5,23**
 - c. The wrath of God coming upon those who refuse His grace - cf. **Ro 2:4-11**
 - 1) To those who obey not the gospel - **1 Pe 4:17; 2 Th 1:7-9**
 - 2) To those who persist in sin - **He 10:26-31**

As we are therefore reminded of how some of the Jews fell from grace, may it serve to caution us not to receive God's grace in vain:

“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Co 6:1-2)

What Is Our Hope, Glory, And Joy?

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

INTRODUCTION

1. Soon after the church at Thessalonica was started, Paul was forced to leave...
 - a. Unbelieving Jews had created problems for some of the members - cf. **Ac 17:5-9**
 - b. Paul and Silas had to be sent away by night - **Ac 17:10**
2. In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul reflects upon their abrupt departure...
 - a. How it created an eager desire to see them again - **1 Th 2:17**
 - b. How Satan had hindered them from fulfilling that desire - **1 Th 2:18**
 - c. Prompting him to ask the question: *“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?”* - **1 Th 2:19**
3. We do well to ask ourselves the same question...
 - a. What is our hope? For what do we long with desire and expectation?
 - b. What is our joy? What gives us true happiness and satisfaction?
 - c. What is our crown of rejoicing? What provides the highest degree of joy in our lives?
-- Is our answer the same as Paul’s? Should it be?

[As we consider what our answer should be, let’s examine more closely our text and the answer Paul gave...]

I. PAUL’S HOPE, GLORY, AND JOY

A. WE READ OF HIS DESIRE TO SEE THEM...

1. He had been *“taken away”* from them - **1 Th 2:17**
 - a. He is referring to his necessary departure - **Ac 17:10**
 - b. He uses a word that implies a painful bereavement, like a child taken away from his or her parents (Barnes)
2. He had been away from their presence only *“a short time”* - **1 Th 2:17**
 - a. Exactly how long, we do not know
 - b. Probably no more than a year, if not months
3. He *“endeavored more eagerly”* to see them *“with great desire”* - **1 Th 2:17**
 - a. Note the repeated emphasis of his longing to see them
 - b. His desire likely heightened by the manner in which he had to leave them

B. WE LEARN WHAT PREVENTED HIM...

1. He wanted to come to them *“time and again”* - **1 Th 2:18**
 - a. Either from Berea or Athens
 - b. But he was hindered
2. It was Satan who hindered him - **1 Th 2:18**
 - a. He attributes the persecution by his fellow Jews to Satan

- 1) It was the unbelieving Jews who were hounding him
 - 2) They were following him from place to place - **Ac 17:5,13**; cf. **Ac 14:19**
 - 3) They were possibly his “thorn in the flesh”, “the messenger of Satan” alluded to in another epistle - cf. **2 Co 12:7-10**
- b. Satan was the ultimate source behind the persecution suffered by the early church - cf. **1 Pe 5:8-9**; **Re 2:10**

C. WE DISCOVER PAUL’S HOPE, GLORY, AND JOY...

1. The Thessalonians were Paul’s “**hope**”, because he hoped to see them at the coming of the Lord - **1 Th 2:19**
2. They were his “**joy**” or “**crown of rejoicing**”, in anticipation of seeing them in the presence of Jesus - **1 Th 2:19**
3. They were his “**glory**” and “**joy**” - not just in the future, but in the present as well - **1 Th 2:20** (“you **are** our glory and joy”)

[Paul’s hope, glory, and joy were his brethren in Christ, especially those he had taught and brought to the Lord. Not just the Thessalonians, but others as well (cf. **Ph 4:1**).

And it works both ways: At the coming of Christ, Paul would be the source of joy for those he taught (cf. **2 Co 1:14**). Now let’s consider what ought to be...]

II. OUR HOPE, GLORY, AND JOY

A. FOR SOME CHRISTIANS, IT MAY BE...

1. Their **possessions**
 - a. Their hope is in the acquisition of material things
 - b. Their glory (pride) is in what they have obtained
 - c. Their joy (happiness) is in the pleasure such things give them

-- But such things are perishable and susceptible to theft, they draw us away from God; therefore it is folly to have them as our hope, glory and joy - cf. **Mt 6:19-21,24**; **1 Jn 2:15-17**
2. Their **jobs**
 - a. Their hope is in the advancement of their careers
 - b. The glory (pride) is in how far they have come
 - c. Their joy (happiness) is in the money, power, or prestige they have obtained

-- But our jobs and all that they bring can be fleeting (especially in today’s job market, with frequent downsizing and lack of company loyalty to employees); they shall one day come to naught - cf. **2 Pe 3:10**
3. Their **families**
 - a. Their hope is what their families may become
 - b. Their glory (pride) is what their families have become
 - c. Their joy (happiness) is in the relationship they enjoy with their families

-- While certainly more noble (and rewarding) than possessions or jobs, even our families are limited in the joys and glory they can bring; death ends our relationship as family, and if they are not Christians, what does that do for our hope? - **Mt 10:37**; **12:46-50**

B. FOR ALL CHRISTIANS, WHAT IT SHOULD BE...

1. Our **hope** should be to see each other in heaven!
 - a. To see each other with Jesus in the presence of the Lord at His coming
 - b. What a wonderful occasion, what a glorious reunion!
2. Our **glory** should be seeing each other in the presence of the Lord!
 - a. Serving the Lord faithfully now
 - b. Being glorified together with Jesus when He comes - cf. **2 Th 1:10-12**
3. Our **joy** should be the happiness coming from our working together in the Lord!
 - a. The joy experienced by John when he saw others walking in the truth - **2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 3-4**
 - b. The joy Paul experienced when told of the faithfulness of the Thessalonians - **1 Th 3:6-9**

CONCLUSION

1. Our hope, glory, and joy should be in that which is **eternal**...
 - a. Otherwise we are setting ourselves up for eventual disappointment
 - b. Our possessions, jobs, even families cannot provide true hope, glory and joy
 - 1) At best, what they offer is temporary
 - 2) At worst, they provide much disappointment, and draw us away from God
2. Since much of our hope, glory, and joy, both now and in eternity, is through our brethren...
 - a. It is important that we nurture and strengthen our relationships
 - b. It is imperative that we seek to bring others to Christ, including those in our physical families
 - Such effort not only brings us closer to each other, but to God, and produces that which lasts for eternity!

And then we shall truly be able to say to each other, *“For you are our glory and joy.”* Can we say that now...?

Paul's Concern For His Brethren

1 Thessalonians 3:1-10

INTRODUCTION

1. It is evident from this epistle that Paul loved his brethren...
 - a. In their presence, he treated them like a nursing mother and exhorted them like a caring father - **1 Th 2:7,11**
 - b. When absent from them, he longed to see them time and again - **1 Th 2:17-18**
2. His concern for them is also evident as we continue our study of this epistle...
 - a. As we notice his anxiety over their faith - **1 Th 3:1-5**
 - b. As we read of his joy in hearing of their steadfastness - **1 Th 3:6-10**
3. What of our concern for one another? Are we troubled at all over the spiritual welfare of our brethren?

[As we take a closer look at “**Paul’s Concern For His Brethren**”, perhaps there are things to be learned that will ensure we have a proper concern for one another as well...]

I. PAUL’S CONCERN FOR HIS BRETHREN

A. IMPLIED BY HIS ANXIETY...

1. Paul was concerned about how they were holding up under tribulation - **1 Th 3:1-4**
 - a. He did not want them to be shaken by them
 - b. He had even warned them when he was still with them
 2. Paul was concerned about their faith - **1 Th 3:5**
 - a. He was afraid that the tempter (Satan) might have tempted them
 - b. He was fearful that his labor might have been in vain
 - 1) A concern expressed for churches in Galatia - **Ga 2:2; 4:11**
 - 2) A concern expressed for brethren at Philippi - **Ph 2:16**
- **Note:** if the doctrine “once saved, always saved” were true, why did Paul worry?

B. INSINUATED BY HIS HELP...

1. He sent Timothy, at expense to himself - **1 Ti 3:1-2**
 - a. It meant being left in Athens alone
 - b. It meant being without the aid of a brother, a minister of God and fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ
 2. He sent Timothy for two reasons - **1 Ti 3:2,5**
 - a. To establish and encourage them in their faith
 - b. To learn of the condition of their faith
- **Note again:** if the doctrine “once saved, always saved” were true, why the need to hinder the work at Athens by sending Timothy back to Thessalonica?

C. INDICATED BY HIS JOY...

1. Timothy had now returned with good news - **1 Ti 3:6**
 - a. About their faith and love
 - b. About their good remembrance of Paul
 - c. About their great desire to see Paul
2. Paul's reaction to this news - **1 Th 3:7-9**
 - a. Comforted in his own affliction and distress by their faith
 - b. Made to really live by their steadfastness
 - c. Rejoicing with thankfulness for their condition before God

D. ILLUSTRATED BY HIS PRAYERS...

1. Note the frequency of his prayers for them - **1 Th 3:10**
 - a. Praying night and day
 - b. Praying exceedingly
2. Note the content of his prayers for them - **1 Th 3:10**
 - a. To see their face once again
 - b. To perfect what is lacking in their faith

[Paul's concern for his brethren is certainly evidenced by his anxiety, his help, his joy, and his prayers. To provoke our thinking, let us now examine whether there is evidence of...]

II. OUR CONCERN FOR OUR BRETHREN

A. DO WE HAVE ANY ANXIETY...?

1. Are we concerned about the welfare of our brethren, especially the weak?
2. Have we noticed their absence, does it not trouble us?
- Do we act as though we believed in the doctrine "once saved, always saved"?

B. DO WE EXTEND ANY HELP...?

1. Have we made an effort to call, write, or in some way contact them?
2. Are we helping by setting a good example with our own service and attendance?
3. Are we doing what we can to establish and encourage them in the faith?
- Paul was willing to make personal sacrifices to provide help for his brethren, are we?

C. DO WE EXPERIENCE ANY JOY...?

1. Are we moved at all when we see a brother or sister restored to the Lord?
2. Do we have any joy when we see them returned to our midst?
3. Can we say with Paul, "*For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.*"?
- Our reaction to seeing brethren who are weak make an effort reveals much about our level of concern for them

D. DO WE OFFER ANY PRAYERS...?

1. Prayers of thanks when we hear or see evidence of their faithfulness?
2. Prayers to see them and perfect what is lacking in their faith?
- Paul prayed exceedingly, night and day...how often do we pray for those who are weak or experiencing trials?

