

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

March 10, 2021

Series – The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

The Future Letters - Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians

Week One – Overview

Text – Thessalonians 1

Introduction

Acts 17 records the historical context of Paul's relationship with the people of Thessalonica and the church which he had established there. Acts 18:1 tells us that Paul arrives in Corinth, and it was from there that Paul would write the two letters to the Church at Thessalonica.

The Church at Thessalonica was the second city in Europe where the gospel was preached, after Philippi (approximately 100 miles away where Paul and Silas were put in jail). Paul ministered in Thessalonica for only a short time, but saw "some" Jews saved, as well as a multitude of Gentiles. Paul was forced to leave the city due to an uprising caused by the unbelieving Jews, and went to Berea first, then to Athens, and next to Corinth. When Paul arrived in Athens he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check up on the fledgling church in Thessalonica. Timothy met back up with Paul in Corinth, and Paul rejoiced to know that the church was doing great.

Thessalonica, known today as Thessaloniki and Salonika, was the Capitol of Macedonia and was located on the Aegean Sea. It was a very important political and commercial city located on the Via Ignacia, the main east-west highway connecting the Aegean Sea to the Adriatic Sea.

Not too far away from Thessalonica was a city called Pelia, which was the birthplace of Alexander the Great.

Warren Wiersbe states this regarding Thessalonica:

You can visit Thessalonica today, only the travel guide will call it Thessaloniki. (It used to be known as Salonika.) It is an important industrial and commercial city in modern Greece and is second to Athens in population. It served as an important Allied base during World War I. In World War II it was captured by the German army, and the Jewish population of about 60,000 persons was deported and exterminated.

It is an ancient city, originally named Therma from the many hot springs adjacent to it. In 315 b.c. it was renamed Thessalonica after the half-sister of Alexander the Great. When Rome conquered Macedonia in 168 b.c., the city was made capital of that entire province. In Paul's day 200,000 people lived there, most of them Greeks, but also many Romans and a strong Jewish minority. Today it has a population of 300,000, and is one of the few cities that has survived from the New Testament era of apostolic ministry.¹

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 2, p. 156). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Thessalonica was actually renamed by Casander who was married to Thessalonike, Alexander the Great's half-sister. Cassander was one of the four generals that divided the Greek Empire after the death of Alexander. He made Thessalonica the capital of his portion of the Greek Empire.

It was Cicero who said, "Thessalonica is in the bosom of the empire." It was right in the center or the heart of the empire and was the chief city of Macedonia.²

These letters were written on Paul's second missionary journey, probably around 51 – 52 AD. The date of this correspondence is confirmed historically because according to Acts 18:12, at the time of the writing of this letter from Corinth, Gallio was the deputy of Achaia. Gallio only served as deputy from 51 – 52. Gallio was referred to by Claudius as "my friend and proconsul" in an inscription (known as the Delphi Inscription), dated 52 AD and found early in the 20th Century at the Temple of Apollos.

Paul had a fruitful ministry when in Thessalonica. He saw a few Jews converted but also a "great multitude" of Gentiles, including many women. Some of the notable converts from Thessalonica were Jason who hosted Paul and his companions (Acts 17:17), and Aristarchus and Secundus (Acts 20:4)

Though Paul had only spent a very short time with this church, he wrote that they were "ensamples" to everybody in Macedonia and Achaia. (1 Thessalonians 1:7) He later stated in 2 Corinthians 5 that the saints from Thessalonica and all of Macedonia were great examples, especially in the area of giving:

"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." - (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

This was a very strong church considering that Paul had not been with them very long. The prevailing subject matter of both of Paul's letters was the Second Coming of Christ, which is a topic which we usually reserve for more mature, seasoned Christians.

John Phillips wrote this regarding the Letters to the Thessalonians:

The two Thessalonian epistles share a common theme—the second coming of Christ. The first Thessalonian letter emphasizes the rapture of the church; the second letter emphasizes the

² McGee, J. V. (1997). Thru the Bible commentary (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 367). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

rupture of the world. Both letters are tremendously relevant to the perilous times in which we live.³

Today, there is much debate regarding the timing of the “Rapture of the Church”. (1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18) The concept of a “pre-wrath” or “mid-trib” rapture is in vogue today. It is our firm position that Jesus will come down and catch away all believers before the beginning of the Tribulation Period. In our discussion of the Second Coming of Christ in these two letters, we will attempt to clarify that position.

Vernon McGee says this:

In 1 Thessalonians the emphasis is upon the Rapture of believers, the coming of Christ to take His church out of the world. The fact that the coming of Christ is a purifying hope should lead to sanctification in our lives. There are a lot of people today who want to argue prophecy, and there is a great deal of curiosity about it. But John tells us, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). This hope should have a purifying effect in our lives. I am not interested in how enthusiastic and excited you get over the truth of the Rapture of the church; I want to know how you are living. Does this hope get right down to where you are living, and does it change your life?

In 2 Thessalonians the emphasis shifts to the coming of Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom. There is a great deal of difference in our being caught up to meet the Lord in the air and His coming down to the earth to establish His kingdom. I think there is a lot of upside down theology today. We need to make a distinction between our being caught up and His coming down.⁴

1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 both state that the letters were from “Paul, and Sylvanus (Silas), and Timotheus”. Timothy and Silas were reunited with Paul after Paul arrived in Corinth. Though these letters were written with the full cooperation and support of Silas and Timothy, Paul was the writer.

