

1 Thessalonians Background and Outline

Purpose: To strengthen the Thessalonian Church and to give them assurance of Jesus' return

Author: Paul

Date written: About 51 AD (one of Paul's earliest), from Corinth

Themes: Second coming of Jesus
Conduct of a watchful believer
Persecution

Setting: The Thessalonian church was young, having been established several years prior by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 17). The letter is in response to Timothy's report to Paul on their spiritual status. They needed to mature in their faith and they needed correction regarding the second coming of Jesus.

Outline:

- I. Relationship of Paul to the Thessalonian Church (1:1 – 3:13)
 - A. Their response to the Gospel (1:2-10)
 - B. Paul's ministry (2:1-12)
 - C. Their persecution (2:13-16)
 - D. Paul's intent for the Thessalonians (2:17 – 3:13)

- II. Exhortation of Paul to the Thessalonian Church (4:1 – 5:28)
 - A. Conduct of a believer (4:1-12)
 - B. The Return of Jesus Christ (4:13 – 5:11)
 - C. Conduct in the Church (5:12-22)
 - D. Closing prayer (5:23-28)

1 Thessalonians Overview

Setting: Paul's 2nd missionary journey...with Silas...not Mark or Barnabas
The Gospel goes to Europe

1st stop was Philippi...established a church there at Lydia's house
then, as always, trouble arose...

- Cast the demon out of a young woman...master was irate
- Beaten, cast into jail, and put in stocks
- broke into worship
- earthquake opened the doors and broke the chains
- imperiled jailer and his family get saved
- Paul played his "Roman citizen" card...protecting the church
and moved onto Thessalonica

Acts 17:1-10

Thessalonica was a large, important trade center and seaport on the Aegean Sea

Paul was in town 3 weeks preaching Jesus Christ and establishing a new church of
both Jews and Gentiles before being run out of town by unbelieving
religious fanatics

From Thessalonica Paul went to Berea...Athens...Corinth
He wrote this letter from Corinth

This letter

- One of the first...if not THE first...of the Epistles written by Paul
- First of 2 letters written to them
- Written to an infantile church
- Dominant topic was the End Times...the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ and the
Rapture
 - 1:10
 - 2:19
 - 3:13 – 5:11
 - 5:23
- But that's not all...

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

- v1 in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
notice the relationship declared in 2 “sets”
- the Church is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
 - God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...are equal

Grace...and peace:

as usual, “Grace”, then “peace”

Note: this letter sets the pattern since it is the first letter

- v2 we give thanks to God always for you, making mention...:
from his very first letter until his last, we see the thankful heart of a
prayerful shepherd

- v3 remembering without ceasing:
“never forgetting”

1 Cor 13:13 (now abideth faith, hope, love...) is first taught in the first
few words of the NT

within 3 weeks, this new fellowship of believers had a testimony:

1. work of faith

Not works to earn salvation but evidence of salvation

James 2:14-26

We are saved by grace thru faith, NOT by works lest any
man should boast

But the things we do are proof that our faith in Jesus is
genuine

2. labor of love (“pains and toils” of love)

The motivation for our works...the only motive acceptable
to God is love...the love of Christ

“If you love me....you are my friends if...”

John 14:15 and John 15:14

If personal gain and profit is the motive for our works, it is
a labor of the flesh not a labor of God’s love

3. patience of hope (“cheerful waiting”) in the Lord Jesus Christ

James 1:2-4 with 1 Peter 1:3-7

Titus 2:11-14

The Good News is that God the Son, Jesus Christ

- Came among us (“Immanuel”)
- Suffered and died in our stead
- Returned to heaven and sent God the Holy Spirit to gather a Bride unto Him...and comfort her in His absence
- Is coming back for His Bride!
- Is coming back again with His Bride to establish His kingdom

But so many churches...I was raised in one...

- never talk about Jesus Christ coming back for His Bride
- believe they will be the ones to establish the kingdom of God and then give it to Jesus

Where is the comfort in that?

Where is the Good News in that?

