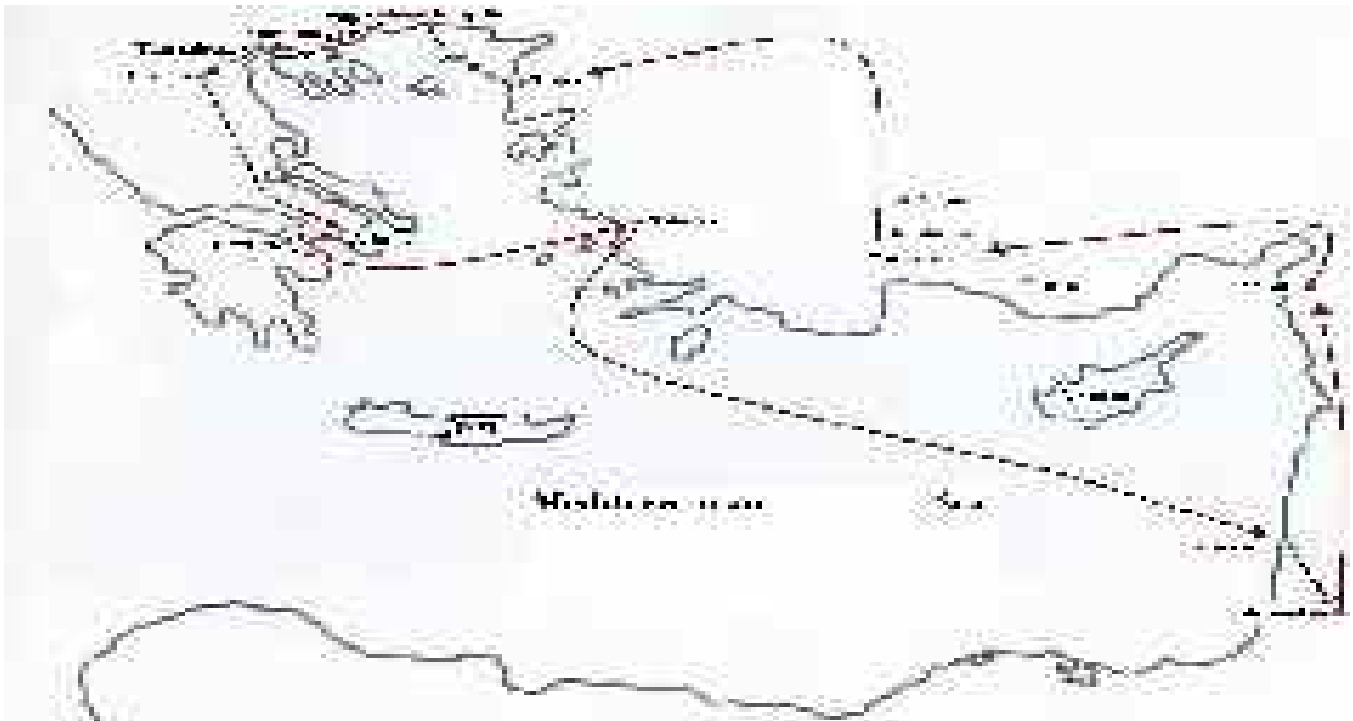


Outline of the Book of I Thessalonians

Introduction:



Introduction to I Thessalonians:

The apostle Paul and Barnabas prepare to begin their second tour of preaching through Galatia in the year 50 AD (Acts 15:36). A “*sharp contention*” arises between Paul and Barnabas regarding the accompaniment of John Mark (Acts 15:36-40). Paul decides it would be better for the three to separate. Paul chose Silas to travel to Galatia with him “*confirming the churches*” (Acts 15:41). Paul and Silas travel further west to Galatia. The first Galatian City visited by the two was Derbe. Secondly, they come to Lystra. Paul and Silas meet Timothy in Lystra, circumcise him, and take him along as a traveling companion (Acts 16:1ff). Traveling North-westward the three visit Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia delivering the “*decrees*” (*dogma*) produced in Acts 15:23ff (Cf. Acts 16:4). The Holy Spirit forbids Paul, Silas, and Timothy from going into Asia (Acts 16:6). Apparently, they travel on the border of Galatia and Phrygia Northward to Bithynia (Acts 16:7). Again, the “*Spirit of Jesus*” forbade them to travel into Bithynia (Acts 16:7b). The three, therefore, travel due west through Mysia and land at the coastal town of Troas (Acts 16:8). Immediately after the vision, Paul and his companions cross the Aegean Sea in rout to Macedonia (Acts 16:10).

At this point in the narrative of Acts, Luke modestly introduces himself into the text by the first person plural pronoun “*we*” (Acts 16:10). Nothing is said about preaching in Troas; however, it appears that a church was established there (Cf. II Cor. 2:12). Crossing the Aegean Sea the four arrive at Samothrace, a small island in rout to Neapolis. Paul and his companions land at a seaport of Macedonia known as Neapolis while traveling northwest from Samothrace. Leaving Neapolis, they travel twelve miles westward to Philippi. Apparently there was no synagogue in Philippi. Paul and his companions asked regarding the whereabouts of a Jewish place of worship. The information led them

to a river outside of town were women met to pray (16:13). It is here that the conversion of Lydia is recorded (Acts 16:14ff).

While in Philippi, Paul is annoyed with a girl who has an evil spirit. The girl follows the four preachers day by day proclaiming that they had words of salvation. Paul commands the evil spirit to come out of the girl and it does so immediately. The girls' masters are incensed over the matter because they used the demon's powers to make money. Paul and Silas are captured and beaten with rods for their part in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such preaching was considered unlawful to the Romans (Acts 16:21). While in prison, Paul and Silas sing praises to God (Acts 16:25). A miraculous earthquake occurs loosening the prisoner's chains. The jailer is prepared to kill himself when Paul stops him claiming that all are accounted for. Paul and Silas take the opportunity to preach the gospel to the jailer and he is converted along with his house (Acts 16:30ff).

Luke and Timothy stay behind in Philippi while Paul and Silas travel through Amphipolis and Apollonia and come to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). Paul and Silas preach Jesus and convert "*some*" of the Thessalonians (Acts 17:4). The unbelieving Jews stir up a riot against Paul and Silas causing them to flee to Beroea but not before a faithful church is established in Thessalonica. The Beroeans were "*noble minded*" and "*searched the scriptures*" to see whether the things Paul said were true (Acts 17:11). When the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica heard that Paul and Silas were preaching in Beroea, they travel there and cause another riot. The Beroean brethren take Paul and escort him southward as far as Athens. Silas remains behind. Paul sends word to Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens. Apparently, Silas and Timothy come immediately to Athens and Timothy is sent directly back to Thessalonica. Since Paul went into Corinth alone (Acts 18:1) it is apparent as well that Silas was sent back either to Thessalonica or Beroea at some point (Cf. I Thess. 3:1).

Paul preaches to the Athenians alone with little success (Cf. Acts 17:33-34). From Athens, Paul travels to the city of Corinth alone and meets Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1). This man and wife were Jews from Italy who shared a common faith and trade with the apostle Paul, as they were tent makers. Eventually, Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:5) join Paul in Corinth. Apparently the two have brought monetary aid to Paul that enables him to spend all his time preaching the gospel (Cf. Acts 18:5 and II Cor. 11:9). Paul remained in the city of Corinth for about 2 years, and then left for Ephesus eventually making it back to Judea (Acts 18:11, 18-20).