Both 1st and 2nd Thessalonians are known for their eschatological importance, but after careful examination we will also see many instructions that are pertinent to the health of a church corporately, and to believers individually. These letters are just as much pastoral in content as they are eschatological.

I 1 Thessalonians

Memory Verses:

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in

³ Phillips, J. (2009). Exploring 1 & 2 Thessalonians: An Expository Commentary. Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp.

⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997). Thru the Bible commentary (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 368). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."
(1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)

A Key Verses – 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 3:10; 3:12 – 13; 4:1; 4:13 - 14

B The Context of the Letter

See Acts 17:1 – 15; 1 Thessalonians 3: 1 - 6

C The Content of the Letter

The first letter to the Thessalonians was written for a variety of reasons. I believe one of the primary original purposes was to encourage and establish this brand-new church, which was made up of mostly Gentile believers. You will note that there is not one Old Testament reference in this letter. However, beyond the original purpose regarding the immediate context of Thessalonica, the Holy Spirit teaches several important principles for all saints through this letter, especially regarding the second coming of Christ.

McGee says this regarding 1 Thessalonians:

The epistle has a threefold purpose: (1) To confirm young converts in the elementary truth of the gospel; (2) to condition them to go on unto holy living; and (3) to comfort them regarding the return of Christ. Paul's message offered a marked contrast to the paganism and heathenism which were present in Thessalonica. A heathen inscription in Thessalonica read: "After death no reviving, after the grave no meeting again."

1 Paul Delights in His Assurance of the Strength of the Church (1:1 – 10)

This church was doing very well considering that it was made up mostly of Gentiles who would have been ignorant about the God of Israel; and also considering the fact that Paul was only in Thessalonica for a short time – possibly only three weeks. (Acts 17:1 – 2) Complicating matters further was the fact that the church did not have trained leadership, though we know that Timothy went back to Thessalonica for a while when Paul was at Athens to "establish" them and "comfort" them concerning their faith. (1 Thessalonians 3:1 - 2)

a. Paul's Remembrance and Appreciation for the Church at Thessalonica (vs. 1 – 5)

This letter, unlike Paul's previous letter to the Galatians, was written to a specific church. However, the Holy Spirit inspired this letter with the intention that it would be used to instruct and encourage churches and believers throughout the Church Age.

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." - (2 Peter 1:20-21)

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." - (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

In verse 2, Paul communicates his appreciation for the faithfulness of the church and he also assures them that he is praying for them. Sometimes when we read these salutations in Paul's letters we are tempted to just glance over them without much consideration. Paul was not just being polite with these opening verses. These were true statements that indicated how he really felt about this church. The great Apostle Paul spent time, probably daily, remembering specific people and perhaps even the special needs of this church. What a blessing it is to know that there are people who are really praying for you.

In verse 3, Paul lists specific strengths that this young church is exhibiting. He mentions their:

Work of Faith - this could have to do with their tremendous growth in the faith, which would obviously require some diligence on their part. They would have to give themselves to studying and learning the principles that they were taught by Paul and Timothy. It takes work to grow in faith.

*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a **workman** that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." - (2 Timothy 2:15)*

An increase in faith will also, however, bring about an increase in service (work) for the Lord.

Labour of Love – this could have to do with serving God's people generally through various types of ministry, but it also may specifically be a reference to this church's reputation of being a giving church. (2 Corinthians 8:1 – 5) The only other time this phrase is used in the Bible is in Hebrews:

*"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and **labour of love**, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." - (Hebrews 6:10)*

One thing is for the sure – faith inside of us will eventually work its way out of us and be a blessing to the people around us.

Patience of Hope – this has to do with the persecution that the Christians were enduring in Thessalonica, and their patient faithfulness as they awaited the return of Christ. In America today, we may not be able to understand the attitude of these believers and many others Christians at other periods of time in history and also in some places in the world today. We live luxuriously here without much persecution. We enjoy much of what this life can offer. However, during times of persecution, suffering people of faith look forward with anxious anticipation for Heaven.

Paul will help clarify their understanding of the Second Coming later on in this letter and also in 2 Thessalonians.

In verse 4, Paul mentions that this church's "election" is evident. The word, "knowing" has to do with perception. In other words, Paul is saying that their election can be easily seen.

Don't get hung up on the word "election". The "elect" are simply those who have genuinely received Christ as their Saviour. Though God is sovereign and obviously foreknows all who are and will be saved, He does not force salvation upon anybody and neither will He turn away anyone who comes to him in repentance and faith. The elect is made up of the "whosoever wills".

In verse 5, Paul reflects on the power and presence of God that was obviously visible when Paul was communicating the gospel to them when he visited Thessalonica. God moved mightily. Paul uses the phrase "much assurance", not only referring to the assurance of salvation experienced by the recipients of God's grace, but also the assurance that Paul and his fellow ministers had of the genuineness of God's hand upon the Thessalonians.

*"But ye shall receive **power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."* - (Acts 1:8)

b. The Church's Reputation and Impact on the Surrounding Areas (vs. 6 – 10)

In verses 6 and 7 Paul explains that the Thessalonians were first followers, and then were "ensamples".