CONCLUSION

1. Much joy comes from seeing the faithfulness and steadfastness of other Christians...
 - a. Paul was comforted in his own afflictions by their faith - **1 Th 3:7**
 - b. He was “alive” because of their steadfastness - **1 Th 3:8**
 - c. He was filled with thanksgiving for the joy that came from seeing their faith - **1 Th 3:9**
 - The apostle John could relate to this joy of which Paul wrote - cf. **3 Jn 3-4**

2. To experience such joy, we need to have concern for our brethren...
 - a. Enough concern to be anxious over their condition
 - b. Enough concern to do something about it
 - Perhaps “**Paul’s Concern For His Brethren**” might spark our own concern!

Without concern for our brethren, there is the very real danger of our labor being in vain. May our concern for our brethren be such that when we hear of their faithfulness we too can say:

“For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” (1 Th 3:8)

Paul's Prayer For The Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

INTRODUCTION

1. The first section of this epistle contain “apostolic reflections” in which Paul...
 - a. Praised their wonderful reception of the gospel - **1 Th 1:1-10**
 - b. Reviewed the nature of his ministry among them - **1 Th 2:1-16**
 - c. Expressed his love and concern for their spiritual condition - **1 Th 2:17-3:10**
2. This section ends with a prayer in their behalf - **1 Th 3:11-13**
 - a. A common practice of Paul in his epistles - cf. **Ph 1:9-11; Co 1:9-12**
 - b. In which Paul expresses his desires regarding his brethren
3. In considering such prayers, I find it beneficial to remember that Paul wrote by inspiration...
 - a. So he is not just expressing his own desires, but those of God's as well!
 - b. In most cases, these prayers are just applicable to us today as they were for them!

[As we examine this prayer more closely, then, consider how **elements of “Paul's Prayer For The Thessalonians”** might also be God's desire for us today. We first notice that Paul's prayer was that the Father and Jesus might...]

I. DIRECT HIS WAY TO THEM (11)

A. PAUL'S DESIRE TO SEE THEM...

1. He had expressed this desire earlier - **1 Th 2:17**
2. He had been hindered by Satan - **1 Th 2:18**

B. PAUL'S PRAYER TO SEE THEM...

1. Requesting aid from both the Father and Jesus
 - a. Note the distinction between the Father and the Son - cf. also **2 Jn 9**
 - b. This implies the Trinity, the distinction between the Persons of the Godhead
 - c. Suggesting both joint and separate actions of the Father and Son
2. Implying belief in the providence of God
 - a. That God could overcome the hindrance of Satan's efforts - cf. **1 Pe 5:8-10**
 - b. That God could provide safe travel if it be in accordance to His will - cf. **Ro 1:10**

C. GOD'S DESIRE FOR US...

1. That we remember God's will in our prayers - **1 Jn 5:14**
2. That we remember God's will in our planning - **Ja 4:13-15**

[As Paul desired to see his beloved brethren, so we should desire to see our loved ones. But in our planning and prayers to see them, let's not forget the will of God! Now consider how Paul prayed that the Lord might...]

II. MAKE THEM INCREASE AND ABOUND (12)

A. THROUGH THE WORKING OF GOD...

1. Our spiritual growth involves the working of God - cf. **Ph 1:6**
2. He works in conjunction with our own efforts - cf. **Ph 2:12-13**
- So let us pray as though it depends upon God, but work as though it depends upon us!

B. TO INCREASE AND ABOUND...

1. Our spiritual growth is to be never-ending, always increasing - cf. **2 Pe 1:5-8; 3:18**
2. Our physical may grow old and slow down, but our inner man can be renewed every day!
- cf. **2 Co 4:16**
- Like the sun rising to reach its zenith, so our spiritual growth should be marked by increasing and abundant progress! - cf. **Pro 4:18**

C. IN LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER AND TO ALL...

1. Especially increasing and abounding in love
 - a. Something the Thessalonians already possessed - **1 Th 1:3**
 - b. Something the Thessalonians didn't really need to be told - **1 Th 4:9-10**
 - c. Yet we can never say that we cannot grow more - cf. **Ph 3:13-17**
2. Love not just for one another, i.e., our brethren, but for all men!
 - a. It is easy to love our brethren
 - b. But it is loving our enemies that we become like God! - cf. **Lk 6:32-35**
- It is certainly God's desire for all His children to abound in love, and this should be the focus of many prayers - cf. **Ph 1:9**

[And finally, we note in “**Paul’s Prayer For The Thessalonians**” that the Lord might...]

III. ESTABLISH THEIR HEARTS

A. BLAMELESS IN HOLINESS...

1. To be blameless is very reason Jesus gave Himself for us - **Ep 5:25-27**
2. Without holiness, we will not see the Lord - **He 12:14**
- While Jesus makes it possible through His blood, we must cooperate as well - cf. **2 Co 7:1**

B. BEFORE GOD AT THE COMING OF JESUS...

1. Here is the “where” and “when” we must be blameless in holiness
 - a. Where - before God at the Judgment!
 - b. When - when Jesus comes with all His saints (lit., holy ones)!
2. Note the following about the Lord's coming...
 - a. This is the third time in three chapters that Paul refers to this event - cf. **1 Th 1:10; 2:19; 3:13**
 - b. While “saints” (holy ones) could refer to angels (cf. **Mt 25:31**), it may also include the redeemed (cf. **1 Th 4:14**)

CONCLUSION

1. From **“Paul’s Prayer For The Thessalonians”**, we have seen that it is appropriate...
 - a. To seek God’s providential guidance when we desire to see our loved ones
 - b. To pray for one another’s spiritual growth and the Lord’s blessing

2. If we desire to see each other...
 - a. In this life from time to time
 - b. Increasing and abounding in love
 - c. Blameless in holiness in the presence of God at Christ’s coming

...the **“Paul’s Prayer For The Thessalonians”** is the sort of prayer that we should diligently offer for one another!

An Exhortation To Walk In Holiness

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

INTRODUCTION

1. As we saw in our previous study, Paul concluded his “apostolic reflections” with a prayer...
 - a. In which he expressed his desire for his brethren - **1 Th 3:11-12**
 - b. In particular, that their hearts be established blameless in holiness - **1 Th 3:13**
2. In the second half of this epistle, Paul gives “apostolic instructions”...
 - a. In other words, exhortations, commands, urgings, etc.
 - b. All designed to help answer his own prayer!
 - 1) That they increase and abound in love
 - 2) That they be blameless in holiness at the coming of the Lord

[His first “apostolic instruction” could be called “**An Exhortation To Walk In Holiness.**” It begins with a general exhortation on how we ought to walk and please God...]

I. **ABOUNDING MORE AND MORE (1-2)**

A. NOTE THE FORCEFULNESS OF THIS EXHORTATION...

1. Paul “urges” and “exhorts” them
2. He reminds them this is:
 - a. What they received from him on how they “ought to walk” and “to please God”
 - b. In keeping with “commandments” given to them
3. Twice he appeals to the name of Jesus (which adds to the force of his appeal)
 - a. Urging and exhorting “in the Lord Jesus”
 - b. Commandments given “through the Lord Jesus”
4. These “instructions” are not suggestions; they carry the force of commands necessary to keep in order to please God!
 - a. Which Jesus expected His apostles to teach - **Mt 28:20**
 - b. Which Paul certainly stressed - **1 Co 7:19**

B. A COMMAND FOR INCREASING SERVICE...

1. They should “abound more and more”
 - a. As he prayed earlier - **1 Th 3:12**
 - b. As he will urge them again later - **1 Th 4:10**
2. This aspect of Christian living is taught throughout the Scriptures
 - a. By Jesus in His parables
 - 1) The Talents - cf. **Mt 25:14-30**
 - 2) The Vine and The Branches - cf. **Jn 15:1-2**
 - b. By Peter in defining what it means to grow in the knowledge of Christ - cf. **2 Pe 1:5-8**
 - c. By Paul in his writing to other Christians
 - 1) The Corinthians - **1 Co 15:58**

2) The Philippians - **Ph 1:9; 3:13-14**

[The Christian “walk” or life is to be one where we abound more and more, never resting on our laurels, always pressing on to increasing levels of service. This is especially true when it comes to living morally pure lives...]

II. SANCTIFICATION THROUGH ABSTINENCE (3-8)**A. GOD’S WILL IS OUR SANCTIFICATION...**

1. The words “sanctification” and “holiness” come from the same Greek word meaning to be “set apart”
 - a. Through the Word of God, we are to be “sanctified” - **Jn 17:17**
 - b. With the aid of the Spirit, we can be “sanctified” - **1 Co 6:11**
2. Sanctification is an ongoing process...
 - a. It began at our conversion - **1 Co 6:11; Ep 5:26**
 - b. It continues throughout our Christian life - **He 2:11; 10:14**
 - c. It will be completed at the coming of Christ - **1 Th 5:23**

B. SANCTIFICATION INVOLVES ABSTINENCE...

1. Abstaining from “sexual immorality”
 - a. The Greek word (porneia) is commonly translated “fornication”
 - b. It is a “general word for unlawful and immoral sexual intercourse and relationships” (Barclay)
 - 1) Thus it includes premarital sex, extramarital sex (adultery), homosexuality
 - 2) I.e., any sexual activity outside a lawful, marital relationship between husband and wife
2. Possessing one’s own vessel (body, or wife) in sanctification and honor
 - a. Not in passion of lust, like those who do not know God - cf. **Ep 4:17-19**
 - b. Something we should know how to do - in case one doesn’t, it involves:
 - 1) Being transformed by the renewing of the mind - **Ro 12:1-2**
 - 2) Not making provision for fulfilling the lusts of the flesh - **Ro 13:13-14**
3. So we will not be take advantage of and defraud our brother
 - a. I.e., commit adultery (perhaps the highest form of fraud - cf. **Pro 6:30-35**)
 - b. Which is what happens when we do not possess our bodies in sanctification and honor

C. WHY SANCTIFICATION (ESP. ABSTINENCE) IS NECESSARY...

1. It is God’s will - **1 Th 4:3**
2. God will avenge those who defraud their brethren - **1 Th 4:6; cf. He 13:4**
3. God has called us to holiness, not (moral) uncleanness - **1 Th 4:7**
4. Otherwise we reject God, who has given us His Holy Spirit - **1 Th 4:8**
 - a. Given to us when we became His sons - **Ga 4:6**
 - b. Our bodies are to be temples for the Holy Spirit - **1 Co 6:18-20**
 - Dare we grieve the Spirit by defiling His temple?