Date of I Thessalonians

A church was established in Thessalonica approximately 50 AD. Paul left Thessalonica and traveled southward to Beroea and then to Athens. Taking his leave of Athens, Paul travels to Corinth where he remains two years (Acts 18:11, 18-20). During these two years Paul attempted to see the Thessalonians face to face on two occasions but was hindered (cf. I Thess. 2:17-18). Based upon Timothy's report of the Thessalonians to Paul (I Thess. 3:1-13) and the "*short season*" Paul spent away from the Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:17), I conclude that the epistle to the Thessalonians must have been written during Paul's first stay in Corinth (~ 51 AD).

Themes in I and II Thessalonians:

- A. Dealing with the suffering that comes with accepting and preaching truth (1:6; 2:2; 3:3, 7; II Thess. 1:4).
- B. The wrath of God against disobedience (I Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 4:6; 5:3; II Thess. 1:6-10).
- C. Walking worthily of God (2:12; 4:1; II Thess. 1:11; 2:15).
- D. The hope of those dead in Christ Jesus (4:13ff).
- E. Paul's instructing and teaching the Thessalonians (Christianity is a learned act; cf. Jn. 6:44-45) (1:5; 2:1-4, 8-9, 13; 3:1, 4, 10; 4:1-2, 6, 9, 13, 15; 5:2, 27; II Thess. 3:7).

- F. That the brethren be found without blame and holy when the Lord comes again (3:13; 5:23).
- G. Paul's desire that God "*establish*" the Thessalonians in the gospel for their salvation (I Thess. 3:13; II Thess. 2:17; 3:3).
- H. Instructions regarding second coming of Jesus (I Thess. 4:13-18; II Thess. 2:1ff).
- I. Instructions regarding the disorderly (I Thess. 5:14; II Thess. 3:6-15).
- J. Instructions regarding heaven:
 1. Thessalonians are told to "*wait*" in obedience for the coming of Jesus from heaven (I Thess. 1:10).
 2. During this "*waiting*" period, saints have "*hope*" in a future heavenly home (I Thess. 4:13-18; II Thess. 2:16).
 3. A future home that gives way to current "*rejoicing*" (I Thess. 5:16).
 4. The Thessalonians are instructed to be found "*blameless and holy*" when the Lord comes (I Thess. 3:13).
 5. God has "*appointed*" the faithful Thessalonians to the salvation of heaven (I Thess. 5:9).
 6. Heaven is a place of "*eternal comfort*" (I Thess. 4:18; II Thess. 2:16).
 7. Since God is the "*God of peace*," heaven will be a peaceful place to dwell into eternity (I Thess. 5:23).
 8. A place of eternal "*rest*" from enemies (II Thess. 1:7).
 9. If you miss out on heaven, you will be "*eternally*" ruined (II Thess. 1:9).
 10. If you gain heaven, you shall "*ever be with the Lord*" (I Thess. 4:17). [Where shall YOU spend your **eternity**?]

Chapter 1

- I. Paul gives thanks to the Thessalonians for their reception of the Gospel (1:1-10):**
- A.** *“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace”* (1:1).
1. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were now in Corinth. Paul writes this letter to the Thessalonians in response to the report that Timothy has brought back concerning them (cf. I Thess. 3:1ff).
 2. Grace and peace are two attributes that Paul often gives in his salutation and benedictions (cf. most of Paul’s epistles). Grace would come to the Thessalonians as they allowed it to instruct them in righteousness (Titus 2:11-12). Peace would come to them as they followed apostolic and authoritative preaching (Phil. 4:9).
- B.** *“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father;”* (1:2-3).
1. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were praying men. Paul’s prayers would have constituted request for strength in time of trials (II Cor. 12:10), forgiveness for sins (Rom. 7:24-25), and the continued faith of brethren (cf. here, Col. 1:3, 9 and II Cor. 11:28).
 2. The Thessalonians were people of conviction. Their faith was illustrated to the world by their works of righteousness (cf. James 2:14ff). Their labor of love would have been the brethrens care for each others physical well being (Heb. 6:10; I Jn. 3:17) conjoined with their care for each others spiritual well being (I Jn. 4:10ff) (see Appendix # 1; The Individual Christian).
- C.** *“Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election, how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake”* (1:4-5).
1. The *“election”* (*ekloge*) of the Thessalonians is *“a picking out, choice, election ... that which is chosen out, and extract...”* (LS 241). Notice the connection between being *“elected”* and *“how that our gospel came.”*
 2. The gospel message came to the Thessalonians through preaching, confirming *“power”* (cf. Acts 2:22; II Cor. 12:12), by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7ff), *“and in much assurance.”*
 3. The Thessalonians experienced the signs, wonders, and power first hand and thereby the truth was confirmed in their minds (cf. Mk. 16:20).
 4. Their being *“elected”* by God was thereby a consequence of their accepting the gospel message. The gospel called upon them to hear and believe that Jesus gave himself for the remission of sins (Rom. 10:17), confess that name (Rom. 10:9-10), repent (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30), be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and live faithfully to the Lord (Rev. 2:10). To be recognized as God’s elect is to *“acknowledge”* one sins (Jer. 3:13) with a spirit of humility (Ps. 51; Isa. 57:15; 66:2).
- D.** *“And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit; so that ye became an example to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything”* (1:6-8).
1. When Paul, Silas, and Timothy first preached the gospel in Thessalonica it caused such a great stir that Paul and Silas had to sneak away in the night by the aid of brethren (cf. Acts 17:2-10).
 2. It was in situations like this that the Thessalonians had received the gospel. Even though their physical well being was threatened they accepted the truth and held to it.

3. Notice that when the Thessalonians “*received*” the Word of God they were receiving the Holy Spirit with joy! The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that the “*Spirit gives life*” (II Cor. 3:6). This “*life*” is found in the Word of God (Jn. 6:63). Paul told the Galatians, “*received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*” (3:2) (See Appendix # 2; Indwelling of Holy Spirit).
 4. Having received the Word of God and thereby the Holy Spirit they became examples to men throughout the world. Paul did not have to tell others or convince others of the Thessalonian’s faith. This is another one of those passages that indicate the fact that brethren were communicating about each other’s stand in truth (cf. Rom. 1:8; 16:19 etc.) (See Appendix # 3; Church Autonomy).
- E. “*For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God,*” (1:9).
1. Paul received reports from other brethren regarding the faith of the Thessalonians.
 2. Brethren were talking about the fact that the Thessalonians turned away from serving idols “*to serve a living and true God.*” Idols were dead wood or rocks and unable to think, reason, and move about on their own (cf. Isa. 46:5ff; Jer. 10:1ff).
- F. “*and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come*” (1:10).
1. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead for our justification (cf. Rom. 4:25; 8:34; II Cor. 5:15; Heb. 7:25; I Jn. 2:1).
 2. Jesus will come again to gather those who faithfully wait upon Him into heaven and to “*deliver us from the wrath to come.*” Here are two facts:
 - a. Jesus will come again (cf. I Thess. 4:13ff).
 - b. Secondly, God’s wrath will come. Interestingly, God’s wrath was outpoured on Judah because of their sins. The Lord had been patient for many years; however, the time of His visitation came. God’s wrath was poured out over Judah and there was nothing that could stop it (cf. Jer. 15:1-7). Likewise, God’s wrath will be poured out upon the disobedient today (cf. Rev. 20:10ff). The lesson learned is that God is longsuffering and patient; however, there comes a day when His patience shall end (See Appendix # 4; The Wrath of God).