Notice, however, that they followed the ministers and the Lord.

Paul encouraged believers to follow him as long as he was following the Lord.

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." - (1 Corinthians 11:1)

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." - (Philippians 3:17)

We are to follow those faithful people that the Lord puts over us to minister to us as long as they continue obediently following the Lord.

Hebrews 13 admonishes us to remember, obey, and salute (honor) those that rule over us in the ministry:

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." - (Hebrews 13:7)

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." - (Hebrews 13:17)

"Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you." - (Hebrews 13:24)

If we are good followers, then we will also learn to become good leaders ("ensamples"). The word "ensample" in verse seven is τύπος (typos), meaning a type, pattern, or picture. Our lives should be pictures of Christ to the world around us. Notice, however, that this church was an example to other believers. Their zeal, their faith, and their sacrifice were encouraging the other churches in Greece and, according to verse 8, had also "spread abroad" to other places as well. Paul stated that he did not have to say anything about this church to others because their reputation was well known.

Verses 9 and 10 state that other churches were well aware of Paul's ministry and the tremendous hand of God upon the City of Thessalonica, with many Gentiles "turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God". This is what true repentance is all about – a turning from and a turning to. Bible separation is also not just from something, but also to something.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God," - (Romans 1:1)

The final thought from this chapter has to do with one the main subjects of the letter – the Second Coming. This church was waiting for the return of Christ. Notice that Paul clearly states here that the Lord has delivered us (the Church) from the wrath to come. We will not go through the Tribulation Period. Amen!

2 Paul Defends an Attack Against His Ministry (2:1 – 20)

a. Paul's Defense of His Ministry (vs. 1 – 12)

Paul reminded the church that even though he had paid a dear price for his ministry in Macedonia, it was not in vain. Paul and Silas were "shamefully entreated" in Philippi when he was put in jail and beaten for preaching the gospel, and received the same animosity from the Jews once they arrived in Thessalonica.

Apparently, Paul was also accused of using the ministry for his own profit. He emphasizes here in these verses that he was not deceitful (v. 3), was not flattering and covetous (v. 5), did not seek glory (v. 6), nor did he want their money (vs. 6 & 9). Instead, Paul reminds them that he and his companions were willing to put up with contention (v. 2), and they behaved themselves holily, justly, and unblameably (v. 10). His motives were totally pure. He treated them the way a good father treats his child (v. 11). Paul wanted nothing from the Thessalonians, except their salvation and the blessings of God on their lives.

This passage should clarify the misconception that some have regarding preachers who sometimes have to work a secular job in order to support themselves and their families. I believe that a true man of God should be willing to do whatever is necessary in order to feed

his family while he also ministers to his flock. However, I also believe that the church should also do whatever is necessary to take care of their pastor. Paul frequently worked as a tentmaker in order to support his ministry. (2 Thessalonians 3:8) He was also reluctant to take money from Corinth, though he later apologized to them for not allowing them to support him.

"And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." - (2 Corinthians 11:9)

"For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong." - (2 Corinthians 12:13)

See 1 Corinthians 9:1 – 18 for more of Paul's teaching on this.

b. The Church's Determination to Persevere (vs. 13 – 16)

Paul commends the church because they had received and obeyed the Word of God even though it was causing them a lot of persecution. Paul stated that they reminded him of the Church at Jerusalem who also was persecuted by their fellow countrymen. It would seem that the Gentiles in Thessalonica were being persecuted by other Gentiles.

It is interesting that Paul who was once the most vehement persecutor of the Christians in Judaea, is now commenting on the persecution that they (v. 14) had received as well as the attacks that he and his companions have had to endure as servants of the Lord Jesus. ("us" – vs. 15 & 16)

c. Paul's Desire to See Them Again (vs. 17 – 20)

Paul expressed his longing to visit Thessalonica again but stated that he had been "hindered" by Satan. The last two verses assure the Thessalonians that though Paul may not see them again on this earth, he would be reunited with them in the presence of the Lord Jesus. He calls the Thessalonians his reward – his "crown of rejoicing". Note - Paul also speaks of a "crown of righteousness" in 2 Timothy 4:8, and an incorruptible crown in 2 Corinthians 9:25. See also James 1:12; Revelation 2:10; 1 Peter 5:4 for more information on crowns.

3 Paul Directs Them to Abound More and More (3:1 – 4:12; 5:12 - 28)

Paul was concerned about the growth of this church, both spiritually and numerically. To this end there was a lot of encouragement to these believers to keep going despite the opposition they might be receiving, and to surrender their lives to godly living. Paul also included in this letter much practical instruction, as he did in all of his letters.

- a. Paul is Pleased about the Success of the Church (3:1 – 10)
 - i. He reflects on the sending of Timothy

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Paul's concern for the fledgling church at Thessalonica caused him to send away his helper, leaving him alone at Athens. (Acts 17:10 – 24) Timothy was sent to “establish” and “comfort” them (v. 2), and to “perfect” them (v. 10). The word “establish” here refers to Timothy working with these new believers in strengthening them and making them stable. Paul said the same to the believers at Rome:

"For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;" - (Romans 1:11)

They needed corporately to be disciple and grounded in the faith. The word “perfect” means to mature or to equip. Paul states that he didn't want them to lack anything.