CONCLUSION

1. To be blameless in holiness at the Lord's coming requires we walk in holiness now...
 - a. Abounding more and more in our service to God
 - b. Abstaining from sexual immorality by possessing our bodies in sanctification and honor

2. Through the grace of God, such holy living is possible...
 - a. We have the blood of Christ to forgive us of the guilt of sin
 - b. We have the help of the Spirit to free us from the power of sin
 - But we must do our part, thus the need for **“An Exhortation To Walk In Holiness”**

In view of our morally lax society, this is a much needed exhortation! God has not called us to (sexual) uncleanness, but in holiness (**1 Th 4:7**). Are we living in a way becoming of our calling?

An Exhortation To Walk In Love

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

INTRODUCTION

1. In his prayer for the Thessalonians (**1 Th 3:11-13**), Paul asked the Lord to...
 - a. Make them increase and abound in love
 - b. To one another and to all
2. As Paul continues with his “apostolic instructions”, he proceeds to help answer his own prayer by exhorting the brethren regarding brotherly love...
 - a. Though not really necessary in their case - **1 Th 4:9-10a**
 - 1) For they have been taught by God to love one another
 - 2) And they love the brethren throughout Macedonia
 - b. Yet he urges them to increase more and more in their love - **1 Th 4:10b**
 - 1) Note yet again the emphasis on an ever increasing service - cf. **1 Th 3:12; 4:1**
 - 2) So they were to increase in this grace as well

[What is it about “brotherly love” that would prompt Paul to first pray for and then to urge the church at Thessalonica to increase in this virtue? As we consider Paul’s “**Exhortation To Walk In Love**” let’s first notice...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF BROTHERLY LOVE

A. THE GREEK WORD...

1. The Greek word is transliterated “philadelphia”
2. It is a compound involving two words: “phileo” (love) and “adelphos” (brother)
3. It literally means “the love of brothers”

B. AS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT...

1. “philadelphia” describes the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren (Thayer)
2. **Ro 12:10** reveals that it is through brotherly kindness we can have “kind affection” toward one another

[Brotherly kindness is what provides a true sense of family in our association as members of the Lord’s body. Now let’s consider why this virtue is so necessary...]

II. THE DEMAND OF BROTHERLY LOVE

A. IT IS EVIDENCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE...

1. It is one way we know that we have truly passed from death to life - **1 Jn 3:14**
2. If we do not have brotherly love, we remain in a state of spiritual death - **1 Jn 3:14-15**

B. IT IS EVIDENCE OF A TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD...

1. It is one way that we demonstrate we have truly come to know God - **1 Jn 4:7-8**
2. Without brotherly love, any claim to know God or love Him is a lie - **1 Jn 4:20-21**

C. IT IS EVIDENCE OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP...

1. It is an identifying mark by which the world can know we are Jesus' disciples - **Jn 13:34-35**
2. Right doctrine is certainly important (**2 Jn 9**), but the world pays little attention to what they may perceive as minor doctrinal differences
 - a. What people do notice is love in a world filled with hate, especially when such love is observed among individuals who come from various social, economic, and racial backgrounds
 - b. Any attempt to proclaim New Testament Christianity, therefore, will fail to appeal to those in the world unless it is accompanied by a visible demonstration of true brotherly kindness among Christians

D. IT IS EVIDENCE OF CONCERN FOR UNITY...

1. Unity among brethren is very important to Jesus - **Jn 17:20-23**
2. Through His death on the cross, Jesus attained unity - **Ep 2:13-16**
3. This unity is maintained through diligent endeavor - **Ep 4:3**
4. Crucial to this endeavor is "bearing with one another in love" - **Ep 4:2**
 - a. There will be times when brethren sin against one another
 - b. Where brotherly love prevails...
 - 1) There will be forbearance and forgiveness
 - 2) There will time for repentance and opportunities for reconciliation
 - c. Unless we develop brotherly love, churches will be prone to split at the earliest sign of conflict

[Can we appreciate why Paul was concerned that the Thessalonians increase in brotherly love? Do we see why we ought to excel in this grace as well? Presuming that we do, here are some thoughts related to...]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS

A. THE HELP GOD PROVIDES...

1. When we first obey the gospel, our souls are purified so that sincere and fervent love of the brethren is now possible - **1 Pe 1:22-23**
2. We are then "taught by God" how to love one another - cf. **1 Th 4:9**
 - a. The Father teaches the meaning of love by the manner in which He offered His Son as the propitiation for our sins - **1 Jn 4:9-10**
 - b. The Son demonstrated true love by freely offering His life - **1 Jn 3:16**

B. THE THINGS WE CAN DO...

1. As Peter implied, brotherly love is a virtue that must be developed - cf. **2 Pe 1:5-8**
2. One thing we can do is **reflect often upon the love and sacrifice of Jesus**
 - a. The more we do so, we come to understand the true meaning of brotherly kindness

- b. As Jesus said, “as I have loved you, that you also love one another” - **Jn 13:34**
3. I find two other things helpful in developing brotherly love
 - a. **Spend time with your brethren**
 - 1) The more I am around people, the more I come to know them personally, the more I share experiences (both good and bad), the easier I find it to “fall in love” with them
 - 2) It is not much different than with one’s own physical family
 - a) I had no choice who my three physical brothers would be
 - b) But as we experience life together our love and appreciation for one another deepens
 - c) I find it to be the same with my brethren in Christ.
 - b. **Pray fervently for your brethren, especially those whom you dislike**
 - 1) It is hard to remain angry or maintain a strong dislike for someone when you spend time praying for them
 - 2) As you pray seeking God’s love and forgiveness for yourself, it becomes so much easier to love and forgive others

[Finally, a thought or two about our relationships as brethren in Christ, and...]

IV. THE DISPLAY OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS

A. WHEN BRETHERN DIFFER...

1. A brother who is strong in faith must be considerate of his brother who may be weak - **Ro 15:1**
2. A brother with liberty in Christ must be willing to limit that freedom if it is beneficial to the spiritual well-being of his weaker brother - **1 Co 8:13; Ga 5:13**
3. It is brotherly kindness that makes one cautious about judging a brother, or what they say about them - cf. **Ja 4:11-12**

B. WHEN BRETHERN ARE WEAK...

1. It is brotherly kindness that leads Christians to truly care for one another - **1 Th 5:14**
 - a. To warn the unruly
 - b. To comfort the faint-hearted
 - c. To uphold the weak
 - d. To be patient with all
2. It is brotherly kindness that will prompt us to pursue the things that make for peace and the things by which we may build up one another - **Ro 14:19**

CONCLUSION

1. The importance of developing the spirit of brotherly love cannot be stressed too highly...
 - a. It is evidence of spiritual life
 - b. It is evidence of a true knowledge of God
 - c. It is evidence of true discipleship
 - d. It is evidence of concern for unity

2. Even if we excel in brotherly love like the Thessalonians...
 - a. We need to pray that the Lord make us increase and abound in love - **1 Th 3:11-13**
 - b. We need to urge one another to increase more and more - **1 Th 4:9-10**

It is evident the Thessalonians heeded Paul's exhortation to walk in love, for in his second epistle he wrote:

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.” (2 Th 1:3)

May the same be true of us as well!

An Exhortation To Walk In Diligence

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

INTRODUCTION

1. In his “apostolic instructions”, we have seen Paul exhort the church at Thessalonica...
 - a. To walk in holiness - **1 Th 4:1-8**
 - b. To walk in love - **1 Th 4:9-10**
2. His next instruction (**1 Th 4:11-12**) is an exhortation to “diligence”, to ensure that...
 - a. They walk properly toward those who are outside - cf. **1 Pe 2:12**
 - b. They lack nothing - cf. **Ro 13:8**
3. That this requires diligence is evident from the word “*aspire*” (study, KJV) in **verse 11**...
 - a. A word meaning “to be ambitious”
 - b. As translated in the NASB (to make it your ambition)

[In three particular areas does Paul want them to be ambitious, the first being...]

I. TO LEAD A QUIET LIFE

A. AN APPARENT PARADOX...

1. For the phrase “quiet life” suggests a calmness, a serenity
2. Yet for this we are to be “ambitious”, apply diligent effort, which seems to be contrary to the idea of quietness, calm
- The “quiet life”, like many good things, does not come without concerted effort

B. AN ADMIRABLE GOAL...

1. As much as possible, to live peaceably with all men - **Ro 12:18; 14:19; He 12:14**
 - a. Though such is not always the case
 - b. As Paul found out even in Thessalonica - cf. **Ac 17:1-6**
2. For which we are to diligently pray - **1 Ti 2:1-2**
 - a. That we might live quiet and peaceful lives
 - b. That we might live such in all godliness and honesty
3. A quiet and peaceful life is more likely if we:
 - a. Seek first the kingdom of God - **Mt 6:25-34**
 - 1) Which requires setting our priorities
 - 2) Which requires saying no to many distractions
 - b. Learn contentment in Christ - **Ph 4:11-13; 1 Ti 6:6-10**
 - c. Overcome anxiety through prayer - **Ph 4:6-7**
- The search for “simplicity” is a popular trend today; for the Christian, it is to be more than just a trend, but a way of life conducive to godliness and honesty

[As we “aspire” to lead a quiet life, we cannot do so unless we also give diligence...]

II. TO MIND OUR OWN BUSINESS

A. THERE IS A PLACE FOR LOVING CONCERN...

1. As we watch out for one another's welfare - **Ph 2:4**
2. As we seek to help each other overcome our weaknesses - **Ga 6:1-2**
- Therefore we should not construe the words in our text to mean that we should not seek to reprove, rebuke, or to restore an erring brother - cf. **Ja 5:19-20**

B. THERE IS NO PLACE FOR NOSY INTERFERENCE...

1. Paul is warning against becoming "busybodies", people who have nothing to do but interfere in the affairs of others
2. A problem that often existed in the early church
 - a. Even at Thessalonica - **2 Th 3:11-12**
 - b. Which Peter lumped together with murderers, thieves, etc. - **1 Pe 4:15**
3. A danger especially when one is not focused on their own business
 - a. Which is why Paul refused to let churches support younger widows - **1 Ti 5:11-14**
 - b. Which is why Paul instructed the older women to properly teach the younger women their responsibilities - **Ti 2:3-5**
- The peace and quiet we desire in our lives and in our churches cannot exist unless we maintain a proper distinction between brotherly concern and becoming "busybodies"

[It certainly helps to maintain that distinction if we "aspire"...]