It is diluted of its hope and its urgency

Yet the Apostle Paul knew this was such an important and foundational truth...such incredibly Good News...that he taught it thoroughly in the first few weeks of the existence of this brand new church the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ is our sustaining hope...it helps us weather the storms of this life...
man cannot live without hope...man cannot live in hopelessness

v4 your election of God:

God choosing who will be saved...this is a divisive issue in the church today because it offends the fragile sensibilities of finite man to think that some men are chosen by God and some men are not

But the One choosing is the all-powerful, all-knowing, Infinite God who

- Gave man a choice to love and obey God...or to love himself and disobey God
- Became flesh, died, was buried, and rose again on the 3rd day because man made the wrong choice and in His grace made it possible for man to make a correcting choice
- Knows which men will believe in and choose Jesus Christ as their Lord...who by faith made the right choice
- Chooses those men

God gives us a choice...how can we deny Him making a choice?

We choose our spouse...why cannot He?

If you are a born-again believer, God chose and ordained you!

John 15:16

If you are not...did God chose you? Choose Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life and find out!

this truth is built into Paul's personal testimony...God initiated and Saul of Tarsus responded...God chose Paul because He knew how Paul would respond

Again, the election of God is such an important and foundational truth that Paul addressed it in the three weeks he was in town

v5 gospel came...in power
the Good News came in

1. Word

The Word of God...Absolute Truth...is spoken...

2. power

The Word of God...Absolute Truth...is revealed

The Word in action...the Living Word

words without the power are but sound...but

words in power are life-changing and life-giving

3. the Holy Spirit

The Gospel does not come by the power of man but by the power of God the Holy Spirit

Rom 1:16 the power of God unto salvation

Acts 1:8 "Don't go until you have The Power."

Zech 4:6 not by might not by power but by My Spirit

1 Cor 1:27 God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty...sent with His power

4. much assurance

"entire confidence"

a. John 14:6 Jesus is THE way, Truth, and Life, NO ONE comes to God any other way

b. the truth of the security of our salvation...another divisive doctrine in the church today...was taught by Paul in the first 3weeks of life of this new church

as ye know what manner of men we were among you:

the Gospel was presented in word and in deed by the power of the Holy Spirit...in walk and talk.

Paul was sincere, the real deal. He was not a hypocrite.

He lived what he preached.

Faith that is seen is real faith...works of faith

v6 ye became followers...in much affliction...with joy of the Holy Ghost:

The Good News came to them

- in word...
- in deed...
- in the power of the Holy Spirit
- in certainty

and they believed

- in great affliction
- with great joy

the terrible persecution Paul knew at the hands of the Jews in Thessalonica and Berea...this church also knew

yet in the affliction there was much joy...an internal, cheerful delight that is impervious to external circumstances

How is that possible? How can there be affliction and joy?

Only by the power of the Holy Spirit

Joy comes from the Lord.

We have joy when we train our eyes on Jesus and not on our circumstances

Satan works outward in...God works inward out.

Notice...

1. receive then follow

God always takes the initiative...man responds

2. affliction and joy

God's work will be resisted and attacked...He gives us the power to endure and prosper

We are in hostile territory...behind enemy lines.

So our Message will be resisted and rejected.

That is why we need the Power in and upon us.

v7-8 examples:

“models”

a model church instantly!

according to the Word of God, the model church is

- hungry and thirsty
- loving
- serving
- faithful
- consistent
- fruitful
- whole-hearted
- single-minded
- sold-out...on-fire
- uncompromising
- Spirit-filled
- Spirit-led
- watching
- ready
- occupying...“getting the Word out” to the surrounding community

Notice that God’s criteria for a model church do NOT include

- Age...Christianity is not a seniority system...but an availability to be used
- Size...what did numbers mean to the ministries of Gideon and Jonathan?
- Beauty/size/etc of a facility...Jesus was never a homeowner

This baby church was a model church immediately!

Issue: finishing as a model church (Rev 2-3)

My desire for CCA is not to be “big and beautiful”...but to be a model church that glorifies the Lord

We need not to speak anything:

The response to the Gospel was so intense...that what happened in this church was obviously all God!