They would also need to be comforted because they were suffering a great deal of persecution. Thessalonica was closely associated with Rome, and Rome had just kicked out all Jews and Christians. The City of Rome contained many Jews, and after Pentecost, began to be a place where Jewish Christians lived. According to a Suetonius, a first century Roman Scholar in his “Life of Claudius”, Caesar Claudius who reigned from 41 to 54 A.D., “banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.”⁵ (presumably Christ – see Acts 18:2 – Priscilla and Aquila were kicked out of Rome).

ii. He references his suffering

Paul was concerned that the suffering that he and his companions had faced would be too much for these new believers to take. He reminds them that he foretold them that suffering was, unfortunately, part of being a preacher of the gospel.

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." - (2 Timothy 3:10-12)

b. Paul Presses Them to Keep Going (vs. 11 – 13)

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." - (2 Peter 3:18)

c. Paul Preaches to Them About Christian Living (4:1 – 12)

Paul will now discuss their “sanctification” (v. 3). The truths that Paul will give them here will tell them how they were to live as godly Christians before the lost world around them. Notice in v. 1 that Paul encourages them to “abound more and more”, and in v. 10 to “increase more and more”.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to

⁵ Suetonius. Life of Claudius
1st and 2nd Thessalonians

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godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." - (2 Peter 1:5-9)

Paul states that if they are to truly be sanctified (set apart) ambassadors for the Lord, they will have to:

i. Abstain from Fornication (4:3 – 5)

Concupiscence means desire for that which is forbidden. Paul will stress this heavily, especially with the Gentile believers. (1 Corinthians 6:12 – 20) In the Jerusalem Council it was established that fornication was one of only four things that Gentiles were requested to abstain from. (Acts 15:20 & 29; 21:25)

ii. Deal Honestly (4:6 – 8; 12)

One of the best ways to demonstrate Christlikeness to the world around us is to just be fair and honest in our business transactions. The world used to be a place where people kept their word, honored their contracts, and did what they said they would do. A handshake was all that was necessary in order to negotiate a contract. Today, however, even many Christians feel that it is acceptable to make late payments, default on loans, be lazy on the job, etc.

iii. Love People (4:9 – 10)

John Pollock states this regarding Paul's instruction to love:

All through the week Paul told Jews, proselytes, and pagans about Christ and strengthened the baptized. These would sit and listen, conscious of three loves blending in Paul: love for God, love for their neighbors, and especially love for them, his "brothers and sisters in Christ." Paul brought a new concept of love, though he would say that it was God teaching them beyond any words he might impart. Where eroticism was in the very air, even in a city such as theirs not dominated by the cults of Apollo or Aphrodite, Paul used the new word *agapē*, which Christians had coined to replace the debased word *eros*, and expounded a love that purified and transformed. Love at its highest and lowest was an urgent topic. Letters that Paul wrote back following his flight from Thessalonica disclose that the church included many young men and women. The men did not find it easy to allow Christ to control their sexual instincts. When they were pagans, they had thought nothing of seducing a friend's wife or fornicating with any girl who caught their fancy. Turning consciously from evil to faith did not always bring immediate awareness of how to please God in this matter.⁶

iv. Work Hard (4:11)

⁶ Pollock, John (2012-01-01). *The Apostle: The Life of Paul* (p. 139). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

He will reiterate this subject of hard work in 2 Thessalonians. (2 Thessalonians 3:6 – 12) The Christian should be the most dedicated and diligent employee on the job. Christians ought not have anything handed to them, but rather they should be willing to work hard in order to meet the needs of family.

d. Paul Picks-Up Where He Left Off Regarding the Practical (5:12 – 22)

This final section of the letter continues with Paul's practical instruction to the church after he parenthetically discussed the rapture of the church beginning in chapter four and verse fourteen.

In Paul's conclusion, he will instruct the church regarding relationships:

i. With Their Leaders (vs. 12 & 13)

In this section, he drives home a point that he made earlier in the letter regarding spiritual authorities. The church at Thessalonica was already commended for being good followers of the Apostle Paul, but now he encourages them to "know" their spiritual leaders, which in this case has to do with observation. They were challenged to carefully examine and follow their authorities in the Lord. Notice that their spiritual leaders "admonished" them. Christian ministry involves admonishment:

Admonish = *νουθετοῦντας* (from *νουθετέω* – *noutheteō*) Verb - Present Active Participle - Accusative Plural Masculine – meaning to reprimand or warn. This is a negative. We typically do not like negatives:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:2)

*"Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee."
(Proverbs 9:8)*

*"This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;"
(Titus 1:13)*

They were also encouraged to "esteem them very highly **for their work's sake**" by honoring them and supporting them. (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24)

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." (Hebrews 13:7)

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17)

*"Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you."
(Hebrews 13:24)*

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Salute = Ἀσπάσασθε (from ἀσπάζομαι – *aspazomai*) Verb - Aorist Middle Deponent Imperative - 2nd Person Plural – meaning to embrace or greet; to welcome cheerfully.