III. TO WORK WITH OUR OWN HANDS

A. THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMMAND...

1. To provide for our families - cf. **1 Ti 5:8**
2. To help the less fortunate - **Ep 4:28; Ac 20:34-35**
- Through example and precept, Paul taught the early Christians to support themselves and not be dependent upon others

B. THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS COMMAND...

1. Failing to provide for our families makes us worse than unbelievers - **1 Ti 5:8**
2. Refusing to work was grounds for church discipline, just like adultery, extortion, etc. - **2 Th 3:10-14; 1 Co 5:11**
- While we may occasionally need assistance from our brethren (even our government), we are not to make it a practice to "live off welfare"

CONCLUSION

1. With diligence, therefore, we are to "aspire"..
 - a. To lead a quiet life
 - b. To mind our own business
 - c. To work with our own hands

2. Again, the purpose behind these instructions is twofold...
 - a. That we might walk properly toward those who are outside - **1 Th 4:12a**
 - b. That we might lack nothing - **1 Th 4:12b**

For the sake of our reputation as Christians, as well as for own well-being while we sojourn here on earth, we must heed this exhortation to walk in diligence!

The Comfort Of Christ's Coming

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

INTRODUCTION

1. In previous studies we've noted that Paul makes frequent mention of the second coming of Christ in this epistle to the Thessalonians...
 - a. In every chapter there is some reference to this great event
 - b. So far we have seen the following references: **1 Th 1:10; 2:19; 3:13**
2. In our text for this lesson, Paul discusses "**The Comfort Of Christ's Coming**"...
 - a. How we ought to be comforted by the "fact" of His coming
 - b. How we should be comforted by the "events" of His coming

[Our text is **1 Th 4:13-18**, a well-known passage often read at funerals. And rightly so, for it deals with...]

I. THE PROBLEM OF SORROW (13)

A. THE LOSS OF LOVED ONES IS GREAT...

1. The sorrow is great, the grief is so hard to bear
2. It is the most stressful event that one can endure

B. THE CHRISTIAN IS NOT IMMUNE TO SORROW...

1. We experience the sorrow of separation - e.g., **Ac 20:37-38**
2. But we need not experience the sorrow of desperation
 - a. The despair of having no hope
 - b. The despair of not ever seeing a loved one again

[What can alleviate the problem of sorrow? It is knowledge concerning the events of Christ's coming; and so Paul does not want them to be ignorant concerning...]

II. THE PROMISE FOR THOSE ASLEEP (14-15)

A. GOD WILL BRING THEM WITH JESUS...

1. Just as He raised Jesus from the dead, so He will bring those who "*sleep in Jesus*"!
 - a. In this text, he limits his discussion to the righteous dead
 - b. Elsewhere, we read of the resurrection of the wicked - e.g., **Jn 5:28-29**
2. What do the terms "*fallen asleep*" and "*sleep in Jesus*" mean?
 - a. The scriptures often speak of death as a "sleep"
 - 1) **Mt 27:52** - ...bodies of the saints who had "fallen asleep"
 - 2) **Jn 11:11-14** - Jesus says of dead Lazarus, "our friend sleeps"
 - 3) **Ac 7:60** - As Stephen is stoned to death, it is said "he fell asleep"
 - b. Some believe these passages support the doctrine of "**soul sleeping**"

- 1) That souls are unconscious between death and the resurrection
- 2) Not to be confused with the doctrine held by JW's, who teach there is no consciousness until the resurrection because the dead cease to exist
- c. Yet the following points should be carefully noted:
 - 1) Nowhere do the Scriptures say that the **soul** of the departed one fell asleep
 - a) It was the **person** who "fell asleep"
 - b) Thus it can have reference to the body, not the soul
 - 2) The term "sleep" is a figurative reference, and a very appropriate one:
 - a) For sleep implies **REST**...
 - 1) When one sleeps literally, there is rest from one's labor
 - 2) So it is that the dead also "rest from their labors" - cf. **Re 14:13**
 - b) For sleep implies a **CEASING OF PARTICIPATION**...
 - 1) In literal sleep, one ceases in the activities pertaining to the sphere in which one has been busy during the hours of wakefulness
 - 2) So it is with the dead, they are no longer active in the world which they left
 - c) For sleep is generally a **PRELUDE TO AN AWAKENING**...
 - 1) In literal sleep, it is followed by an "awakening"
 - 2) So it is with death:
 - a/ Though the souls may be conscious during the intermediate state...
 - b/ ...at the resurrection there will be the "awakening" of the glorified and transformed bodies in which to house our souls
 - 3) The term "sleep" became a euphemism for death because of the sleep-like appearance of the body
3. That God will bring "*them with Jesus*" implies they are with Jesus now!
 - a. As stated later in this epistle - **1 Th 5:10**
 - b. As stated elsewhere in the Scriptures - **2 Co 5:8; Lk 23:43; Ph 1:21-23**

B. THEY WILL PRECEDE THOSE WHO ARE ALIVE...

1. It seems some in Thessalonica feared those who had died would miss out on the blessings of Christ's coming
2. Paul reassures them (and us) that such is not the case...
 - a. God will bring them with Jesus! - **1 Th 4:14**; cf. also **3:13**
 - b. Therefore, "*by no means*" will those alive precede those who are dead! - **1 Th 4:15**
 - c. This assurance we have "*by the word of the Lord*" - **1 Th 4:15**
 - 1) The same "word" which foretold and brought about the flood - **2 Pe 3:3-6**
 - 2) The same "word" now tells of Christ's coming - **2 Pe 3:7-13**
 - 3) This "word" lives and abides forever! - **1 Pe 1:23-25**

[To reinforce the promise for those asleep in Christ, Paul next describes...]

III. THE PROCEDURE FOR CHRIST'S COMING (16-17)

A. THE LORD WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN...

1. Note what is said about His coming - **1 Th 4:16**
 - a. It will be with a "*shout*"
 - b. It will be with the "*voice of an archangel*"

- c. It will be with the *“trumpet of God”*
2. This is not describing some silent rapture!
 - a. This very passage is used to teach the premillennial concept of the rapture
 - b. Yet Paul ties the coming of the Lord and our gathering together into one event - cf. **2 Th 2:1-2**
 - 1) In which Jesus comes for His saints - **1 Th 4:13-18**
 - 2) In which Jesus brings judgment upon the wicked - **1 Th 5:1-3**; cf. **2 Th 1:7-8**

B. THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST...

1. Their souls will be coming with Jesus - **1 Th 4:14**
2. But their bodies will be raised from the grave - **1 Th 4:16**; cf. **Jn 5:28-29**
-- This will happen first, so we who are alive will not precede those who are dead

C. THOSE LIVING WILL BE CAUGHT UP WITH THEM...

1. Those alive will be transformed - cf. **1 Co 15:51-53**
 - a. Their mortal bodies will put on immortality
 - b. Their corruptible bodies will put on incorruption
2. The righteous living will then join the righteous dead - cf. **1 Th 4:17**
3. Together in the clouds we will meet the Lord in the air - cf. **Ac 1:9-11**

[In this wonderful way we shall come to be with the Lord forever (**1 Th 4:17**)! As Jesus said, *“that where I am, there you may be also”* (**Jn 14:3**). What a blessed hope! As we consider our final point, it should be obvious what is...]

IV. THE PURPOSE FOR THESE WORDS (18)

A. TO BE COMFORTED...

1. The wonderful promise in our text certainly provides comfort
2. Comfort that can sustain us in times of great loss
-- While we may sorrow when a fellow-Christian dies, it is not the sorrow of those who have no hope!

B. TO COMFORT ONE ANOTHER...

1. Comforting others in their loss of a loved one is a common human trait - cf. **Jn 11:19**
2. Certainly Christians are to *“weep with those who weep”* - **Ro 12:15**
3. But for those who are fellow Christians, we can do more - we can provide comfort!
 - a. Comfort them with the comfort we have in Christ - **2 Co 1:3-4**
 - b. Especially the comfort provided by the hope we have in Christ - **1 Th 4:18; 5:10-11**

CONCLUSION

1. Paul will have more to say about the coming of Christ in the next chapter...
 - a. In which he writes about the timing of Christ’s coming
 - b. In which he writes about the preparation for Christ’s coming
2. But in a passage that addresses...

- a. The problem of sorrow
 - b. The promise for those asleep
 - c. The procedure for Christ's coming
 - d. The purpose for these words
- We are reminded that death need not be **“good bye”**, but only **“good night”** (relate the story of the father who on his death bed told all his children “good night” except the one unfaithful son to whom he said “good bye”)

When the time comes for our loved ones pass on, will we be able to find comfort in this passage? Will those who survive us be comforted by its promise when they grieve over our death?

Preparing For Christ's Coming

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study we saw where Paul discussed **“The Comfort Of Christ's Coming”**...
 - a. How we ought to be comforted by the facts and events of His coming
 - b. Especially as it relates to loved ones who have died in the Lord - cf. **1 Th 4:13-18**
2. Of course, **“The Comfort Of Christ's coming”** presumes that we are prepared for it...
 - a. Whether we are among those who have died prior to that great event
 - b. Or we are among those who will be alive when He comes
3. Are we prepared?
 - a. Will He find us ready when He comes?
 - b. Will we be ready should we die before He comes?

[As we come to the final chapter in Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, we find him telling how Christians can be **“Preparing For Christ's Coming”** (1 Th 5:1-11). Proper preparation for the coming of Jesus takes into account that...]

I. HE SHALL COME AS A THIEF IN THE NIGHT (1-4)

A. FOR SOME, BUT NOT FOR OTHERS...

1. The Lord's coming will be a surprise for many, as the **“thief in the night”** motif clearly indicates - **1 Th 5:2**; cf. **2 Pe 3:10**
2. But for those who heed the warnings of Scripture, the **“Day”** will not overtake them as a thief - **1 Th 5:1-2,4**
 - a. Because they will be ready for His coming, though we don't know when it will be
 - b. Because they will have taken to heart the admonitions we shall consider momentarily

B. FOR SOME, AN INESCAPABLE DESTRUCTION...

1. He will come when people are saying **“Peace and safety!”** - **1 Th 5:3**
 - a. Not in troublesome times, but in peaceful times
 - b. Yet many Christians seem to think He is coming whenever there is tribulation
2. When He comes, it will be with **“sudden destruction”** - **1 Th 5:3**
 - a. Just as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman
 - b. There will be no time nor way to escape this destruction, described in more detail in the second epistle to the Thessalonians - cf. **2 Th 1:7-10**
3. This **“Day”** will be one of glory for those who are ready - cf. **2 Th 1:10**
 - a. For those who now “sleep in Jesus” - cf. **1 Th 4:13-16**
 - b. For those prepared for His coming when He does descend - cf. **1 Th 4:17-18**

[What will this **“Day”** mean for us, when the Lord comes **“as a thief in the night”**? A day of

destruction, or a day of delight? It depends upon whether we are prepared for His coming, and proper preparation means...]