- The establishment of this church was an “Upper Room” event
- The fruit of this church was “Philippian jail” fruit

their reputation preceded them

“Oh, you are from Thessalonica. Say no more.”

v9 they shew us...we had unto you:
their testimony is proof of their genuine faith in Jesus Christ...and reflects
the effectiveness of Paul's work while he was with them

ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God:
God revealed Himself to them...they embraced Him...
He transformed them...they served Him

only God has the power to accomplish this transformation

- turning to...from
- serving \ of formerly selfish, impatient people
- waiting /

the most powerful proof that Jesus Christ is Lord is a transformed life

man still worships idols today

Col 3:5 covetousness...of things, money, pleasure

every man

- serves a god
- becomes like the god he serves

you can determine a man's god by observing him...listening to him

v10 wait for His Son...delivered us from the wrath to come:
delivered = "rescued"

God is a holy God. He hates sin. All sin will be judged.
there is no remedy for sin except God's remedy (John 14:6)

For the believer, our sin was laid upon God's own Son, our Substitute, and
paid for by Him.

the wrath of God for my sins was poured out upon Jesus, the Lamb of
God, on the cross

By His stripes we are healed.

1 Thes 5:9

Rom 5:8-9

God showed us His love for us...while we were yet
sinners, Christ died for us

since we are justified by the blood of Christ, we are
saved from the wrath of God thru Him...

He is our Ark in the judgment of the world to come

So...in the very first words of the first book of the NT, Paul revisits doctrines he taught them in the three weeks he was with them

- the Trinity
- the election of God
- the security of our salvation
- the baptism of the Holy Spirit (power of God that comes upon)
- the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ
- the snatching away of the Bride of Christ
- the wrath of God to come

these doctrines may not be historic Church doctrine...Satan has attacked from within but they ARE Biblical doctrine

The 2nd coming of Jesus Christ dominates the letters to the Thessalonians

no generation of the church has escaped or ever will escape the wrath of Satan...

We endure the wrath of Satan as we overcome this world...by the power of the Holy Spirit

no generation of the church has faced or ever will face the wrath of God and the wrath of the Lamb

we need not fear God's wrath...we have made our peace with Him by putting our trust in the Lamb of God

Do you believe Jesus would beat up His precious Bride before the honeymoon?

Be freed from that fear

Do you want Jesus to return this very moment?

If not, you are probably turned toward an idol and away from the living and true God

WHEN

IS JESUS COMING AGAIN? I DON'T KNOW!! AND NEITHER DOES ANYBODY ELSE

Jesus said:

1. No man knows the hour

Matt 24:36

Matt 25:13

Acts 1:6-8

we are on God's schedule, not man's

2. He will come like a thief in the night

Matt 24: 42-51

3. People will be proclaiming "peace and safety"

1 Thes 5:2-3

4. We should be as ready as bride in Jewish wedding, who does not know when bridegroom is coming until hears trumpet

Matt 25:1-13

5. The servant who knows but does not get ready does not get a 2nd chance

Luke 12:45-47

6. It will happen very quickly

Rev 1:1 "shortly take place", "soon take place"

Heb. = "entachi"

root for "tachometer"

means "when it happens, will happen very rapidly"

the pace of events will be rapid

Doctrinal positions

- Millennialism: There will be a 1000 year Kingdom of Christ on earth
- Premillennialism: Christ will return before the millennium and, in fact, will establish His 1000 year Kingdom when He returns.
- Postmillennialism: Christ will return after the 1000 or more years of peace on earth that come about as a result of Christian preaching and teaching
- Amillennialism: There is no 7 year Tribulation on earth and there is no 1000 year Kingdom of Christ on earth; His second coming ushers in eternity
Note: despite the fact that all fulfilled Biblical prophesies were done so literally, unfulfilled prophesies are written in symbolic language and are not to be interpreted literally
- Pretribulationism: Christ comes for His Church before the Tribulation starts and comes with His Church to establish the millennium.
(Tribulation is Jacob's Trouble, Dan 9 is a Jewish prophesy)
- Midtribulationism: Christ comes for His Church midway (3½ years) into the Tribulation
- Posttribulationism: His Church (Bride) will go thru the 7 year Tribulation. Christ's coming for His own and with His own will happen at the same time as a general resurrection and judgment just before the eternal state begins.