Notice – we are to “*be at peace among [ourselves].*” We are not to be bickering about things that do not matter:

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:29-32)

ii. With Their Co-Laborers (vs. 14 and 15)

“Warn them that are unruly” – unruly = ἀτάκτους (from ἄτακτος – *ataktos*) Adjective - Accusative Plural Masculine. Meaning “deviating from the prescribed order or rule.”⁷

Warn = νουθετεῖτε (from νουθετέω – *noutheteō*) Verb - Present Active Imperative - 2nd Person Plural – meaning warn or admonish.

“Comfort the feebleminded” – feebleminded = ὀλιγοψύχους (from ὀλιγόψυχος – *oligopsychos*) Adjective - Accusative Plural Masculine. Meaning faint-hearted or discouraged.

“Support the weak” – weak = ἀσθενῶν (from ἀσθενής – *asthenēs*) Adjective - Genitive Plural Masculine. Meaning sick, feeble, or without strength.

iii. With Their Lord (vs. 16 – 20)

“Rejoice evermore” Rejoice = χαίρετε (from χαίρω – *chairō*) Verb - Present Active Imperative - 2nd Person Plural. 42 times translated “rejoice;” 14 times “be glad.”

“Quench not the Spirit” – Quench = σβέννυτε (from σβέννυμι – *sbennymi*) Verb - Present Active Imperative - 2nd Person Plural. Meaning suppress or hold back.

Note – we can resist the spirit:

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51)

And grieve the Spirit:

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)

iv. With The Lost (vs. 21 – 22)

⁷ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 83.

The word “prove” means to demonstrate. We are to live a life in front of the lost that demonstrates or proves that we are Christians.

e. Paul’s Parting Comments (vs. 23 – 28)

Here Paul prays for the church and asks them to pray for them. His request is that they would be wholly sanctified and preserved blameless, knowing that God would do His part. He also requests that they read this letter to everyone in the church.

4 Paul Discusses the Arrival of Christ (4:13 – 5:11)

Apparently, this was a subject that Paul discussed with this young church when he was with them. (2 Thessalonians 2:5) They may have had some questions regarding eschatological events that needed further clarification.

It is important to note that this section begins and ends with the subject of comfort. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul encourages them to not be sorrowful concerning those who have already died (“sleep”); and, in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, he tells them to comfort one another and strengthen one another with the truths that he gave them regarding the rapture.

a. The Explanation of the Rapture of the Church (4:13 – 18)

What we call “the rapture of the church” comes from the Latin word, “rapturo”, which means “caught up” (4:17). The word, “rapture”, is found nowhere in Scripture, but the concept of the rapture is clearly taught.

The rapture of the church is an event yet in our future, when the Lord Jesus Christ will return and take His Bride (the Church) from this earth, and bring her back to Heaven with Him. Consider the following verses that refer to the rapture of the church:

"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." - (Acts 1:11)

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." - (John 14:1-3)

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O

death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." - (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." - (Revelation 4:1)

Note regarding the above verse in Revelation 4 - Revelation chapter 1 deals with the Apostle John's vision of the Lord in Heaven and chapters 2 & 3 are all about the Church Age. When you get to chapter 4, there is no longer a mention of the Church again. The Church (the Bride) has been brought up to Heaven ("come up hither").

Enoch and Noah –

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" - (Genesis 5:24)

Enoch is a picture of the Church – “God took him” translated him – picture of the Rapture.

Noah and his family are a picture of Israel who will be saved through the tribulation; but they must go through it.

All of the above passages deal with the Rapture of the Church, but there is another wonderful picture of this event taken from the tradition of the Jewish Wedding. In Bible days when a marriage was arranged, the Groom first came to the Bride's home and paid the price for the Bride. Then the Groom would return to his father's home and prepare a home for himself and his new bride. When all of the preparations were finished, the Groom would return to pick up the Bride and take her to the new home. By the way, the Bride never knew when the Groom was going to come, so she had to be ready all the time. A celebration would take place for several days back at the Father's house, and then the whole procession would return to the Bride's parent's home. All of this is a wonderful picture of Christ coming to earth (the Bride's home), and paying for our sins. He is now back in Heaven preparing a place for us, and someday soon He will return for us and bring us to our new home in Heaven where we will celebrate for seven years (Marriage Supper of the Lamb). At the end of the seven years, we will return to the earth with the Lord.

i. The Rapture is for the Dead in Christ (vs. 13 – 16)

The word, “sleep”, here is speaking of the bodies of the saints that are in the graves.

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." - (Daniel 12:2)

The soul and spirit of those who have died and were saved are in Heaven:

"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." - (2 Corinthians 5:6-8)

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ... For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:" - (Philippians 1:21, 23)

ii. The Rapture is for the Alive in Christ

After the dead are resurrected from their graves, then those that are saved will be “caught up” in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

Someone once said that the rapture of the church is typified by the harvest: Jesus and the few Old Testament saints who rose at the time of His resurrection were the first-fruits of the harvest. (Matthew 27:52 – 53) The rapture is the full harvest; and then the tribulation saints will be the gleanings after the harvest.