Chapter 2

- I. **Paul and Silas’ work among the Thessalonians was motivated by a love for their souls (2:1-12):**
- A. “*For yourselves, brethren, know our entering in unto you, that it hath not been found vain: but having suffered before and been shamefully treated, as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict*” (2:1-2).
1. Those of Macedonia and Achaia had heard of Paul and Silas’ “*entering*” among the people’s of Thessalonica (cf. I Thess. 1:8-9). The consequence of Paul and Silas’ “*entering*” among the Thessalonians was their conversion. The Thessalonians turned away from false gods to serve the “*living and true God.*”
 2. Now Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his “*entering in unto*” them. The subject at hand is the preaching of the gospel message (a divine message of salvation) to the Thessalonians. Paul and Silas preached this message even though they were “*shamefully treated*” at Philippi (cf. Acts 16:22ff. reveals that they were beaten with rods and put in stocks).
 3. Paul and Silas did not let this beating and shameful treatment detour them from their objective of preaching the gospel message to those at Thessalonica.

- B. *“For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:”* (2:3).
1. The word *“exhortation”* (*paraklesis*) = “a calling to one’s aid, summons... a calling upon, appealing to one... intreaty, deprecation, address... encouragement” (LS 597). A connection between *“exhortation”* and the *“gospel”* is made by Paul. Paul used the gospel message to appeal (exhort) to the Thessalonians desire to be saved.
 2. The gospel message is intended to ‘aid’ those who hear and is thereby *“not of error.”* To be of *“error”* (*plane*) = “a wandering, roaming, a digression, metaphorically a going astray, error” (LS 643). Nothing about the gospel message would lead one astray or to digress. The gospel, in fact, is the standard by which man’s paths are measured (cf. II Cor. 10:12ff).
 3. The gospel message is not of *“uncleanness”* (*akatharsia*) = “impurity” (LS 25). God’s word is the truth and this truth is pure (cf. II Cor. 1:12; 2:17).
 4. Nor is the gospel message filled with *“guile”* (*dolos*) = “a bait for fish... then, any cunning contrivance for deceiving or catching, as the Trojan horse, the robe of Penelope... generally, any trick or stratagem, wiles. Guile, craft, cunning, treachery” (LS 208).
 5. Paul and Silas preached a message that was intended to appeal to the Thessalonians since of a need for eternal salvation. Those who followed Paul’s teaching would not be lead astray or digress in error (Rom. 1:16). Paul’s message was divine and thereby pure. The gospel’s design was to save men’s souls and not catch people in a trap whereas Paul could make money or merchandise from its adherents (cf. II Cor. 12:14-18) (See Appendix # 5; The Nature of the Gospel).
 6. The context here indicates that Paul is defending the idea that he is interested in the Thessalonians’ souls alone.
- C. *“But even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts”* (2:4).
1. The word *“approved”* (*dokimazo*) = “to assay or test metals, to see if they be pure... of persons, to put to the test, make trial of, scrutinize... to think fit to do” (LS 208).
 2. It seems that Paul is saying that he and Silas have been found fit to be entrusted with the gospel of God. Such a statement would infer that Paul and Silas were men who cared for men’s spiritual well being and were not interested in making merchandise of anyone. God found this to be the case with them and they were thereby *“intrusted with the gospel.”*
- D. *“For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness; nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ”* (2:5-6).
1. Paul’s purpose for preaching the gospel was not to *“please men”* (2:4). If gaining a following was his purpose he would have used *“words of flattery.”* The design of flattering words is to build one’s self up in the eyes of another. Paul’s message; however, was not about him but Christ. Paul sought to bring glory to the name of Christ rather than self (See Appendix # 6; Purposeful Preaching).
 2. Here Paul clearly states that his preaching was not a *“cloak of covetousness”* as he was accused in Corinth (cf. II Cor. 12:14ff).
- E. *“But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us”* (2:7-8).
1. Paul and Silas did not build themselves up in the eyes of the Thessalonians and neither did he demand money from them as a consequence of his preaching. Paul and Silas

were rather “*gentle... as when a nurse cherishes her own children.*” Instead of making demands upon the brethren they nurtured them with the word of God.

2. Paul was willing to be spent in the form of shameful ill treatment for the souls of the Thessalonians. Paul was thereby interested in their souls (cf. Rom. 9:1ff; 10:1ff; II Cor. 12:14; I Jn. 3:17; 4:10ff; II Jn. 4; III Jn. 4; cf. Appendix # 6; “Purposeful Preaching”).
- F. “*For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblamably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe*” (2:9-10).
1. Paul was a tentmaker by trade (cf. Acts 18:1-3). Paul worked very hard at his trade instead of taking funds from the brethren “*that we might not burden any of you*” while preaching the gospel to them.
 2. Paul and Silas had every authorized right to receive wages from the brethren; however, they chose to forbear this that none may charge them with preaching for money (cf. I Cor. 9:14).
- G. “*As ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying, to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory*” (2:11-12).
1. Again, Paul expresses his deep care for the Thessalonian brethren. He compares himself to a father that would care and give up things for his own children.
 2. The greatest care a father can share with his children is teaching them to distinguish between right and wrong (cf. Appendix # 7; “Godly (loving) Fathers”). Paul admonished the Thessalonians to “*walk worthily of God.*” Their conduct was to be “*worthily*” (*axios*) = “of a proper value... of things, deserved, meet, due... sufficient for... worthy of, deserving, meet for” (LS 85). The Lord’s message is of divine origin and thereby to be followed (walked after). When one so walks, he is deemed worthy or deserving to receive God’s promises of salvation.
 3. God is love (I Jn. 4:10ff). The God of love has brought forth a message that calls men to obey unto salvation. Such are thereby be added to His church, the kingdom of God (cf. Col. 1:13).

II. Paul and Silas give thanks unto the Lord for the Thessalonians reception and obedience to the gospel message (2:13-16):

- A. “*And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe*” (2:13).
1. There is a clear distinction to be made between the “*word of men*” and the “*word of God.*” Here Paul refers to the word of God as truth. The truth is the gospel and thereby the word of God (cf. Eph. 1:13). There is a divine message that leads to salvation and there is a “*fleshly wisdom*” (“*word of men*”) that leads to eternal destruction (cf. II Cor. 1:12) (cf. Appendix # 8; Authority).
 2. Paul is made joyous over the fact that the Thessalonians viewed his words in their proper light; i.e., as the truth and word of God. What Paul preached was not his own ideas, though he had been so charged in Corinth (cf. II Cor. 3:1ff; 10:12ff).
- B. “*For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews;*” (2:14).
1. This verse is reminiscent of I Thessalonians 1:6. The brethren at Thessalonica had received the word of God in affliction yet with joy through the Holy Spirit. Men were

persecuting them because of their acceptance of the gospel. Now Paul states that as the Thessalonians receive the gospel and suffer because of their acceptance of it that they are *“imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea.”*

2. Paul preached the same truth in every church (I Cor. 4:17). The truth had the same violent consequences in every place. Man’s sins were exposed and thereby they hated the one speaking the words of condemnation (cf. Mk. 13:13; Jn. 7:7; 17:14). This is the badge of Christianity; i.e., suffering, because we care that people are lost and are not going to stand by and say nothing (cf. II Tim. 3:12) (cf. Appendix # 9; Consequences of Preaching Truth in Love).
- C. *“Who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost”* (2:15-16).
 1. Jesus exposed the religiously zealous Pharisees as those who taught the *“doctrines and precepts of men”* (Matt. 15:9). Those who followed the Pharisees eventually killed Jesus as they had the prophets because they testified that their works were evil (Jn. 7:7).
 2. Said ones do not please God and are *“contrary to all men.”* They were contrary in that they did not represent truth and thereby led all men they contacted away from the gospel of salvation.
 3. To these will the wrath of God be unleashed (cf. I Thess. 1:10 and comments).