The bottom-line issue is how you interpret Scripture, specifically unfulfilled prophesy: literally or symbolically

Premillennialism/Pretribulationism is based on the literal interpretation of Scriptures e.g.:

- unconditional promises to Abraham and David
- promises to Israel will be fulfilled
- the Church does not replace Israel
- Rapture of the Church is different from Christ's 2nd coming)
- 7 year Tribulation on earth
- Christ's 2nd coming (to earth) starts the 1000 year reign
- at the end of Christ's kingdom, eternity is ushered in
- 2 Resurrections

A. 3 kinds of people in God's 2 world judgments

| <u>Kinds</u> | <u>Flood</u> | <u>Fire</u> |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| pulled out prior to saved during perish in | Enoch Noah + 7 world | Church Tribulation saints unbelievers |

B. OT hints of the rapture

1. Gen 7 Flood didn't start until Noah was in the Ark (the Ark is a model of Jesus)
2. Gen 19 Lot rescued from Sodom prior to judgment
3. Gen 24 Rebekah taken out of the world to meet her husband Isaac, a model of Jesus
4. Is 26:19-21
John 14:2 many mansions in My Father's house
5. Zeph 2:3 seek the Lord, be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger
6. Dan 3 Where is Daniel?
7. Ruth 3 Ruth at Boaz's feet during threshing (judgment)
8. Gen 5:24 Enoch translated (halfway between Adam & Abraham)
9. 2 K 2:11-12 Elijah translated (halfway between Abraham & Jesus)
10. Psalm 27:4-5 He will hide me in the day of trouble
11. Psalm 47:5 God has gone up with a shout, the sound of a trumpet
12. Psalm 81:3 new moon is concealed/hidden
13. 2 K 8:1-6 sojourn, 7 year famine, restoration

C. 1 Thes

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 1 Thes 1:10 | Jesus rescues us from the coming wrath |
| 1 Thes 3:13 | when Jesus comes with His holy ones |
| 1 Thes 4:13-17 | caught up in the clouds |
| | Acts 14:19-20, 2 Cor 12:1-3 |
| 1 Thes 5:1-10 | "peace and safety" then sudden destruction |
| | there will be no peace |
| 1 Thes 5:23-24 | He is faithful, He will do it |

D. other Scripture

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. 1 Cor 15:42-57 | Resurrection body, we will all be changed |
| 2. 1 John 2:28-3:3 | we shall be like Him |
| 3. Phil 3:20-21 | transform our lowly bodies |

E. The Church is the bride of Christ

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Matt 9:14-15 | Jesus calls Himself the Bridegroom |
| 2 Cor 11:2 | we are promised to one husband, Christ |
| Eph 5:22-32 | husbands and wives = Christ and Church |
| Hints in the OT: | 1. Gen 22 & 24 Issac and Rebekah |
| | 2. Ruth Ruth & Boaz |
| | 3. Hosea God and Israel |
| | 4. Others Joseph and Asenath |
| | Moses and Zipporah |
| | Salmon and Rahab |
| | David and Bathsheba |

Note: All Gentile brides above have no death recorded!!

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2

- v1 our entrance in unto you...not in vain:
Paul was opposed by the enemy in Thessalonica...but many came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ
- the preaching of the Gospel WILL be met with opposition...
...but it is never in vain!
1 Cor 15:58 be steadfast...know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord
- v2 shamefully entreated...in Philippi...we were bold in our God to speak unto you:
What did the Apostle Paul do after being beaten and locked up into a dungeon? Went immediately back to his calling!
2 Cor 4:7-9 troubled yet not distressed
perplexed but not in despair
persecuted but not forsaken
cast down but not destroyed
- the measure of a minister is not in numbers or in church buildings...
it is faithfulness to his calling
- The work of God in a Spirit-filled man cannot be stopped by the hostility of the world
Rom 8:31
The Church has always prospered in times of persecution
- v3 our exhortation was not of deceit nor of uncleanness nor in guile:
Paul is speaking of his ministry and his motives for doing the Lord's work...and it serves as a model for any minister
- motives as pure as God's love
 - approach that was straight-forward and honest
- deceit, uncleanness, and guile are characteristics of Satan and his servants

v4 we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel:
God has entrusted the Gospel to us...what an incredible trust God has placed in us!
Do we comprehend what God has invested in us and what He wants us to do with it?

We speak, not as pleasing men but God:
Paul was not out to win a popularity contest!
“But everyone else is doing it!” did not fly in his house!