The primary purpose of this portion of the letter is to bring comfort. It is comforting to know that this life is not the end. There is a wonderful, bodily resurrection for believers. Unfortunately, there will also be a horrible, bodily resurrection for the lost. (Revelation 20:11 – 15)

b. The Expectancy of the Rapture of the Church (5:1 – 11)

Paul will now address the question of the timing of the rapture and second coming. The phrase “day of the Lord” in v. 2 speaks of the actual return of Christ to the earth in judgment, along with all of the wrath spoken of in Revelation that is poured out preceding that time. These verses indicate several things about believers:

- i. We “know” (v. 2)
- ii. We are not “in darkness”, but rather “in light”
- iii. We are to be sober – alert, awake

The world is clueless as to what is happening right now. Believers know that the current events of the world are hastening toward the rapture and the day of the Lord, but the Lord is blindly oblivious. We do not know when the rapture will occur, but we all have the sense to know it is coming soon.

The timing of the rapture is hotly disputed today, with several different positions including a post-tribulation rapture and a mid-tribulation rapture, which is very similar to the pre-wrath position, which is becoming increasingly popular today. There is even a position out there that espouses a partial rapture where only good little boys and girls get to go. We hold to the position that the Rapture of the Church will take place before the beginning of the tribulation period and will involve all born-again believers. The tribulation period actually begins with a treaty between antichrist and Israel, and concludes with the second coming of Christ to the

earth and the Battle of Armageddon. (Revelation 19:11 – 21) During the seven-year tribulation period God will save Israel (Romans 11:25 – 26; Zechariah 12:10, Daniel 12:1), and pour out His wrath on a Christ rejecting world.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." - (Matthew 24:21)

The Church will be "caught up" before the wrath of God is poured out, and even before the seven-year countdown begins. The surprise of the rapture indicated by the concept of its imminence would necessitate that it happens before these events occur.

"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." - (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." - (Revelation 3:10-11)

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," -
(1 Thessalonians 5:9)

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." - (1 Corinthians 15:52)

As to the timing of the rapture, this is what John Phillips has to say:

People take many positions regarding this event. We have amillennialists, postmillennialists, and premillennialists. We have those who believe in a mid-tribulation Rapture, those who preach a post-tribulation Rapture, and those who herald a pretribulation Rapture. Some people have even embraced "a pre-wrath Rapture," which seems to be a loudly heralded version of the mid-tribulation Rapture.

Those who espouse the tribulation Rapture generally think it necessary to attack John Nelson Darby. Darby was a prominent leader among the so-called Plymouth Brethren. He did much to rescue the truth of the Lord's coming from the rubbish heap on which the professing church at large had dumped it. Darby was a scholar, a theologian, an intellectual, and a spiritual giant who was thoroughly at home in Hebrew and Greek as well as a number of European languages. His enemies say that he obtained his views on the Rapture from a hysterical, vision-prone woman. The statement is slanderous. It betrays an ignorance of the man, his mission, and his message that is inexcusable. About the last place Darby would have gone for his theology was to a woman. He had quite other ideas about the place of women in the church. He certainly did not advocate a woman's preaching, teaching, or usurping a man's role of authority in the church. Why should Darby need female instruction regarding Bible truth when

he himself produced several translations of the Bible in English and other languages? He had a mind for the universe that was not to be narrowed by a hysterical, unstable “prophetess.”

Many able expositors (e.g., Dwight Pentecost, John Walvoord, and Charles Ryrie) have taken in hand the defense of the pretribulation Rapture. Any position on the second coming of Christ that takes the edge off our expectancy and intrudes all kinds of prior events between the believer and the Rapture is a wrong position. The element of surprise is a key element in all New Testament teaching regarding the Rapture; hence, the repeated exhortations that we be watchful.⁸

The Ryrie Study Bible says this regarding the timing of the rapture:

Pretribulation rapture. a. Meaning. The rapture of the church (i.e., the coming of the Lord in the air for His saints) will take place before the seven-year period of the Tribulation begins. Therefore, the church will not go through any of the Tribulation period according to this view.

b. Proof cited. (1) The promise to be kept out of the hour of trouble (Rev. 3:10). (2) The removal of the residence aspect of the indwelling Spirit’s work in believers requires the removal of believers too (2 Thess. 2). (3) The Tribulation is a time of the outpouring of the wrath of God and the church is exempt from wrath (Rev. 6:17; cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). (4) The rapture can be imminent only if it is pre-tribulational (1 Thess. 5:6).⁹

Notice also the reference to the rapture in 2 Thessalonians 2:1:

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,” (2 Thessalonians 2:1)

According to 2 Thessalonians 2:3, two events need to take place before the Lord returns at the Second Coming:

- i. There must be a falling away. The word translated “falling away” is ἀποστασία (apostasia), which means a total forsaking. In order for God to be totally forsaken, there would need to be a removal of all true believers.
- ii. The man of sin – Antichrist - would need to be revealed.

Another consideration when contemplating the timing of the rapture is the fact that according to 2 Thessalonians 2:6 & 7, the Holy Spirit would have to be removed before the Antichrist is revealed. If the Tribulation does in fact begin with the treaty of Antichrist with Israel (Daniel 9:24 - 27), then believers who possess the Holy Spirit will have to be removed first.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

⁸ Phillips, J. (2009). Exploring 1 & 2 Thessalonians: An Expository Commentary (1 Th 4:17–18). Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp.