III. Paul’s desire to see the Thessalonians had been put on hold (2:17-20):

- A. *“But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire: because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us”* (2:17-18).
 1. To be *“bereaved”* (*aporphanizo*) = “to be torn away from one... orphaned or bereaved” (LS 106). This word indicates the close association that Paul had with the Thessalonians in that it did not seem natural to be apart from them.
 2. This separation; however, was only in physical presence rather than spirit (heart) (cf. I Cor. 5:3).
 3. Paul seems to be comforting the Thessalonians in these difficult days. Their own people were persecuting them for accepting the gospel message as the Jews did their kind in Judea. Paul is not deserting them, he is comforting them through this letter. If he had things his way, he would be there with them; however, *“Satan hindered us.”* Just how Satan hindered Paul and Silas from returning to Thessalonica is not said. Perhaps the work in Corinth (with all the evil workers there [cf. II Cor. 11:13-15]) kept Paul and Silas away??? (cf. Appendix # 10; The Work of Satan).
- B. *“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy”* (2:19-20).
 1. Paul so desired to see the Thessalonians because in them his hope was fulfilled. Paul and Silas’ joy and crown of glorying was fulfilled in these brethren. When things make us very happy we tell others about it in a boasting fashion. Paul and Silas boasted of the Thessalonians because their faithfulness made them very happy.
 2. As the Thessalonians remained faithful they would be with the Lord when He comes again (this idea to be discussed further in I Thess. 4:13ff).

Synopsis of chapters 1 -2

To this point of the study, it appears that Paul is commending the Thessalonians for their acceptance of the gospel message in the face of intense persecution (cf. 1:6; 2:2, 14). The gospel is the truth, the word of God (2:13). Paul preached this truth rather than his own ideas to make merchandise of men

(2:4-5). Paul and Silas' great joy was in the fact that the Thessalonians received the truth and were adhering to it (2:13). Due to the persecutions being experienced by the Thessalonians own countrymen, Paul desired earnestly to visit them (2:17ff).

Chapter 3

I.

A. *"Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone;"* (3:1).

1. The word "*forbear*" (*stego*) = "to cover closely, so as to keep water either out or in: A. to keep water out, to keep off rain from oneself. 2. generally, to keep off, fend off weapons, etc. 3. later, to bear up against, endure... to contain oneself, hold out, NT. II. To cover, shelter, protect... 2. to cover, conceal, keep hidden, to keep secret... B. to keep water in, hold water, keep in... to contain, hold" (LS 743).

2. The pronoun "*we*" would be Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Apparently Silas and Timothy obeyed Paul's request when he said, *"that they should come to him with all speed"* (Acts 17:15) to Athens. While at Athens, all three could not "*forbear*" the anxiety they had for the Thessalonian brethren (due to their having received the word of God in affliction and how that they continued to experience affliction [no doubt when Silas and Timothy joined Paul at Athens they told Paul of the intense conditions in Thessalonica]). The word "*forbear*" would simply mean that they could not contain their anxiety any longer and thereby had to do something about it [i.e., send Timothy back to them to establish them]. Though nothing is said here about Silas being sent back to Thessalonica, there was a point in which he separated from Paul. Acts 18:5 states that both Timothy and Silas joined Paul in Corinth. Silas may have been sent North to Philippi or Borea sometime between the time Timothy was sent to Thessalonica and Paul leaving Athens.

B. *"and sent Timothy, our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith; that no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed"* (3:2-3).

1. Timothy was sent to Thessalonica that he may "*establish*" and "*comfort*" the brethren in their afflictions. The word "*establish*," (*sterizo*) = "to make fast, fix, set... he set the stone fast in the ground... Metaphorically to confirm, establish" (LS 746).

2. Timothy's task was to make the Thessalonian's faith concrete as though it were set firm in their minds.

3. These brethren were suffering due to their faith and thereby Paul sends his beloved Timothy to comfort and establish them that they may continue faithfully serving the Lord.

4. Paul further states, *"for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed."* Every Christian has an appointment with suffering at the hands of evil doers. Paul told Timothy, *"Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (II Tim. 3:12). Paul told the Corinthian brethren, *"being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now"* (I Cor. 4:13). The prophets experienced this as well. Jeremiah said, *"O Jehovah, thou knowest; remember me, and visit me, and avenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered reproach"* (Jer. 15:15)

(cf. also Jer. 15:15-16; 18:18; 20:1-2; Ps. 69:7ff; Jn. 7:7; 16:33; 17:14; Acts 9:16; 14:22; II Cor. 1:5ff) (Appendix # 9; The Consequences of Preaching Truth in Love).

- C. *“For verily, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know”* (3:4).
1. The suffering that took place by the hands of bitter Jews should not have surprised any of the Thessalonian Christians (See Appendix # 11; Personal Work for the Christian). Apparently Paul preached to them about their appointment with suffering. The Thessalonians were informed and knew the consequences of accepting and teaching the gospel message.
 2. The world hated and persecuted Jesus because he exposed its errors (Jn. 7:7) and so the world will hate all those who so do (Jn. 17:14) .
- D. *“For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain”* (3:5).
1. Paul reiterates what he had said in verse 1 regarding their inability to *“forbear”* the anxiety over the suffering Thessalonians.
 2. Now, he gives the reason for his anxiety. The *“tempter”* is Satan (cf. I Thess. 2:18). The devil is trying to discourage the Thessalonians and sway them away from the faith through these persecutions (cf. Appendix # 10; The Work of Satan). Satan would have them say that they could not endure afflictions that result from their remaining faithful and preaching the truth. There seems to be two classes of Christians. Those who remain faithful till death come what may (Rev. 2:10) and those who cannot endure sound doctrine (II Tim. 4:3).
- E. *“But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you; for this cause, brethren we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith:”* (3:6-7).
1. This verse helps us further pinpoint Silas’ travels. Apparently he was not with Timothy at Thessalonica. Timothy and Silas came to Paul from Macedonia (Acts 18:5). It seems apparent then that Silas was not with Timothy at Thessalonica but somewhere else in Macedonia. He meets up with Timothy somewhere in Macedonia and together they travel to Corinth to meet Paul.
 2. Paul’s anxiety over the faithfulness of the Thessalonians in the face of intense trials is now relieved by the report given him by Timothy.
 3. Again, these verses indicate the close association brethren had with each other. Paul gained comfort in the knowledge of their faith (cf. II Cor. 7:5-7). Each of us as Christians should be made joyous over the news of a brother’s faithfulness and saddened by one’s unfaithfulness (cf. II Jn. 4; III Jn. 4).
- F. *“For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord”* (3:8).
1. Now we live as opposed to now we die. Paul was so intensely interested in the spiritual welfare of the brethren that it truly caused him misery to not know all the details of their faithfulness.
 2. Those who became Christians as a result of his preaching were his *“children”* in the faith (cf. I Cor. 4:14-15).
- G. *“For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?”* (3:9-10).
1. Due to the wonderful news given to him by Timothy regarding the faithfulness of the Thessalonians he was speechless in his prayers to God on their behalf.
 2. Paul had been *“night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face.”*