Paul went into every town yielding a Sword!
Heb 4:12 the Word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword
Matt 10:34 Jesus did not come to send peace, but a sword

The faithful servant of God speaks God’s life-changing truth...
not flattering, “feel-good”, and entertaining sermons
The truth often times offends...discomforts...upsets people
(we are never to be offensive in our giving of the truth!)
The Light is not pleasing to the natural man hiding in the darkness
But preaching the gospel is pleasing to God!

the servant of God will answer to God, not to any man
So who do you want to please?
Matt 10:28

so preach Jesus boldly in the face of contention

1. You are entrusted by God with His priceless message
2. To please Him Who saved you

Ask the Lord to give you the boldness to share the

- life-giving
- life-changing
- healing

Sword He has placed in your hands

v5 at any time used we flattering words...nor a cloke of covetousness:
“I did not dilute or soften The Message in order to avoid the edge of the world’s ‘sword’ (the persecution) that comes from using it.”
Paul was a no-nonsense guy

the Gospel is not flattering...the truth about man is not flattering.
Jer 17:9-10 heart is desperately wicked and deceitful
Is 64:6 our very best is like filthy rags
Gen 6:5 our imagination is evil continually
Rom 3:10 none are righteous, no not one
Rom 3:23 we all fall short of the glory of God

The whole truth must be understood...so speak the plain truth plainly

- Don’t mince words
- Don’t be vague
- Don’t look to be diplomatic...while not being offensive
- Just say it the way it is

1 Cor 2:1-5

Paul preached the gospel with sincerity...and with no strings attached
he did not come with a hidden agenda, looking for worldly gain
His motive was love...to seek and save the lost...not to make a killing financially

v6 nor of men sought we glory...nor...burdensome:
“We did not preach to become famous.
We did not come to make PEOPLE Magazine’s 10 Most Intriguing People list.”
how many ministers thrive on the praise and applause of men?
They have their “pleasing target” messed up
Is 10:15
Jer 9:23-24
2 Cor 10:17, 1 Cor 1:31 he that glories, let him glory in the Lord

v7 gentle:
loving and compassionate...like Jesus
meek...like Jesus

God’s sacrificial, unconditional Love is the most excellent way.

v8 affectionately desirous:
“yearning for”
an intense longing based on the love of God, not the self-gratifying
lust of the flesh

Paul poured out his heart and soul and his life to these people he loved

Monica and I know what Paul is saying...we love you guys and are
humbled to have the privilege to minister to and with you
the Christmas party Friday night was absolutely delightful!
“We have a great fellowship! Wonderful people.”

v9 laboring day and night:
Paul worked during the day and taught Bible studies at night...so he could
bring them Good News without being a financial burden to them
the tentmaker worked hard!
2 Thes 3:10...spoken by a hard working man...
not a sluggard or a leech
even though God’s Word say the ox is worthy of his hire
v6
1 Cor 9:9-19

He refused to be a burden, lest he stumble some in their young faith or
make listeners think he had an improper motive...and therefore
reject the message entrusted to him

the joy of ministering to God’s people is so great, this “double duty” is no
big deal

Paul is undermining the false teachers who came thru town preaching...
1. A diluted message...
2. To please men...
3. For their own personal gain

Monica and I also know what Paul is saying here

I am pleased that the Lord has given me a job to support my family.

- The church is not strong enough to bear that burden
- We never want any one to say we are doing this for the money
- We do this because
 1. We love Him Who first loved us...
 2. He called us to preach and teach the Word here
 3. We love you, His children...our brothers and sisters

v10 we behaved ourselves:

“Our actions...consistent with our message...speak louder than our words.
Remember how we lived among you.”