II. WE SHOULD LIVE AS SONS OF THE DAY (5-11)

A. WATCHFUL AND SOBER...

1. We are “children of light” and “children of the day” - **1 Th 5:5**
 - a. Because we follow Jesus, the “light of the world” - **Jn 8:12; 12:35-36**
 - b. Because we are now in Jesus, and walk in the light - **Ep 5:8; 1 Jn 1:5-7**
 - c. Because we cast off works of darkness, and seek to walk properly - **Ro 13:11-14**
2. We are to be watchful for His coming - **1 Th 5:6**
 - a. For no one knows the day nor hour - cf. **1 Th 5:2; Mt 24:36,42**
 - b. Watchfulness includes prayer - cf. **1 Pe 4:7**
 - c. Watchfulness includes repentance, and strengthening what we have - cf. **Re 3:2-3**
-- On the other hand, “sleep” in our text refers to spiritual laxity - **1 Th 5:6-7**
3. We are to be sober - **1 Th 5:6-8a**
 - a. The word “sober” means to be temperate or abstinent, especially in regards to wine
 - b. It usually used in a more general sense to be sober-minded, watchful, circumspect
- Barnes
 - c. Note how Jesus relates this to watching for His coming in **Lk 21:34-36**
-- We should certainly take the promise of Jesus’ coming seriously, not frivolously

B. ARMED AND WAITING...

1. In all soberness (seriousness), putting on “the armor of God” - **1 Th 5:8**
 - a. Such as the breastplate of faith and love
 - 1) Faith and love protect our hearts from much evil
 - 2) Faith comes from the word of God, and love comes from Him who is the Word
- **Ro 10:17; 1 Jn 3:16**
 - b. Such as the hope of salvation as a helmet
 - 1) Our hope of salvation protects our mind from much fear and doubt
 - 2) Hope also comes from the word of God - cf. **Ro 15:4**
- Compare this description of “armor” with one more detailed - **Ep 6:11-18**
2. Encouraged to wait because God has appointed us to salvation - **1 Th 5:9-10**
 - a. He has not appointed us to wrath
 - 1) A day of wrath is coming - cf. **Ro 2:4-11**
 - 2) Yet Jesus has come to deliver us from that wrath - **1 Th 1:10**
 - b. He has appointed us to salvation
 - 1) Through the blood of His Son - **Ro 5:8-10**
 - 2) So that whether we “wake or sleep” (live or die), we live together with Christ! - cf. **1 Th 4:14,17; Ph 1:21-23**

C. COMFORTED AND EDIFIED...

1. We are to comfort one another - **1 Th 5:11**
 - a. With the comfort we each receive from God - cf. **2 Co 1:3-4**
 - b. With the comfort of our hope we have in Christ - cf. **1 Th 4:18**
2. We are to edify (build up) one another - **1 Th 5:11**

- a. A goal we are to pursue - **Ro 14:19; 15:2**
- b. The primary work of the church is edification - **Ep 4:11-12,15-16**

CONCLUSION

1. Will we be prepared when Christ comes? It all depends...
 - a. Are we watchful? Are we serious about His coming?
 - b. Are we putting on the armor of God?
 - 1) With faith and love as a breastplate protecting our hearts?
 - 2) With the hope of salvation as a helmet protecting our minds?
 - c. Are we actively engaged in comforting and edifying our brethren?
-- If so, then we are truly *“sons of light and sons of the day”!*
2. Note what is absolutely necessary for us to be doing these things...
 - a. **The Word of God**
 - 1) Which builds faith and hope
 - 2) Which provides comfort
 - b. **The Church of God**
 - 1) Where love is to expressed among members
 - 2) Where comfort and edification is to be experienced by members

“Preparing For Christ’s Coming” cannot happen without diligent application of God’s Word and active participation in the Lord’s church. Have you been added by the Lord to His church (cf. **Ac 2:41,47**)? Are you continuing steadfastly in fellowship with a local church (cf. **Ac 2:42**)?

Edifying And Comforting One Another

1 Thessalonians 5:11

INTRODUCTION

1. To be prepared for the coming of the Lord, Paul exhorted Christians to be “*sons of light and sons of the day*” - cf. **1 Th 5:4-7**
 - a. Which necessitates putting on the armor of God - cf. **1 Th 5:8**
 - b. Which also includes edifying and comforting one another - cf. **1 Th 5:11**

2. This last charge to edify and comfort one another is just one of many “*one another*” passages in the New Testament; here are some of them:
 - a. Love one another - **Jn 13:34-35**
 - b. Be affectionate to one another, and honor one another - **Ro 12:10**
 - c. Serve one another - **Ga 5:13**
 - d. Bear with one another - **Ep 4:2**
 - e. Submit to one another - **Ep 5:21**
 - f. Be kind to one another, and forgive one another - **Ep 4:32**
 - g. Exhort one another - **He 3:13**

3. These are based upon the principle that we are “*members of one another*” - **Ro 12:5**
 - a. Implying an interdependence where we need one another
 - b. An interdependence felt and expressed most keenly in the local church

[In this lesson, I wish to focus our attention upon the charge to “*comfort each other and edify one another*”, especially in our relationship as members of the same congregation. We note first the command...]

I. COMFORT EACH OTHER

A. THE WORD “COMFORT”...

1. The Greek is **parakaleo**
 2. Lit., to call to one’s side, call for, summon
 3. Hence, either “an exhortation, or consolation, comfort” (Vine’s)
- **The picture is one where someone walks alongside of another, providing comfort, even exhortation**

B. SOURCES OF COMFORT...

1. Each member of the Godhead is a source of comfort
 - a. The God of all comfort - **2 Co 1:3; Ro 15:5**
 - b. The Lord Jesus Christ - **2 Th 2:16-17**
 - c. The Holy Spirit - **Ac 9:31**
2. The Word of God is a source of comfort
 - a. Such as the Old Testament writings - **Ro 15:4**

- b. As well as New Testament promises - **1 Th 4:18**
 - 3. Our brethren are to be a source of comfort - **1 Th 4:18; 5:11**
 - a. As Paul expected Tychicus to do for both the Ephesians and the Colossians - **Ep 6:21-22; Co 4:7-8**
 - b. As others had done for Paul - **Co 4:10-11**
- **We are blessed to have so many different sources of comfort available to us!**

C. RECEIVING THE COMFORT GOD INTENDS...

- 1. We must as individuals be in a right relationship with God - **1 Pe 3:12**
 - a. Which involves doing the Father's will - **Mt 7:21-23**
 - b. Which involves keeping the Lord's commandments - **Jn 14:21-23**
 - 2. We must as individuals feed upon the Word of God - **Ja 1:21**
 - a. The source of much comfort - **Ro 15:4**
 - b. Comfort that comes from the joy and peace it gives - **Psa 1:1-3; 119:165; Jer 15:16**
 - 3. We must as "members of one another" comfort one another - **1 Th 5:11**
 - a. With the comfort we each have received from God - **2 Co 1:3-4**
 - 1) Each of us receive comfort through our individual relationship with God
 - 2) Each of us receive comfort through our relationship with one another
 - b. Can we not see the importance of involvement in the local church?
 - 1) Unless we are active members, comforting one another...
 - 2) We miss out, and brethren miss out, on the comfort God offers His people!
- **God intends for us to receive comfort from two angles: 1) horizontally, through our relationship with Him, and 2) vertically, through our relationship with one another in the local church!**

[Why deprive ourselves of the great blessing of comfort from God? Why shortchange ourselves when God desires us to have comfort "coming and going"? We hurt not only ourselves, but also our brethren! Don't forget Jesus' words in **Mt 25:41-46**. Consider now also the charge to...]

II. EDIFY ONE ANOTHER

A. THE WORD "EDIFY" ...

- 1. The Greek is **oikodomeo**
 - 2. Lit., to build a house
 - 3. Used metaphorically, in the sense of "edifying," promoting the spiritual growth and development of character of believers, by teaching or by example (Vine's)
- **Each person is undergoing a spiritual construction project, aided by the efforts of those around him or her**

B. THE IMPORTANCE OF EDIFICATION...

- 1. Building up one another is something to "pursue" - **Ro 14:19**
 - 2. We need to be careful not to "destroy the work of God" - **Ro 14:20**
 - 3. We must be willing to bear with one another if it means edification - **Ro 15:1-3**
- **Building each other up is an obligation that has been placed upon all Christians!**

C. ACCOMPLISHING THE EDIFICATION GOD INTENDS...

1. It is done through the church, which Christ designed to edify or build up its members - cf. **Ep 4:11-12; 1 Co 14:26**
2. It is done through the working of each individual member, doing his or her part - **Ep 4:16**
3. It is done through kind and graceful words to one another - **Ep 4:29**
- **The key point is this: edification (like comfort) takes place through our involvement with one another in the local church!**

CONCLUSION

1. To the Thessalonians, Paul was able to follow-up his command to comfort and edify one another with this statement: **“...just as you also are doing.” - 1 Th 5:11**
 - a. They were already comforting one another
 - b. They were already edifying one another-- Yet like the command to love another, there is always the need to abound more and more - cf. **1 Th 4:9-10**
2. Could Paul have said the same of us as a church? Of you as a Christian?
 - a. Are we engaged in the ministry of providing comfort and edification to our brethren?
 - b. If you are not an active member of a local congregation, how can you?-- May this command of God motivate us to examine ourselves and our relationships with our brethren in the congregation where we work and worship!

If Paul could have written the same to us (“...*just as you also are doing.*”), then keep up the good work, and remember the words given to encourage another congregation:

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”
- 1 Co 15:58

Our Duty To Those Who Serve

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

INTRODUCTION

1. As “sons of light and sons of the day” (**1 Th 5:5**), we have a duty to comfort and edify one another - cf. **1 Th 5:11**
2. This duty is true of all us who are members of the body of Christ - e.g., **Ep 4:15-16**
 - a. Each member has a part in which he or she does their share
 - b. When all are working, the body grows through the edifying of itself in love
3. Yet the Lord has also blessed His body with those who edify the body through their service in certain capacities - cf. **Ep 4:11-12**
 - a. Such as evangelists, pastors, teachers
 - b. Whose purpose is for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ

[In the text for our study (**1 Th 5:12-13**), we are told of “**Our Duty Toward Those Who Serve**” us by their function in the church of Christ. Observe that we are commanded...]