3. As new babes in Christ, Paul knew that his beloved Thessalonians needed more spiritual guidance. They needed more spiritual food. They needed more instruction in the teachings of Jesus Christ that they may be perfected and “*no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind or doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error;*” (Eph. 4:14) (cf. Appendix # 12; The Christian’s Spiritual Growth).
- H. “*Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you: and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints*” (3:11-13).
1. Paul prays that the Lord would cast down the hindrance of Satan (cf. 2:18) and allow them to come to Thessalonica to do as he said in verse 10 (i.e., “*perfect that which is lacking in your faith.*”).
 2. When said event occurs, again, it is Paul’s prayer that the Thessalonians would “*increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also do toward you.*” Bible love is not only caring for an individual’s physical well being (cf. Heb. 6:10; James 2:15; I Jn. 3:17) but it is caring for the spiritual well being of others too (cf. I Jn. 4:10ff). The Thessalonian’s love, when exercised toward others, would look to both the physical and spiritual well being of others. The third aspect of love is its affects on ourselves. If we love we will do what God commands us to do (cf. Jn. 14:15-23). We will be motivated to know more of God’s truths and to complete our knowledge in Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 6:1-12) (cf. Appendix # 13; The Christian’s Responsibility Toward Other Christians).
 3. When such love takes hold of one, the Lord will “*establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.*” Again, to establish is to set firm. Those who would truly desire heaven must be “*unblamable*” (*amemptos*) [“not to be blamed, blameless... of things, perfect in its kind... without blame... so as to merit no blame, right well” (LS 43)]. This state of heart is in relation to “*holiness before our God and Father.*” The word “*holiness*” (*hagiosune*) = “sanctity (holiness of life; living according to a strict or highly moral religious or spiritual system” {AHD 617})” (LS 5). Here in we see sin and law defined. The one who sins has violated the law of God and is no longer blameless or holy in relation to that law (cf. I Jn. 3:4). Such a one has no place in heaven without humbly asking for the forgiveness of those sins (I Jn. 1:9; cf. Rev. 21:27). When the Lord comes again with His saints, so His judgments will come to man. Each will stand before the Lord and be judged by the word of God (Jn. 12:48) (see Appendix # 14; Fellowship with God).

Chapter 4

I. An exhortation to conduct one’s self in a Godly and lawful manner (4:1-8):

- A. “*Finally then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as ye received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk, that ye abound more and more*” (4:1).
 1. Paul appeals to the authority of Christ (“*in the Lord*”) saying that the Thessalonians are to walk (conduct themselves) in accordance with the word of God that Paul, Silas,

and Timothy had instructed them while at Thessalonica (cf. Appendix # 15; Let us Give a 'Thus saith Jehovah' for all that we say and Do).

2. When Christians so conduct themselves, God is pleased. This epistle has focused on the point of pleasing God rather than self or others (cf. 2:14; 2:15).
 3. Lastly, those who walk by God's standards will "*abound more and more.*" To "*abound*" (*perisseuo*) = "to be over and above the number... to be more than enough, remain over..." (LS 632). The verb "*abound*" is in the present tense which indicates an ongoing action (cf. Friberg pp. 624). The point being is that Christians are to go above and beyond in their knowledge and application of God's word. This indicates great interest in God's word. Again, it indicates an insatiable appetite for the Word of God (see Appendix # 12; The Christian's Spiritual Growth).
- B.** "*For ye know what charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication;*" (4:2-3).
1. Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the source of said instructions, they are from the Lord and thereby authoritative.
 2. God's will for His people is their "*sanctification,*" (*hagiasmos*) i.e., "consecration" (LS 5); "separate from things profane and dedicated to God, to consecrate and so render inviolable... Since only what is pure and without blemish can be devoted and offered to God (Lev. 22:20; Deut. 15:21; 17:1) sanctified signifies to purify and to cleanse externally, to purify by expiation, free from guilt of sin: I Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12... to purify internally by reformation of soul" (Thayer 6).
 3. In light of the command to be sanctified, Paul admonishes the brethren to "*abstain from fornication.*" Fornication (unlawful sexual intercourse) was a prevalent sin among the Christians of Paul's day and he thereby wrote much about the subject (cf. I Cor. 6:13, 18 ; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5 etc...).
- C.** "*that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God;*" (4:4-5).
1. To "*possess*" oneself is to "procure for oneself, to get, gain, acquire... to get one's living from a thing... to win favor... to bring upon oneself, incur... to have acquired, i.e. to possess, have, hold" (LS 453). That which the individual Christian is to possess or have hold of is his "*vessel.*" The word vessel is used to indicate a container in some NT passages (cf. Jn. 19:29) and in other parts of the NT the word is used metaphorically as a representative of the human body (cf. Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21; II Tim. 2:21; I Pet. 3:7). The idea Paul conveys is that the Christian is to have a 'hold' on self as a controlled 'possession.' When one has 'hold' of something he is in control of it (cf. Appendix # 16; Self Control)!
 2. That which the Christian is to be in control of is the mind and body. The Christian is to be "*sanctified*" (set apart from sinful activities and thoughts). When one gives in to the passions and lust of the mind then he no longer has 'hold' of self and he has lost his sanctification.
- D.** "*That no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified*" (4:6).
1. Paul defines transgression as to lose control of the passions and thereby commit fornication or adultery. Such activity with another's wife would be to "*wrong his brother in the matter.*"
 2. Another reoccurring theme in I Thessalonians is the idea of God's wrath against the ungodly. Here, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of those things he had preached to

them while in Thessalonica. Those who commit sin are due God's wrath "*because the Lord is an avenger in all these things.*" See I Thessalonians 1:10 and 2:16.

- E. "*For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification*" (4:7).
1. The calling of God comes from the gospel (II Thess. 2:13ff). The gospel demands that one hear and believe the message of Jesus (Rom. 10:17). This calling commands unashamed confession in the name of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9). The gospel calls upon one to repent of past sins (Acts 17:30) and to be baptized for the remission of those sins (Acts 2:38). Lastly, the gospel calls upon its adherents to remain faithful to God (Titus 2:11-12).
 2. This is the "*sanctified*" life as opposed to the "*unclean*" (without purity) life (cf. Eph. 5:5).
- F. "*Therefore he that rejects, rejects not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you*" (4:8).
1. To live in uncontrolled passion and fulfillment of lust is to reject God and His laws of sanctification. Herein is the test of true discipleship. One who truly loves God will certainly follow His laws and thereby be sanctified (cf. Jn. 8:31; 14:23-24; I Jn. 5:3).
 2. By the giving of the Holy Spirit unto man they now had the opportunity to receive the gospel message (cf. Gal. 3:1-2). God's instructions teach all who are willing to hear and learn how to be sanctified (cf. Jn. 6:44-45).