Paul’s actions testified of his motives
as he did everywhere, Paul walked the talk.
he lived the Gospel for all to see...honestly, not for show

This is a clear measure of a minister of God that we take VERY seriously
James 3:1

v11-12 we exhorted and comforted and charged you:

how a father is to deal with his kids vs Col 3:21

1. encouraging
 2. comforting
 3. urging/showing/living godly lives/witnessed
- giving them the Word of God, which is given by our Father to
encourage and comfort and exhort us

that you walk worthy of God:

“live appropriately”

How do we live appropriately?

a consistent lifestyle characterized by

- holiness
- purity
- honesty
- kindness
- forgiveness
- love

we now live in a different kingdom...talk and act accordingly
the consequences of not doing so are devastating

- To other believers
 1. Stumble them in their faith
“It must be OK if he can do it...”
 2. Shipwreck their faith
“Her?! After all she has preached to me?
Hypocrite! I am never coming to church again, I’m
not hanging out with Christians any more because
they are not honest.”
- To unbelievers
 3. Give them cause/opportunity to blaspheme God
“You are a phony! So your God is a phony!”

v13 when ye received...ye heard...ye received...it as the Word of God:
because Paul lived the Gospel, they heard what he was saying...
and knew the message was from God, not man.

truths:

- you must believe before you can understand
the spirit must be born before spiritual truths can be understood
- you must have faith before you can see
God gives both...we only receive

effectually worketh also in you that believe:

They believed and the Word of God went to work on their hearts

the Gospel of Jesus Christ works!

- Heals
- Transforms
- Changes

It is the only thing that genuinely works...has everlasting results

Man's ways are only as deep as man

But man's problems are much bigger than man

God's ways are bigger than the biggest problem of man

I KNOW that by teaching the Word verse-by-verse

- The Seed is being sown and watered
- Lives will be radically changed by the power of the Word
- The increase belongs to the Lord

v14 have suffered like things
they are suffering persecution from their own countrymen for the
Gospel of Jesus Christ...just like their Jewish brothers and
sisters!
the unbelieving Gentiles persecuted the believing Gentiles just as the
unbelieving Jews did the believing Jews.

When you “walk worthy of God”...people resent it!
They are angry you no longer want to drink and party and etc with
them
They mock and develop a hatred for our “goody-two-shoes”
Lifestyle...and for loving them with the love of God

But that is so irrational!
How could any one hate another who is

- pure
- honest
- kind
- forgiving
- loving

which unbeliever, trapped in a dark alley, would prefer the 2 “monster
men” approaching him to be carrying lead pipes vs Bibles?

It does not make sense, but the world hates

- Holiness
- Purity
- Righteousness

Gut check: is the world antagonistic of your lifestyle?
If it is not...

v15-16 who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets:

Paul knew EXACTLY what the Jews were thinking...he thought he was doing the work of God by trying to wipe out the sect called "Christians"

Note: we all killed Jesus

Satan corrupts this verse to sow anti-Semitism in the Church

forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles:

The Jews rebelled at the thought of the salvation of the God of Israel being available to the "dogs"....

they thought salvation was

- only available exclusively to the Jew, "God's chosen people"
- a matter of nationality...not of faith

That this "traitor" would spread this vicious lie everywhere he went infuriated the Jews.

They did not love the Gentiles, they hated them and yearned for the wrath of God to fall upon them.

The Jews came to misrepresent God, not witness of Him to the world

Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost:

16 years after Paul wrote this the Romans

- destroyed Jerusalem
- destroyed the Temple
- slaughtered over 1 million Jews
- scattered the rest to the 4 corners of the world

misrepresenting God carries some very heavy consequences!

v17 taken:

separated from them, Paul felt the great pain of an orphaned child...
the yearning for the fellowship of like-minded believers

separated in body but never in spirit
John 14:16-18

v18 but Satan resisted us:

forget the Jews for a moment...Satan was none too happy about the Good
News of God's love and grace going out into his kingdom either

we are resisted and attacked every step of the way as the enemy tries to
discourage and distract us from our calling
especially true this past several weeks – a direct attack on us and our
ministries, and on others in the fellowship

v19 our hope, our joy, or crown of rejoicing:

again, the dominant theme of this letter – the return of Jesus

our crowns will be those people we have ministered to in word and in deed
with the Truth of God.

story: husband + drinking buddies waking up born-again wife to cook
breakfast...