⁹ Ryrie, C. C. (1994). Ryrie study Bible: King James Version (Expanded ed., p. 1982). Chicago: Moody Press.

Note – although the Holy Spirit will no longer be restraining sin, He will still be redeeming sinners during the Tribulation Period.

II 2 Thessalonians

Memory Verse:

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:" (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

Key Verses – 2 Thessalonians 2:17; 3:3

"Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." (2 Thessalonians 2:17)

"But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

It appears that 2 Thessalonians was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians, possibly only 3 months later, and was an answer to some of the questions and problems that had arisen from the first letter. Primarily, Paul wanted to straighten out a misunderstanding regarding the second coming of Christ. Apparently, some people in Thessalonica thought that the judgments of the Tribulation Period had already begun, and some had even stopped working. Paul explains that before Christ returns at the Second Coming (after the Rapture, at the end of the Tribulation Period), there will first be a "falling away", and the "man of sin" (2:1 – 12) will be revealed. 2 Thessalonians reveals much about the fate of unbelievers in the Tribulation Period.

A Paul Praises Them for Their Faithfulness, and Presses Them to Stay Faithful (Chapter One)

1 Paul's Salutation (vs. 1 – 2)

Notice that Paul offers them on "grace and peace" on behalf of both the Father and the Son. You have to experience grace before you can have God's peace. We experience God's grace (undeserved or unmerited favor) when we get saved:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

J. Vernon McGee says this about God's peace:

Peace is the world's softest pillow that you can sleep on at night. It is the peace that comes when you know that your sins are forgiven. Peace comes, not from some psychological gyrations you go through, or through the counsel of a psychiatrist, but it comes from a supernatural source—from "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"; it is supernatural.¹⁰

2 Paul's Commendation (vs. 3 – 10)

¹⁰ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 408). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

These eight verses (3 – 10) are all part of one long sentence and are a commendation to the saints at Thessalonica for their faithfulness to the Lord even while enduring persecution. Remember, this is a young and inexperienced church made up of many new, Gentile believers. In the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3 – 9; 18 – 23) Jesus illustrated that the seed that fell “upon stony places” was eventually withered because it was not grounded deep enough in the soil. Jesus explained that this type of soil was a picture of a new believer that grew well for a while, but when tribulation or persecution came he became offended. Apparently, this church at Thessalonica was well grounded because they were doing well even though they were being persecuted.

Paul will encourage this new church to keep doing what they were doing, and remain faithful to the Lord.

In vs. 3 – 4, Paul acknowledges that the believers in Thessalonica were growing “exceedingly” in both faith and love. It is important for love to grow, especially during times of persecution. We need each other even more when we are going through it. This church was growing in its love for the Lord, for each other, and also for the lost. Paul was thankful to God for what He was doing in these young believers. This was a great source of joy for the Apostle Paul:

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." (3 John 1:4)

This was also an answer to Paul’s concern and prayer from the first letter:

"For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. ... Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thessalonians 3:5, 10)

The fact that they were growing was even more amazing considering they were enduring persecution. “Patience” (v. 4) means “endurance.”

Notice in v. 5, the persecution they were enduring proved that they were “counted worthy” of the kingdom of God. Enduring persecution does not make you worthy, but it does prove that you belong to God. God did not take away Paul’s thorn, but He did give grace to endure to His child. Those that truly belong to Christ, will get better through tribulation, not bitter. Persecution is evidence that God is working in you; not that He has forsaken you:

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10)

Persecution also prepares you for the Kingdom:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:2-4)

Peter had a lot to say about trials and persecutions:

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:6-9)

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:12-16)

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Peter 5:8-10)

Patience through suffering is also one of the ways that believers can glorify the Lord. In Acts 5, Peter and John were beaten:

"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." (Acts 5:41)

In vs. 6 – 10, Paul assures these saints that the persecutors will someday get what is coming to them. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were well acquainted with suffering, and they admonished the Thessalonian believers to *"rest with us."*

*"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that **they should rest yet for a little season**, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Revelation 6:9-11)*

Vs. 7 – 10 are clearly a reference to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus and the Battle of Armageddon. (See Revelation 19:11 – 21).

This judgment will take place when the Lord **comes** back to earth and is **glorified** through the lives of believers whom He has transformed by making saints out of sinners. This is not the Rapture (1 Thes. 4:13–18; John 14:2–3), for no judgment accompanies the Rapture. Instead, it is the revelation of Jesus Christ in power and great glory (Ps. 2:1–9; Matt. 25:31), when He will set up His earthly kingdom (Rev. 19:11–20:4). At His return He will destroy the Armageddon armies gathered against Him (Rev. 16:12–16; 19:19–21) and will then judge living Jews (Ezek. 20:33–38) and living Gentiles (Matt. 24:31–46). These judgments are the ones just described (2 Thes. 1:9).¹¹

Notice in v. 8, God will punish those that don't know Him, and those that don't obey the gospel.

*"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
(Matthew 7:23)*

3 Paul's Supplication (vs. 11 – 12)

Paul prays for the saints at Thessalonica that they would remain faithful to the Lord through the persecution, and that He would fulfill His will through them with faith and power. Paul's desire was that the name of Christ would be glorified through the lives of these believers in Thessalonica.