II. Paul exhorts the Christians to love each other and mind their own business (4:9-12):

- A. "*But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more*" (4:9-10).
1. The apostle Peter commanded, "*Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king*" (I Peter 2:17). Note that Paul does not command that the Thessalonians love only those individuals that are members of their local church, but "*all the brethren that are in all Macedonia.*" The churches in Macedonia would have included the church of Philippi, Borea, and Thessalonica. To love each other is to care for one's physical needs (I Jn. 3:17) and spiritual needs (I Jn. 4:10-17) (cf. Appendix # 3; Church Autonomy and # 13; The Christian's Responsibility toward other Christians).
 2. Note once again that Paul states that this is what they were "*taught.*" As we consider Paul's previous statements regarding the Thessalonians having learned and been taught, we conclude that Paul, Silas, and Timothy's stay in Thessalonica was a time of teaching and instructing (cf. 1:6; 2:2, 8, 13; 3:3, 10; 4:2, 6, 9). Paul thereby exhorts the Thessalonians to abound more and more in these divine instructions.
- B. "*and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing*" (4:11-12).
1. An example of what the Thessalonians needed to abound in was the instructions regarding their "*studying to be quiet and do your own business, and work with your hands.*"
 - a. The word "*study*" (*philotimeomai*) = "pursue some object of ambition... to strive eagerly and emulously to do a thing... aspire... to be anxious" (LS 865). It is the Christian's pursuit in life to live a quiet life (cf. I Tim. 2:1-2). We are not to draw attention to ourselves in any way. Our existence is modesty and aim is sanctification (cf. Appendix # 12; The Christian's spiritual Growth).

- b. We are to pursue a life of hard work with our hands and not be idle (cf. Eph. 4:28). Idle people meddle into the affairs of others for recreation. The Christian is a worker that minds his own business.
2. Such a life will be seen by the world and admired as we have need of nothing. Hard labor and diligence in work habits lead to one taking care of self.

III. Paul eases the Thessalonians confusion over their dead loved one's (4:13-18).

- A. *"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope"* (4:13).
 1. To this point Paul has brought to the Thessalonian's remembrance the things in which he has instructed and taught them while with them (cf. 1:6; 2:2, 8, 13; 3:3, 10; 4:2, 6, 9).
 2. Paul now wants to impart new instructions to the Thessalonians regarding those who die before the Lord's coming. Apparently, some of the Thessalonians had lost loved ones since Paul's departure and were sore afraid that these loved ones had lost out on the promise of salvation. Their fear was that such were without hope.
 3. Interestingly, Paul refers to the Christian's death as being asleep (cf. Lk. 8:52; Jn. 11:11; Acts 8:1). When Saul called Samuel from the dead, Samuel replied to Saul saying, *"why has thou disquieted me, to bring me up?"* (I Sam. 28:15). The idea of restfulness is indicated in these terms. This restfulness does not indicate an unconscious existence (cf. Lk. 16:19-31) (cf. Appendix # 17; A Study of where the Dead Are).
- B. *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (4:14).
 1. Jesus died on the cross (Jn. 19:30). After three days, He arose (Matt. 28:1-6).
 2. Jesus is said to be the *"firstfruits of them that are asleep"* (I Cor. 15:20). As sure as the Lord rose from the grave even so will all of mankind (cf. Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
- C. *"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep"* (4:15).
 1. Paul has been divinely instructed regarding the resurrection of the dead. What he states on this subject and others are the result of divine revelation and thereby authoritative (cf. I Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:12).
 2. Paul indicates that when Jesus comes again there will be two classes of Christians as there are now. First, there is that class of Christians that are alive. Secondly, there will be those Christians who have died. An order is thereby given by Paul regarding the resurrection unto a new body (cf. I Cor. 15:35ff). That order is that the dead will be raised first, then those that are alive will be raised.
- D. *"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 that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (4:16-17).
 1. Paul now explains the sequence of events on that wonderful day when all will end and eternal existence in heaven or hell will begin (cf. Appendix # 18; The Day of Judgment).
 2. As the Lord ascended into the heavens in the view of man so shall he return from heaven to the earth in view of man (Acts 1:9-11).
 3. The Lord shall descend with a *"shout"* i.e., the Lord's voice (cf. Matt. 24:31; Jn. 5:25-29). Those who died in Christ shall arise at his command as did Lazarus (Jn. 11:43).
 4. Not only will the Lord shout, but the *"voice of the archangel"* (cf. Matt. 24:29-31) and *"the trump of God"* shall sound as well (cf. I Cor. 15:52).

5. The Thessalonians need not worry about their dead because they will be the first to be raised from the dead and experience the glories of the resurrected state and closely followed by the then living saints. A reunion will then occur between those dead in Christ and those alive in Christ. These things shall happen in a *“moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (I Cor. 15:51-52).
 6. *“So shall we ever be with the Lord”* (cf. Jn. 14:1-3; 17:24).
- E. *“Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (4:18).
1. What a soothing message of relief this must have been to the Thessalonians and to all faithful Christians today.
 2. Paul has eased their grief with these words and so he has eased our grief. Let us ease other’s grief by these same comforting words.
 3. The Christian is not fearful of death, to the contrary, he looks forward to the day when he will be with the Lord forever. Paul told the Philipians, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (cf. Phil. 1:20-24).

Synopsis of chapter 4

One of the reoccurring themes in I Thessalonians is the idea that Paul, Silas, and Timothy had taught the divine Word of God to the Thessalonians (cf. 1:5; 2:1-8, 13; 3:4; 4:1-2, 9). The subject that they taught was that they *“how ye ought to walk and to please God”* (4:1). The gospel that was preached among them condemned self indulgence in the areas of lust and fornication naming it as sin (4:3ff). All mankind has inner desires that God has blessed us with and they are to be channeled in the right direction. That is, each of us should exercise self control (4:4). The author of Hebrews said, *“Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge”* (Heb. 13:4). We recognize that man and woman are attracted to each other as those of the opposite sex. Attraction toward the opposite sex remains even after one is married. Each is to keep that attraction to the opposite sex contained within the marriage relationship. Solomon said, *“Let thy fountain be blessed; and rejoice in the wife of thy youth. As a loving hind and a pleasant doe, let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love”* (Prov. 5:18-19). The moment one goes outside the marriage bond to fulfill these God given desires that one has sinned.

A brother who commits adultery with another’s wife surely is lacking in love (4:9) and understanding (Prov. 6:32). The reputation of the Thessalonians throughout all Macedonia was that they were loving brethren (4:10). Paul wanted to make sure that this love continued through study and desire of truth (4:11). Paul’s final words in this chapter concern those who have died in Christ. Paul gives an order to the resurrection of the dead; i.e., the dead in Christ will rise first then those that are alive will join them with Christ (4:15). These words were intended to be a comfort to the Thessalonians and indeed they comfort us all (4:18).

Chapter 5

- I. **Paul warns that all be on “watch” for the coming of the day of the Lord (5:1-11):**
- A. *“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”* (5:1-2).
1. The statement, *“for yourselves know perfectly...”* infers that Paul had taught the Thessalonians previously regarding the subject of the Lord’s coming. They were taught that no man knows when this day will be (cf. Matt. 24:36-44; 25:13; Lk. 12:39-40; II Pet. 3:10).