I. TO RECOGNIZE THEM

A. THOSE WHO LABOR AMONG YOU...

1. This would include those who serve as:
 - a. Elders (also known as pastors, bishops), whose duty is to watch and feed the local congregation - **Ac 14:23; 20:17,28; 1 Pe 5:1-2; 1 Ti 3:1-7; Ti 1:5-9**
 - b. Deacons, who minister to the needs of the congregation - **Ph 1:1; 1 Ti 3:8-13**
 - c. Evangelists, whose ministry is to the Word of God, proclaiming the good news to both sinner and saint - **Ep 4:11; 2 Ti 4:5,2; 1 Ti 4:16**
 - d. Teachers, who provide instruction in the doctrine of Christ - **Ep 4:11; Ac 13:1-2; 1 Co 12:28-29; Ti 2:3-5**
 - 1) Such as those who teach our children
 - 2) And those who teach the lost in our families and community
 2. There are others who labor among us in other areas...
 - a. Those who minister through exhortation, giving, showing mercy (such as in visiting the sick) - **Ro 12:6-8**
 - b. Those who use their talents to do good deeds, as did Dorcas - **Ac 9:36-39**
 - c. Those who keep up the facilities in which we meet to worship
 - 1) Cleaning the building, preparing the communion
 - 2) Pruning the yard, maintain the baptistery and other aspects of the building
- **In every active congregation, there is much labor going on; do we recognize those who often labor quietly for our benefit?**

B. THOSE WHO ARE OVER YOU...

1. "In the Lord"
 - a. This has particular reference to the elders (pastors, bishops)
 - b. They are the only ones given authority "over" us in the Lord - **Ac 20:28; 1 Pe 5:1-2;**
cf. **He 13:7,17**
 2. "And admonish you"
 - a. The duty of elders often require them to admonish and warn - **Ti 1:9**
 - b. That is why they must be qualified to teach - **1 Ti 3:2**
- **Any congregation with men qualified to serve as elders should certainly be careful to recognize them as such, and respect their God-given duty**

[While the context may have special application to our duty toward those who serve as elders, I believe we are not amiss to apply it toward those who serve in other capacities as well. Certainly it is appropriate regarding those who serve us in any role...]

II. TO ESTEEM THEM

A. VERY HIGHLY IN LOVE...

1. To hold them in high regard, to honor them
 - a. We are to prefer all brethren in honor - cf. **Ro 12:10; Ph 2:3**
 - b. How much more those who expend their time and energy in serving us!
2. To do so in love
 - a. We are to love all brethren - cf. **1 Pe 2:17; Jn 13:34-35**
 - b. How much more those who expend their time and energy in serving us!

B. FOR THEIR WORK'S SAKE...

1. Certainly the work of elders is worthy of high esteem
 - a. They feed us, they watch over us, they provide examples for us - **1 Pe 5:1-3**
 - b. They must give an account for our souls - **He 13:17**
2. So also the work of all who serve their brethren
 - a. The work of deacons is worthy of high honor - **1 Ti 3:13**
 - b. Indeed, those who are serve are to be considered great in the kingdom of God! - cf. **Mt 20:25-28**

[We have a duty to esteem those who serve, to hold them in high regard. Not just because of who they are, but what they do! Do we both recognize and esteem our brethren for their work? Finally, note that in "**Our Duty To Those Who Serve**" we are...]

III. TO BE AT PEACE

A. AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES...

1. Peace among brethren, like unity, is a wonderful thing - **Psa 133:1**
2. It is a mark of heavenly wisdom, and provides the atmosphere in which much righteousness can be sown - **Ja 3:17-18**
3. It is certainly something we all should pursue - **Ro 14:17-19; He 12:14**

B. TO LIGHTEN THE LOAD OF THOSE WHO SERVE...

1. Those who serve (especially elders) have a heavy burden - e.g., **He 13:17**
 - a. They watch for our souls
 - b. They must give an account for our souls
2. We can make their load lighter - cf. **He 13:17**
 - a. Make their work a joy, contributing to peace through obedience and submission
 - b. Avoid adding unnecessary grief, which would not be good for us (what an understatement!)

CONCLUSION

1. As we wait for the coming for the Lord, we are blessed not to wait alone...
 - a. The Lord's church is here to comfort and edify us
 - b. There are individuals who labor among us, and are over us in the Lord
 - 1) Some meet our needs, making it easier for us to grow
 - 2) Others watch over us, and admonish us as necessary
 - For such blessings we ought to be thankful!
2. But we can do more than just be thankful...
 - a. We can recognize those who labor among us, and are over us
 - b. We can esteem them highly in love for their work's sake
 - c. We can be at peace among ourselves

Indeed, this is **"Our Duty To Those Who Serve"**. May God grant us the strength to give what is due those who give so much of their time, energy and love to us!

Our Duty To Those In Need

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

INTRODUCTION

1. We have noted earlier in our study of 1st Thessalonians that Paul describes Christians as:
 - a. “the children of light”
 - b. “the children of the day” - **1 Th 5:5**
2. As such, we have various responsibilities and duties...
 - a. To watch and be sober - **1 Th 5:6**
 - b. To put on the breastplate of faith and love, with hope as a helmet - **1 Th 5:8**
 - c. To comfort and edify one another - **1 Th 5:11**
3. In our previous study we noted “**Our Duty To Those Who Serve**”...
 - a. To recognize them - **1 Th 5:12**
 - b. To esteem them highly in love - **1 Th 5:13**

[Our responsibilities as “children of light” and “children of the day” continue as we now notice “**Our Duty To Those In Need**” (**1 Th 5:14-15**). Both in the church and out, there are those in need of help from Christians. Some may not even be aware of their need, yet our duty remains. For example, we have the duty to...]

I. WARN THE UNRULY (14)

A. IDENTIFYING THE UNRULY...

1. The Greek word (**ataktos**) means “disorderly, out of ranks”
 - a. Used often of soldiers who fall out of line
 - b. Deviating from the prescribed order of rule
2. The unruly Christian is one who does not abide by the teachings of the apostles
 - a. From the beginning, faithful Christians “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” - **Ac 2:42**
 - b. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to do the same - **1 Th 4:1,2; 2 Th 2:15**

B. WARNING THE UNRULY...

1. Warning brethren is a crucial component of preaching Christ - cf. **Co 1:28**
 - a. Paul warned the brethren at Ephesus - **Ac 20:31**
 - b. He encouraged Timothy to do the same - **2 Ti 4:1-2**
2. Unruly brethren who do not heed the warning are to be marked and fellowship withdrawn - e.g., **2 Th 3:6-15**
 - a. In an effort to save the unruly
 - b. Also an effort to keep the church pure - cf. **1 Co 5:1-13**

[For those who are unruly, their need is to be warned. We should never fault those brethren who fulfill

their duty to “warn the unruly”, but be thankful they have the concern and the courage to do so! Next we learn of the duty to...]

II. COMFORT THE FAINTHEARTED (14)

A. IDENTIFYING THE FAINTHEARTED...

1. The Greek word (**oligopsuchos**) literally means “small-souled, little-souled”
 - a. Translated “feble-minded” (KJV), “timid” (NIV)
 - b. It describes those who lose heart, prone to dropping out, be quitters
2. Various conditions might lead some to lose heart; for example:
 - a. Persecutions, tribulation - **Ep 3:13**
 - b. Lack of immediate results - **Ga 6:9**

B. COMFORTING THE FAINTHEARTED...

1. Such brethren are to be encouraged, consoled
 - a. Paul had done this while at Thessalonica - **1 Th 2:11-12**
 - b. He did it earlier in this epistle - **1 Th 4:13-18**
2. Thus we see need to make a distinction
 - a. Some brethren (the unruly) need to be warned, admonished
 - b. While others (the fainthearted) may need a more tender touch, to be encouraged

[Another duty similar to comforting the fainthearted is to...]

III. UPHOLD THE WEAK (14)

A. IDENTIFYING THE WEAK...

1. The weak could be those in need - cf. **Ac 20:35**
2. But more likely it refers to those whose faith is weak
 - a. Who are likely to violate their weak consciences - e.g., **1 Co 8:7-13**
 - b. Who are tempted to sin

B. UPHOLDING THE WEAK...

1. We uphold the weak by receiving them - cf. **Ro 14:1-3**
 - a. Not to argue over things in which they have doubts
 - b. Nor to despise them because of their weak faith
2. We uphold the weak by bearing with their scruples - cf. **Ro 15:1-2**
 - a. Making an effort not to put stumbling blocks in their way - **Ro 14:13**
 - b. Determining not to destroy our brother through the use of our liberties - **Ro 14:14-23; Ga 5:13**

[Brethren who are weak in faith need time to grow, for their consciences to become strong. Our duty is for “*each of us to please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification*” (**Ro 15:2**). Finally, we notice several sundry duties...]

IV. TOWARD ALL MEN (14-15)

A. BE PATIENT WITH ALL...

1. Certainly we are to be patient with the fainthearted and the weak
2. We are also to be patient with those we teach
 - a. Even when it is time to rebuke (warn the unruly) - cf. **2 Ti 4:2**
 - b. Even when we are dealing with those who oppose us - cf. **2 Ti 2:24-26**

B. RENDER NOT EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE...

1. A principle taught by our Lord - **Mt 5:44-45**
2. Expounded upon by Paul in his epistle to the Romans - **Ro 12:17-21**
3. Repeated by Peter in his epistle - **1 Pe 3:9**

C. PURSUE WHAT IS GOOD...

1. For **yourselves**
 - a. Such as things that make for peace and edify one another - **Ro 14:19**
 - b. Such as righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness - **1 Ti 6:11**
 - c. Such as holiness - **He 12:14**
2. For **all**
 - a. Such as things honorable, and honor itself - **Ro 12:17; 1 Pe 2:17**
 - b. Such as things that are good - **Ga 6:10**
 - c. Such as civil obedience, kind words, gentleness and meekness - **Ti 3:1-2**
 - d. Such as prayers in their behalf, and a knowledge of the truth leading to their salvation - **1 Ti 2:1-4**

CONCLUSION

1. Such is “**Our Duty To Those In Need**”...
 - a. To warn the unruly
 - b. To comfort the fainthearted
 - c. To uphold the weak
 - d. To be patient with all
 - e. To render no evil for evil with anyone
 - f. To pursue what is good for us and for all
2. In a world filled with much evil and moral depravity, those who do such things are truly...
 - a. “children of light”
 - b. “children of the day”

Is this true of us? If not, then we need to heed another exhortation from Paul:

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by

them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”

“Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.’”

- Ep 5:8-14

Brethren, are we sleeping?