B Paul Instructs Them Regarding the Timing, and Informs Them of the Terror (the Anti-Christ) of the Tribulation Period. (Chapter Two)

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1, Paul explains regarding the "coming of the Lord", and "our gathering together unto him". Apparently, the Thessalonians were confused as to the order of events. Some of them had thought that they were already living in the "day of the Lord's wrath", which is the Tribulation Period. Paul had told them already that they were not appointed to wrath:

"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

He further explains what the Tribulation will be like, and though the Thessalonians were enduring persecution, they had not seen anything like what Paul explains in this chapter. We not only get a glimpse of the Antichrist in this chapter, but we learn that there is a Restrainer on earth today who will be taken out of the way. (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

1 A Remembrance of the Rapture (vs. 1; 5)

¹¹ Constable, T. L. (1985). *2 Thessalonians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 716). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Paul had already instructed the Thessalonians about the Rapture and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they had apparently gotten some of the timing confused. The timing of the Rapture causes a great deal of confusion today. There are many different theories as to when it happens in relation to the Tribulation Period and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that Rapture precedes the entire Tribulation Period. The actual return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Earth to judge the unbelievers, and to set up His kingdom, will take place at the end of the seven-year period.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Revelation 3:10)

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." (Revelation 4:1)

2 A Righting of the Record (vs. 2 – 11)

Paul will now correct their mistaken thinking. They had either combined the Rapture and the Second Coming into one event, or perhaps, they thought they had misunderstood about the rapture and were actually living within the time of Tribulation, which was known as the "Day of Christ", or the "Day of the Lord." The Day of the Lord begins with the seven-year period of judgment known as the Tribulation, and continues into the Millennium. (See also Joel 2:11; 31; Zephaniah 1:14; Malachi 4:5)

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (1 Thessalonians 5:2)

"For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:17)

Notice in v. 2 that their confusion may have been a misunderstanding from a letter that appeared to come from Paul or one of his associates.

a. Truth Rejected (vs. 3)

The phrase “falling away” is the word apostasy (ἀποστασία – *apostasia*), which means a forsaking or defection from truth. Though we live in times right now where there is much apostasy, the Truth can still be found. However, when believers are removed along with the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, the world will forsake the Truth and believe a lie.

b. Antichrist Revealed (vs. 2 – 4; 8 – 10)

The Antichrist is revealed during this period of tribulation after the Rapture of the Church. At first, he will come in peace (Revelation 6:2); but, eventually his true Satanic colors will come out, and he will wage war with the people of God. During this period, Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26), along with many Gentiles. (Revelation 7:9) Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel, but will then break it. (Matthew 24:15)

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (Daniel 9:26-27)

c. The Holy Spirit Removed (vs. 6 - 7)

“Letteth” means to hold back or restrain. The Holy Spirit is the restrainer, but when He is “taken out of the way” through the Rapture, there will be nothing holding back the evil on the earth.

Notice in v. 11, many on Earth will believe the lies of the devil.

"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." (Romans 1:25)

Wiersbe states:

In this paragraph, Paul taught a sobering truth: a person can so resist the truth that he finally becomes deluded and has to believe a lie. There can be no neutral ground: either we believe the truth or we believe a lie. To reject the truth means to receive the lie.

Does this mean that God is to blame for a man’s rejection of Christ? No more than God was to blame for Pharaoh’s spiritual condition when Moses was bringing the plagues on Egypt. Pharaoh heard God’s Word and saw God’s wonders, yet he refused to bow to God’s will. Pharaoh occasionally relented and gave lip service to God’s will; but he always resisted in the end and refused to obey God. He hardened his heart so that he could not believe the truth, and this led to God’s final judgment of the land of Egypt.¹²

¹² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 199). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Notice also, that they rejected the Truth “and had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19)

3 A Reassurance for the Righteous (vs. 12 – 17)

Paul assured these believers in Thessalonica that they were not part of the Christ rejecting crowd, because they had been chosen by God to salvation, because of their faith in Christ. Paul’s desire was to encourage them to keep going:

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Galatians 6:9)

People will be condemned because they reject the Truth, but the Thessalonians believed the Truth. (v. 13) Paul encourages them to hold on to the Truth (v. 15), and to obey the Truth. (v. 17)

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:22-25)

C Paul Encourages Them to Be Patient, and Exhorts Them to Part (Separate) From Those Who Aren’t (Chapter Three)

1. Paul Assures Them of His Confidence in The Lord and Them (vs. 1 – 5)

"And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you." (2 Thessalonians 3:4)

In vs. 1 – 5, Paul asks for prayer, and assures them of his confidence in them.

2. Paul’s Admonishes them to Separate from Disorderly Brothers (Vs. 6 – 15)

There were some in Thessalonica that were no longer working, possibly because they thought the Lord’s return was imminent. Paul admonishes them to go back to work, and also encourages those that were still working to be patient, remain working, and keep serving the Lord.

We are to stay busy for the Lord until He comes to take us home to Heaven.

*"And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, **Occupy till I come.**" - (Luke 19:13)*

3. Paul Asks a Final Blessing (vs. 16 – 18)

The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

Paul asks the Lord to give the Thessalonians peace. They had lost some peace within their church because of the misconceptions regarding the return of Christ. Knowing the truth will give you peace:

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)