2. The Lord has revealed only those things that He deems appropriate for our salvation (Deut. 29:29). The times and seasons of His coming is not revealed.
- B.** *“When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape”* (5:3).
1. The false prophets of Jeremiah’s day gave Judah false hope saying, *“Jehovah hath said, Ye shall have peace; and unto every one that walketh in the stubbornness of his own heart they say, no evil shall come upon you”* (Jer. 23:17). The next few verses; however, reveal the *“wrath”* and *“anger”* of Jehovah that will *“burst upon the head of the wicked”* (Jer. 23:19-20).
 2. This judgment and coming of Jesus will be painful to many as a woman giving birth to a child.
 3. Those who are wicked will in no way escape the Lord’s judgment.
- C.** *“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness;”* (5:4-5).
1. The idea of *“darkness”* in the NT is often used of a lack of understanding (cf. Eph. 4:17-18). We often say, ‘he is in the dark about such and such matter.’ God would not have His people in the dark concerning the coming of His Son. This is not to say that we can know when Jesus will come, that would contradict the Lord’s teaching on the matter. What this says is that the child of God understands by faith that the coming of the Lord is a reality and is thereby to prepare self for that day (cf. Appendix # 12; The Christian’s Spiritual Growth).
 2. As *“sons of light and day”* Christians are depicted as those who have clear and perceptive vision. The Psalmist said, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path”* (Ps. 119:105). Again, he said, *“The opening of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple”* (Ps. 119:130). God’s word directs one’s path in light as though an illuminating device in dark places. The apostle Paul speaks of the *“light of the gospel”* that is a *“light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (cf. II Cor. 4:4-6).
 3. The NT depicts the idea of light as not only a point of enlightenment, understanding, and perception, but holiness of living too (cf. I Jn. 1:5-7). Paul states that the child of God is one of the day in all aspects (i.e., understanding and holy living).
- D.** *“So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night”* (5:6-7).
1. Paul contrast *“sleep”* and being *“drunk”* with *“watching”* and being *“sober.”* To sleep and be drunk is to be oblivious to one’s surroundings.
 2. To be on watch is the complete opposite of sleeping. To be *“sober”* (*nepho*) = “to drink no wine... to be sober, dispassionate” (LS 532). The illustration of the effects of alcohol on an individual is most effective in this context. Alcohol, even when drunk in moderation, causes one’s judgment to be effected (Prov. 31:5; Isa. 28:7-8), takes away one’s understanding (Hosea 4:11), makes one sick (Hosea 7:5), and causes a loss of mastery over self (Prov. 20:1). Such a state of mind is dull, uninterested, tolerant, lethargic, apathetic, and generally of little care. The Hebrew Christian’s were guilty of this and thereby were in jeopardy of losing their souls (cf. Heb. 5:22; 6:12).
- E.** *“But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation”* (5:8).
1. Those of the day are sober in regards to watching and being ready for the coming of the day as opposed to the drunken non-interested masses who could care less. Those who care about the soul’s eternity will *“put on the breastplate of faith and love.”*

2. The Christian is not a civilian walking under the protection of some military force in the kingdom of God. The Christian's citizenship includes enlistment in the Lord's army (cf. Eph. 2:19; II Tim. 2:4). This soldier is armed to the teeth with armament provided by God and the sword of faith (cf. Eph. 6:13ff). The breastplate and helmet are represented by our faith, love, and hope of salvation. These three will protect us against the wiles of the devil.
- F. *"For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up even as also ye do"* (5:9-11).
1. Paul had told the Thessalonians that they were "*appointed*" to experience afflictions in this life (I Thess. 3:3). He now tells them that they are "*not appointed unto wrath.*" The word "*appointed*" (*tithemi*) = "to set, put, place... to put or plant it in his heart... to deposit, as in a bank... to place to account, put down, reckon..." (LS 806). The Lord has placed (appointed) salvation upon those who would walk in the light as He is in the light (I Jn. 1:5-7). This appointed salvation will come through many trials and tribulation (Acts 14:22). The Christian is not set to receive the wrath of God. God's wrath is reserved for the ungodly (Rom. 1:18).
 2. This appointment with heaven is made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross through His death. Paul said, "*yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him:*" (Col. 1:22).
 3. Because this hope of heaven is real, Paul commands the Thessalonians to "*exhort one another and build each other up.*" To "*exhort*" is to "call to aid, call in, send for... encourage, to comfort, console..." (LS 597). Christians should encourage each other forward in the faith that no one be left discouraged by the afflictions faced (cf. Appendix # 13; The Christian's Responsibility Toward Other Christians).

II. Paul instructs the Thessalonians to live according to divine instructions (5:12-21):

- A. *"But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves"* (5:12-13).
1. Who are those who "*labor among you, and are over you in the Lord?*" Macknight believes it is the elders of the church (cf. Vol. 3-4, pg. 86-87). Lenski believes it is the elders under consideration as well (cf. Lenski on I Thess. Pg. 352-354). David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd have those who "labor among you" as the teachers or preachers of the gospel message (cf. Gospel Advocate series of NT Commentaries on I Thess. Pg. 68-69). It seems apparent to me that those who "*labor among you, and are over you in the Lord*" could be none other than the elders yet a mutual respect ought to be showed toward all those who uphold the truth.
 2. The Christian is commanded to "*know them*" (*oida*) = "to regard with favor" (Moulton 283).
 3. The "*labor*" and "*work*" of these elders is to "*admonish you.*" To "*admonish*" (*noutheteo*) = "to put in mind, to admonish, warn, advise" (LS 536). "To reprove (to rebuke for a fault or misdeed; scold... to find fault with) mildly or kindly but seriously" (AHD 80) (cf. Appendix # 19; The Work of the Elder in the Local Church).
 4. Christians are commanded to hold these elders in high esteem because they gently remind us of our error and correct us. When our minds are thinking correctly we will recognize their admonition as an act of love and thereby we will certainly reciprocate

that love and respect toward them. When this mutual respect and love for each other exist there will be *“peace among yourselves.”*

- B.** *“And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all”* (5:14).
1. Paul *“exhorts”* or ‘encourages’ the brethren as a whole to *“admonish the disorderly.”* Again, the word *“admonish”* is to ‘warn, rebuke for a fault, scold.’ Those to be warned are the *“disorderly”* (*ataktos*) = “undisciplined, disorderly, irregular, lawless” (LS 128). Why warn such brethren? We warn the disorderly because in such a state their souls are lost in sin (I Jn. 1:5-7). This verse should be compared to II Thess. 3:6 to define what the idea of longsuffering is all about (cf. Appendix # 20; Longsuffering).
 2. Secondly, Paul exhorts the brethren to *“encourage the fainthearted.”* The *“fainthearted”* (*oligopsuchos*) = “faint-hearted” (LS 552). “Deficient in conviction or courage; timid” (AHD 486). Paul may have in mind those in Thessalonica that are giving in to the persecution due to their faith. They are not as capable or convicted as others to deal with such times of affliction. These should be encouraged to continue on in the face of difficult times.
 3. Thirdly, Paul exhorts the brethren to *“support the weak.”* Those who are spiritually *“weak”* are those who are convicted of things not commanded (cf. Rom. 14:1ff). They may feel it their duty to abstain from eating meats. What does this really matter? Nothing really so why should I try to change such a brother. Paul said, *“Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves”* (Rom. 15:1) (cf. Appendix # 13; The Christian’s Responsibility Toward Other Christians).
 4. Fourthly, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to be *“longsuffering toward all.”* Whether the brother be in error or weak in faith let us be patient and longsuffering. Longsuffering; however, does not mean ever-suffering. Those in the church of Thyatira were guilty of *“suffering the woman Jezebell who teaches and seduces”* members of the body of Christ (Rev. 2:20). So the Lord said, *“I have this against thee”* (Rev. 2:20a). A true definition of longsuffering is found in the writings of I and II Corinthians. Paul wrote a scathing rebuke to the Corinthians exhorting them to change their sinful ways and then waited a year (II Cor. 8:10; 9:1-2) to see what the consequences of such teaching would be before he threatened more drastic measures (cf. I Cor. 4:21 and II Cor. 12:19-13:2). Likewise, the time between I and II Thessalonians gives us an idea of the limits of longsuffering (compare I Thessalonians 5:14 with II Thessalonians 3:6)
- C.** *“See that none render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all”* (5:15).
1. We have Jesus as such an example who did not seek revenge against His enemies but sought to help them realize their error (cf. I Pet. 2:21-23).
 2. Christians are to love. Bible love seeks the betterment of self (Jn. 14:23), the physical care of others (I Jn. 3:17; James 2:15-16), and the spiritual care of others (I Jn. 4:10-17).
- D.** *“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward”* (5:16-18).
1. Paul told the Philippians, *“But I rejoice... for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content... I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengthens me”* (Phil. 4:10-13). To *“rejoice”* (*chairō*) = “to rejoice, be glad, be delighted” (LS 878). The idea is that the Christian is a happy, glad, and delighted person because Jesus has provided the forgiveness of sins and a hope of heaven. We can all therefore rejoice