Our Duty To Ourselves

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

INTRODUCTION

1. In 1st Thessalonians chapter five, we continue to note our various responsibilities as...
 - a. “the children of light”
 - b. “the children of day” - cf. **1 Th 5:5**

2. In recent studies, we have considered...
 - a. **“Our Duties To Those Who Serve” - 1 Th 5:12-13**
 - 1) To recognize them
 - 2) To esteem them highly in love
 - b. **“Our Duties To Those In Need” - 1 Th 5:14-15**
 - 1) To warn the unruly
 - 2) To comfort the fainthearted
 - 3) To uphold the weak
 - 4) To be patient with all
 - 5) To render to no one evil for evil
 - 6) To pursue what is good for us and for all

3. Our duties are not just directed toward others, we have some that address our own spiritual well-being...
 - a. Three such duties are mentioned in our text for this lesson - **1 Th 5:16-18**
 - 1) To rejoice always
 - 2) To pray without ceasing
 - 3) To give thanks in everything
 - b. Note that Paul says these things are *“the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”*
 - 1) These three things are what God wants us to do for ourselves
 - 2) Therefore I have entitled this study **“Our Duties To Ourselves”**

[It is in the fulfillment of these three duties that we strengthen ourselves spiritually and emotionally , enabling us to be better fit to serve God and others. Consider first our duty to...]

I. REJOICE ALWAYS

A. THE NEED TO REJOICE ALWAYS...

1. In joy there is great strength - cf. **Neh 8:10**
2. When we have joy in what we believe, we abound in hope - cf. **Ro 15:13**
3. When we are joyful, it helps those around us to be joyful - e.g., **2 Co 2:3**
-- To be joyful, to be merry, is crucial to remaining strong ourselves, and being a source of strength to others - cf. **Pro 15:13,15; 17:22**

B. THE WAY TO REJOICE ALWAYS...

1. It is in the Lord that we find the ability to “rejoice always” - cf. **Ph 4:4**
 - a. His salvation is the source of much joy - cf. **Psa 21:1**
 - b. He grants joy to those who please Him - **Ecc 2:26; 5:20**

- c. His mercy is a source of great joy - **Psa 31:7**
 - d. In His presence there is fullness of joy, and He will abide with us if we obey His commands - **Psa 16:11; cf. Jn 14:21,23**
2. To rejoice in the Lord always, follow these simple guidelines:
- a. Read and feed upon the Word of God daily - cf. **Jer 15:16**
 - b. Meditate upon the teachings of Christ and His apostles
 - 1) Jesus spoke that His disciples joy might be full - **Jn 15:11**
 - 2) The apostles wrote that our joy might be full - **1 Jn 1:4**
 - c. Spend time with brethren who make us happy
 - 1) As Titus' joy encouraged Paul - **2 Co 7:13**
 - 2) As Philemon's love and joy refreshed the hearts of others and gave Paul joy - **Phile 7, 20**
 - d. Lead others to Christ, for they will be a great source of joy
 - 1) As the Thessalonians were to Paul - **1 Th 2:19-20; 3:9**
 - 2) As Philemon was to Paul - **Phile 1:7**
 - 3) As John's converts made him joyful - **3 Jn 4**
 - e. Sing praises of joy to God
 - 1) Certainly we should sing when cheerful - **Ja 5:13**
 - 2) But we can also find joy by singing praises (cf. "Sing and Be Happy") - **Psa 71:23; 104:33-34; 135:3**

[By being "proactive" and following these guidelines, it is possible to "*rejoice always*" even when external circumstances are not conducive to creating joy (cf. Paul and Silas, singing and praying in prison, **Ac 16:25**). Of course, what helps to "rejoice always" is to...]

II. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

A. THE NEED TO PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

- 1. In prayer we find mercy and grace to help in time of need - **He 4:14-16**
- 2. In prayer we find forgiveness of sins as we confess them - **1 Jn 1:9**
- 3. In prayer we find the peace of God, so helpful in anxious times - **Ph 4:6-7**

B. THE WAY TO PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

- 1. Having "set times" to pray can help create the habit of praying
 - a. E.g., consider the example of David and Daniel
 - 1) David, whom God described as "a man after My own heart" - **Psa 55:17**
 - 2) Daniel, whom the angel described as "O man greatly beloved" - **Dan 6:10**
 - These great men of God made it a habit to pray at set times throughout the day; we would do well to imitate their example
 - b. At the very least...
 - 1) Find some time each day to be alone with God in prayer
 - a) Early morning may be best for some
 - b) Others might find it easier to be alone late at night
 - 2) Make it a special time to be alone with your Heavenly Father!
- 2. We should not limit prayers to "set times", special needs may call for special praying
 - a. Jesus, praying on important occasions - **Lk 6:12-13**

- b. Paul, praying in trying circumstances - **Ac 16:25**
- c. Nehemiah - praying on the spur of the moment - **Neh 2:4-5**

[Having “set times” helps to develop experience and persistence in praying; praying “spontaneously” as needs arise develops the disposition to pray in every circumstance. Together, they fulfill the command to “pray without ceasing”. What helps us even further is if we...]

III. GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING

A. THE NEED TO GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING...

1. Ingratitude is very displeasing to God
 - a. It is included among other sins that would be prevalent in “perilous times” - **2 Ti 3:1-5**
 - b. The wrath of God will be revealed against those who are unthankful - **Ro 1:18-21**
2. Christians should be known for their “attitude of gratitude”
 - a. Thankful for what the Father has done for us - **Co 1:12-14**
 - b. Abounding in thanksgiving - **Co 2:7**
 - c. A part of the “garment” we are to put on - **Co 3:12-15**
 - d. A complement to our prayers - **Co 4:2; 1 Ti 2:1**
3. Thankfulness added to our prayers is the key to...
 - a. Overcoming anxiety - **Ph 4:6**
 - b. Obtaining the peace of God which surpasses understanding - **Ph 4:6-7**

B. THE WAY TO GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING...

1. Remember that all things can work for our good - **Ro 8:28**
 - a. We can therefore glory in tribulation - **Ro 5:3-5**
 - b. We can rejoice in persecution - **Mt 5:10-12**
 - c. We can rejoice in trials - **Ja 1:2-3**
2. Include thankfulness along with our prayer requests - **Ph 4:6**
 - a. Just as Daniel made the giving of thanks as part of his daily prayers - **Dan 6:10**
 - b. As we “pray without ceasing”, so we will be “thankful without ceasing”!

CONCLUSION

1. What is God’s will for us in Christ Jesus?
 - a. To be a thankful people!
 - b. To be a prayerful people!
 - c. To be a joyful people!
2. These three are intertwined, with one leading to another...
 - a. The more thankful we are, the more prayerful we will be
 - b. The more prayerful we are, the more joyful we will be
 - Thus the key to much joy in Christ begins with the “attitude of gratitude”!

In our zeal to fulfill our duties to those who serve and to those in need, do not overlook these duties we have to ourselves...they can help us be more productive in the service we render to the Lord and to all!

Our Duty To The Truth

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

INTRODUCTION

1. The last chapter of 1st Thessalonians is filled with exhortations to various duties that we have as Christians awaiting the coming of the Lord...
 - a. Our duty to those who serve - **1 Th 5:12-13**
 - b. Our duty to those in need - **1 Th 5:14-15**
 - c. Our duty to ourselves - **1 Th 5:16-18**

2. Before Paul closes his epistle with a final blessing and admonition, he list another series of exhortations...
 - a. Do not quench the Spirit - **1 Th 5:19**
 - b. Do not despise prophecies - **1 Th 5:20**
 - c. Test all things; hold fast what is good - **1 Th 5:21**
 - d. Abstain from every form of evil - **1 Th 5:22**-- Taken together, we can categorize these exhortations as **“Our Duty To The Truth”**

[What is our obligation to the truth? What does God expect of us regarding the reception of truth, and that which proves to be error? From the exhortations in our text, we can say first...]

I. DO NOT STIFLE REVELATION OF THE TRUTH

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TRUTH...

1. In Proverbs, we are exhorted to *“buy the truth, and do not sell it...”* - **Pro 23:23**
2. Why is truth so important? In Psalms we learn...
 - a. God’s truth preserves us - **Psa 40:11**
 - b. God’s truth is a shield and buckler - **Psa 91:4**
 - c. God’s truth provides atonement - **Pro 16:6**
3. Jesus taught regarding truth...
 - a. It provides freedom from the bondage of sin - **Jn 8:32**
 - b. It is the means by God sanctifies Jesus’ disciples - **Jn 17:17**-- In view of its benefits, we should never be guilty of stifling the truth!

B. THE REVELATION OF THE TRUTH...

1. God’s truth was made known through His Holy Spirit - **Jn 16:13**
 - a. In OT times, He did this through prophets - cf. **1 Pe 1:10-11 ; 2 Pe 1:20-21**
 - b. In NT times, He did this through the apostles and prophets of Jesus - cf. **Jn 16:13; 14:26**
2. These inspired apostles and prophets communicated God’s truth...
 - a. Through their spoken word - cf. **1 Pe 1:12**
 - b. Through their written word - cf. **Ep 3:3-5; 1 Co 14:37**
3. This truth was fully and finally revealed....

- a. Completed through the work of the apostles - **Ac 20:32; 2 Pe 1:3**
- b. Revealed one time for all times - **Ju 3**
- c. Thus we have that which can make us complete - cf. **2 Ti 3:16-17**
- 4. Today, if we desire to receive God's truth...
 - a. We cannot look to their spoken word, since they are no longer living
 - b. We must look to their written Word, i.e., the Bible
 - c. We must accept God's Word in its entirety - cf. **Psa 119:160**

C. THE SUPPRESSION OF THE TRUTH...

- 1. Mankind has a history of resisting God's truth...
 - a. Israel suffered this affliction - cf. **Hos 4:1**
 - b. The Gentiles likewise, especially the wise - cf. **Ro 1:18-23**
- 2. In New Testament times, Christians could be guilty of resisting truth also...
 - a. By "quenching the Spirit" - **1 Th 5:19**
 - 1) Refusing to heed what the Spirit was still making known at that time
 - 2) Cutting off the revelation of God's truth intended for them
 - b. By "despising prophecies" - **1 Th 5:20**
 - 1) Belittling the prophecies being made known through the prophets
 - 2) Refusing to accept what the prophets of God were revealing
- 3. Today, we can stifle the truth of God...
 - a. "Quenching the Spirit" through neglecting God's revealed Word
 - b. "Despising prophecies" through rejecting the apostles' teaching

[Through neglect or outright rejection of God's Word, we can be guilty of stifling the truth, and suffer the consequences of not having the benefits of truth in our lives. To avoid being misled by false prophets or false interpretations of God's word, we need to...]

II. EXAMINE ALL THINGS BY THE TRUTH

A. CLAIMS OF TRUTH NEED TO BE CHALLENGED...

- 1. As Paul wrote: "***Test*** (prove, KJV) ***all things***" - **1 Th 5:21a**
 - a. This is not quenching the Spirit nor despising prophecies
 - b. But a recognition that not all claims to be from God are true
- 2. As John wrote: "***...do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits***" - **1 Jn 4:1**
 - a. For many false prophets have come into the world
 - b. It is not quenching the Spirit to test what people claim is a revelation from God

B. EXAMINING CLAIMS OF TRUTH...

- 1. The Bereans provide a noble example - **Ac 17:11**
 - a. They received the word with all readiness (i.e., they paid careful attention to what Paul said)
 - b. They searched the Scriptures daily (to see if what Paul taught was true)
 - This is how the Bereans tested Paul's teaching, for which they were commended as being "fair-minded"
- 2. In examining all things by the truth today, we need to...
 - a. Give people a fair hearing - **Ac 17:11**

- b. Search the Scriptures daily, looking at God's word in its entirety - **Psa 119:160**
- c. Accepting that which is in harmony with the apostles' teaching, and rejecting that which is not - cf. **1 Jn 4:6; Ac 2:42**

[**“Our Duty To Truth”** does not end with simply believing the truth and rejecting that which is false, we must also “hold fast what is good” (**1 Th 5:21**). I take this to mean we must...]

III. APPLY THE TRUTH IN OUR LIVES

A. WITH PROPER ATTITUDES...

1. A prayerful attitude, like David possessed - e.g., **Psa 86:11**
2. A meek spirit, allowing God's word to be implanted - **Ja 1:21**

B. WITH RIGHT ACTIONS...

1. In deed, not just in word; e.g., our love - **1 Jn 3:18-19**
2. We must be doers of the Word (truth), not hearers only - **Ja 1:22-25**
3. Thereby walking in the truth, which delights those who see you - **3 Jn 3-4**

[Our duty is to hold fast what we find to be true, to practice what we believe to be true. At the same time, we must also...]

IV. ABSTAIN FROM WHAT THE TRUTH DEFINES AS EVIL

A. THE TRUTH DECLARES THAT EVIL EXISTS...

1. There is that which is false, that which is wicked - e.g., **Exo 23:7**
2. Those who do evil, do not want to hear that which is true - **Jn 3:19-21**

B. THE TRUTH DEMANDS THAT WE ABSTAIN FROM EVIL...

1. When we are not valiant for truth, we will become progressively worse - **Jer 9:3**
2. Therefore we must *“abstain from every form of evil”* - **1 Th 5:22**
 - a. KJV has “appearance” instead of “form”
 - 1) Leading many commentators to conclude that we must always abstain from that which may “seem” to be wrong (e.g., Barnes, Clarke)
 - 2) Yet Jesus did things that “appeared” to be wrong; e.g., eating with sinners which appeared to be toleration of their evil deeds - **Mt 9:11**
 - b. The Greek word is **eidous** - “As commonly explained, abstain from everything that even ‘looks like’ evil. But the word signifies ‘form or kind.’ Compare Luke 3:22; John 5:37, and see nearly the same phrase in Joseph. ‘Ant. x. 3, 1.’ It never has the sense of ‘semblance.’ Moreover, it is impossible to abstain from everything that looks like evil.” (**Vincent’s Word Studies**)
 - c. “‘Abstain from every form of evil,’ i. e., every sort or kind of evil (not ‘appearance,’ KJV). This meaning was common in the papyri, the Greek writings of the closing centuries, B. C., and the New Testament era.” (**Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words**)
3. This we do by taking heed to both our thoughts and our actions
 - a. Thinking on things that are true - **Ph 4:8**

- b. Walking righteously and speaking uprightly - cf. **Isa 33:15-16**

CONCLUSION

1. **“Our Duty To The Truth”** is made clear in our text...
 - a. Do not stifle revelation of the truth
 - b. Examine all things by the truth
 - c. Apply the truth in our lives
 - d. Abstain from what the truth defines as evil-- Because of the benefits that comes from knowing and walking in the truth, we should be careful to fulfill “Our Duty To The Truth!”

2. What about those who do not have a love for the truth?
 - a. They will be susceptible to the lying wonders and unrighteous deception of the lawless one - cf. **2 Th 2:9-10**
 - b. Having no love for truth, God will harden their hearts even further by sending them a strong delusion - **2 Th 2:11**
 - c. Not believing the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness, they will be condemned - **2 Th 2:12**

We must therefore have the prayer and attitude of David regarding God’s truth:

*“Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.” - Psa 25:5*

Is that your prayer? Is that your attitude? Are you walking in the truth?

Closing Prayer And Final Admonitions

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study of First Thessalonians, we have seen that the epistle divides itself into two sections...
 - a. Personal reflections (1-3)
 - 1) Regarding their condition - **1:1-10**
 - 2) Regarding his conduct - **2:1-12**
 - 3) Regarding his concern - **2:13-3:13**
 - b. Apostolic instructions (4-5)
 - 1) Walk in holiness - **4:1-8**
 - 2) Walk in love - **4:9-10**
 - 3) Walk in diligence - **4:11-12**
 - 4) Walk in hope - **4:13-18**
 - 5) Walk in light - **5:1-11**
 - 6) Walk in obedience - **5:12-28**
2. Mention is made of the Second Coming of Christ in every chapter, and so I offered “**Holiness In View Of The Coming Of Christ**” as the theme of the epistle
3. In the final verses of Paul’s letter, we find words that certainly fit in with such a theme...
 - a. In the form of a closing prayer
 - b. In the form of final admonitions

[While this prayer was offered in behalf of the Thessalonians, it expresses what must be the sentiment that God has for all His children. That being so, let’s take a few moments to first reflect upon...]

I. PAUL’S CLOSING PRAYER (23-24)

A. THAT THEY BE SANCTIFIED...

1. That is, “set apart for a holy purpose”
 - a. As stated earlier, this is God’s will for them - **1 Th 4:3a**
 - b. Especially in regard to sexual purity - **1 Th 4:3b-4**
 2. By God Himself
 - a. He who is described as the “God of peace” - cf. **Ph 4:9; He 13:20**
 - b. Which He does through the Word of God - cf. **Jn 17:17; Ac 20:32; 1 Pe 1:22-23**
 3. Completely
 - a. Not just in part, but in whole
 - b. As mentioned momentarily, in body, soul and spirit - **1 Th 5:23b**
- Of course, we must cooperate with God if this prayer is to be answered in our lives - cf. **2 Ti 2:19-22**

B. THAT THEY BE PRESERVED BLAMELESS...

1. For which Paul prayed earlier in this epistle - **1 Th 3:13**
 - a. To be blameless in holiness
 - b. When? As here in **5:23**...at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!
 2. Preserved blameless, that is, without fault - cf. **Ju 24**
 - a. Which Jesus makes possible through His death - **Co 1:22**
 - b. Provided we remain faithful - **Co 1:23**
 - c. God is faithful, and will uphold His end; will we uphold ours? - cf. **1 Th 5:24**
 3. Blameless not just in spirit, but in soul and body
 - a. Often in the scriptures, the terms soul and spirit appear to be interchangeable, referring to that part of man which continues after death - cf. **Mt 10:28; Re 6:9; 20:4; Ecc 12:7; He 12:23**
 - b. They are also used to distinguish one from the other (**He 4:12**), in which case...
 - 1) Soul refers to the animal life, as distinguished from the mind or soul
 - 2) Spirit refers to the immaterial part of man that continues after death
- God is faithful, and can be counted on to help us answer this prayer; but against we must cooperate with God - cf. **Ph 2:12-16**

[To assist those who desire Paul's prayer to be answered in their lives, we now notice...]

II. PAUL'S FINAL ADMONITIONS (25-27)

A. PRAY FOR THE BRETHREN...

1. Paul requested that they pray for him - **1 Th 5:25**
 - a. Something he asked often of his brethren - e.g., **Ro 15:30-33; Ep 6:18-20**
 - b. Especially that the gospel might have free course - cf. **2 Th 3:1; Co 4:3**
2. Certainly we should pray for one another as well
 - a. When we sin - **1 Jn 5:16-17**
 - b. When we are sick - **Ja 5:14-16**
 - c. When we are serving the Lord - **2 Th 3:1**

-- If the prayer of one righteous man avails much, how much more the prayers of many righteous! Wouldn't we want the prayers of others on our behalf?

B. LOVE THE BRETHREN...

1. Paul charged that they greet the brethren with a holy kiss - **1 Th 5:26**
 - a. Something he did often in his epistles - e.g., **Ro 16:16; 1 Co 16: 20; 2 Co 13:12**
 - b. Greeting one another with a kiss was a common practice
 - 1) In those days, and in many eastern countries today
 - 2) "The custom hence arose in the early Church of passing the kiss through the congregation at the holy communion [Justin Martyr, *Apology*, 1.65; *Apostolic Constitutions*, 2.57], the men kissing the men, and the women the women, in the Lord. So in the Syrian Church each takes his neighbor's right hand and gives the salutation, 'Peace.'" - **JFB**
 - c. The emphasis appears to be greeting each other in love, and in holiness
2. Certainly we should have a deep love for one another
 - a. It is a mark of discipleship - **Jn 13:34-35**
 - b. It is a sign of true conversion - **1 Jn 3:14**

- Brethren who truly love one another will help each other stay on the straight and narrow, to remain sanctified and blameless in anticipation of the Lord's return!

C. READ THE SCRIPTURES...

1. Paul charged that this epistle be read to all the brethren - **1 Th 5:27**
 - a. As he did the letters to the Colossians and the Laodiceans - **Co 4:16**
 - b. Believing in the Word of God to build them up and give them the inheritance among all those who are sanctified - **Ac 20:32**
 2. We should not underestimate the importance of the Scriptures in our lives!
 - a. The means by which God sanctifies us - **Jn 17:17**
 - b. By which we are born again and have purified our souls - **1 Pe 1:22-25**
 - c. By which God brought us forth, and will save our souls - **Ja 1:18,21**
- Just as Paul commended his brethren to the Word of God, so we need to be committed to the Word of God if we desire that inheritance promised to those who are sanctified!

CONCLUSION

1. Paul ends his epistle with a simple prayer: ***"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."*** - **1 Th 5:28**
2. It is a prayer that we should all offer to one another...
 - a. Do we not all need grace?
 - b. Do we not all want the grace of the Lord in our lives?
3. It is a prayer that we can help fulfill in our own lives...
 - a. By praying for one another fervently
 - b. By loving one another in all purity
 - c. By reading the scriptures diligently
4. Doing such things will also help fulfill the prayer for God...
 - a. To sanctify us completely
 - b. To preserve our spirit, soul, and body blameless at the coming of the Lord!

My prayer is that our study of this brief epistle has encouraged us to always have **"Holiness In View Of The Coming Of Christ."** Are you getting ready for that great event...?

"And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." - 1 Th 3:12-13