even in the most difficult times. When our priorities are right with the Lord then come what may we will rejoice (cf. Appendix # 21; The Happy Christian)!

2. Because we have this hope of salvation, we rejoice, and thereby we give thanks to the Lord for all things whether they be perceived as bad or good by the world. This is the *“will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward.”* God’s will and His desire is that His people be glad (rejoice) and give thanks to Him in whatever state of life we find ourselves in. We all should thereby have a prayerful disposition of *“praying without ceasing.”*
- E. *“Quench not the Spirit”* (5:19).
1. To *“quench”* (*sbennumi*) = “put out, extinguish, quell (put down forcibly), go out (fire)” (LS 724). The Holy Spirit dwells within by means of the word of God (cf. Gal. 3:2). The word of God is depicted in the scriptures as being a fire that burns within a man. The prophet Jeremiah writes, *“is not my word like fire? Saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”* (Jer. 23:29).
 2. Paul is telling the Thessalonians to not extinguish the word of God that causes the Godhead to dwell within you. How can I *“quench the Spirit?”* I can quench the Spirit by giving in to false teachings, afflictions, and the devil in general (cf. II Cor. 2:11) (cf. Appendix # 5; The Nature of the Gospel).
- F. *“Despise not prophesyings”* (5:20).
1. Apparently the *“prophesyings”* under consideration were of the teaching divine revelation sort as opposed to giving information regarding future events (cf. I Cor. 14:3).
 2. Paul thereby encourages the Thessalonians not to *“despise”* such teaching. To *“despise”* (*exoutheneo*) = “to set at naught” (LS 276). Counting divine revelation as though it were worthless would be detrimental to their souls.
- G. *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from every form of evil”* (5:21-22).
1. The apostle Paul authorizes a test regarding things taught and practiced. The Christian does not accept any and all doctrines taught as gospel truths but he is to *“prove”* or put to the test the teachings. Other places where said test is authorized may be found in II Cor. 2:9; I Jn. 4:1-6 etc. (cf. Appendix # 22; The Christian’s Responsibility to Prove all Doctrines).
 2. Paul encourages the brethren to take a strong hold to those things which are good.
 3. Thirdly, Paul says, *“abstain from every form of evil.”* Many doctrines and activities have a *“form”* of godliness yet they are not authorized by God (Col. 2:23). Paul told Timothy that erroneous men would be swayed by sin while *“holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away”* (II Tim. 3:5). The Christian should avoid and abstain from forms of evil at all cost.

III. Salutation and Benediction to the Thessalonians (5:23-28):

- A. *“And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it”* (5:23-24).
1. Paul revealed the efficacy of the blood of Christ to the Colossians saying that the blood of Christ has the power to make one *“without blemish and unreprouvable before God”* (Col. 1:22). It will only be in this sanctified and blameless state that one will find themselves in heaven with the Lord for eternity (Rev. 21:27) (cf. Appendix # 14; Fellowship with God).
 2. God has promised eternal salvation for the sanctified and those without blame. This is the hope of the Christians’ calling, i.e., eternal salvation (cf. Acts 2:39; I Jn. 2:25). God will perform His words and promises (cf. Isa. 46:9-10).
- B. *“Brethren, pray for us. Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss”* (5:25-26).

1. Paul not only prayed for others he demanded that others pray for each other. As Paul was in Corinth at the time of this writing, he desired the prayers of the Thessalonian saints that all his work would be fruitful.
 2. To “*Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss*” is to exercise an outward show of fellowship and unity in the teachings of Jesus Christ. The word “*salute*” = “To welcome kindly, bid welcome, greet; as the common form on meeting... of things, to follow eagerly, cleave to” (LS 124). No such greeting could be extended to those walking in error (cf. II Jn. 9-11).
- C. “*I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren*” (5:27).
1. To “*adjure*” (*horkizo*) = “administration of an oath” (LS 568).
 2. It was Paul’s desire that the words of this letter be read to all brethren because they were divine instructions. It seems that the idea of instruction continues to surface in this epistle. Paul saw the necessity and importance of putting the brethren in the know regarding divine instructions and this would only come through teaching (cf. Rom. 10:11-15). This letter was not to be kept secret nor was it intended for a certain group of people. All the Thessalonians needed to read it that they may be informed and comforted. Note that truth with one set of brethren (i.e., the Thessalonians) was the same truth for all brethren (cf. I Cor. 4:17).
- D. “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*” (5:28).
1. God’s grace is revealed in His offer for salvation (Eph. 2:1ff).
 2. This grace teaches and instructs one to live Godly (Titus 2:11-12).
 3. It was Paul’s desire thereby that the Thessalonians be instructed and receive the gift of God; i.e., eternal life in heaven.

Synopsis of chapter 5

The people of God are a people who are informed and on the watch as opposed to sleeping in lethargic apathy regarding the coming of the Lord and His judgment. With said event ever in the Christian’s minds eye, they will seek peace, admonish, encourage, and be longsuffering toward other brethren. Said brethren rejoice, pray, and consider the word of God with all seriousness and diligence. These “*abstain from every form of evil*” (I Thess. 5:22). Such Christians look out to others of like precious faith and thereby greet them in full fellowship.

Concluding thoughts on I Thessalonians:

The overriding topic of I Thessalonians was the idea of teaching and instructing (1:5; 2:1-4, 8-9, 13; 3:1, 4, 10; 4:1-2, 6, 9, 13, 15; 5:2, 27) (cf. Appendix # 12; The Christian’s Spiritual Growth). The Thessalonians had received divine revelation from the apostle Paul and were receiving more revelation through this epistle (I Thess. 5:27). As these instructions became a part of their lives they suffered persecution from their countrymen (1:6; 2:2; 3:3, 7). Paul thereby encourages the brethren to continue their faithful walk even though some were making their lives miserable (2:12; 4:1). In due time, the wrath of God would be pored out upon those who rejected the Lord’s instructions and were disobedient (1:10; 2:16; 4:6; 5:3). Paul’s prayer and hope of the Thessalonians was that they would be found without blame and holy when the Lord comes again (3:13; 5:23).