What do we do with those crowns?
Rev 4:10-11

v20 Ye are our glory

Why do we labor as we do? The sheer joy:

- To see you in the presence of the Lord!
- To see the work of the Lord in and thru your lives!
- To see you grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 3

v1-2 we could no longer forbear:

remember, Paul, Silas, and Timothy were in Thessalonica only for 3 Sabbaths before violent trouble arose to drive him out of town... they left in a hurry so he was not able to finish what he had started... to teach them the Scriptures in depth to establish their faith so, naturally, as would any parent, Paul was deeply concerned for the health of these new babes as a result of their sudden departure after such a short stay

from Thessalonica they went to Berea and then on to Athens, where

- their angst was go great...
- the pain of separation so intense...
- the hindering of Satan so persistent...

that they couldn't take it any more...they split ranks

- Paul sent Timothy back to the Thessalonians
- Silas went back to Berea
- Paul...the "marked" man...remained alone in Athens

"I could not get to you and I had to know how you are doing...so I sent Timothy

- to "firm up" your faith
- to comfort you (2 Cor 1:3-4)
- to steady you upon the Rock in this time of persecution (Matt 7:24-27)
- to remind you of God's promises
 1. we shall have tribulation (John 16:33)
 2. God is near (Jer 1:6-8, 19)
 3. if God be for us who can be against us (Rom 8:31)
 4. we overcome by faith (1 John 4:4, 1 John 5:4-5)
- that I might know how you are doing spiritually

Timothy was a trusted ambassador...

- Brother in Christ
- Servant of God
- Fellow-laborer in the Gospel

to do an important work of discipleship

Discipleship: we all need

- Some one to disciple us (1 & 2 Tim are personal discipleship letters from Paul to Timothy)
- Some one to disciple...no one learns more than the teacher!

None of us can be a growing, maturing Christian alone

the most important part of the Great Commission is that which must take place AFTER witnessing and leading to Christ, “making disciples”, moving from “believe”...to “devoted”...to “sold-out”

sadly, it is usually the most neglected part of the Great Commission... because

- it is the most time and effort consuming part...
and the flesh is lazy
- it requires PERSONAL investment in another person...
and the flesh is self-centered
- it includes accountability...
and the flesh hates that, preferring the darkness to the Light!
- Satan intensely resists it...
because a new born is an easy target for him and a “sold out” Christian keeps him running

You MUST invest yourself and your faith in the baby Christian, to

- Teach/feed
- Protect
- Grow/strengthen
- Encourage
- Edify

Be a trusted ambassador of God’s sanctifying work of Phil 1:6

- So the enemy does not rip them off or rip them apart.
- So they do not take “the easy way out” during persecution and say, “Oh, I give up! Life was easier before becoming a Christian.”
- So they grow deep roots so they are not shaken off their Foundation (1 Cor 3:11) by the certain attacks of Satan...who piles on and kidney punches and whispers in their ear, “Curse God and die!”
- To remind them that Satan needs permission (ala Job) and to remind them that God never allows more than He knows we can bear

v3-4 we should suffer tribulation:

consider Paul's calling by the Lord

Acts 9:4-16

Jesus did not call Paul with a false invitation of

- Fame
- Fortune
- Luxury
- Glory
- Health and wealth

The calling was one of suffering and affliction

And it was all coming to pass!

Paul did not want these babes to be moved from the faith because of his suffering...while assuring them they would have their own

Don't be moved by tribulation – the pressure allowed by God to separate the wheat from the chaff – let your light shine!

Persecution is to be expected by the faithful and bold Christian
and Darkness will persecute the Light...

but there is not enough darkness in the whole world to extinguish
the light of even one candle!

I wake up my daughter to go to work on Saturday morning
She wants me to turn on soft music...but she succumbs to the
temptations of a warm bed and lounges there...and ends up
being late

so I turn on the light...in her room or even in the hallway
she hates it...but she gets right up and is on time
as her father, I give her what she needs...light

Give those whom you are disciplining what they need...the Light of the
world

- v5 Lest by some means the tempter have tempted you:
Paul...a sower of the Word of God...knew the devices of Satan
- to snatch away the Word of God sown in the world
Matt 13:4, 19
 - to “turn up the heat” through persecution
Matt 13:5-6, 20-21
 - to lure man out of the spiritual realm into the physical realm
Matt 13:7, 22
James 1:13-16
 - to sow lies with the Truth
Matt 13:24-30

v6-7 when Timothy came from you:
from Athens Paul went to Corinth, where Timothy caught up with him

Paul was very distressed about the health of these baby Christians

- While he was in Berea
- While he was in Athens
- And while he was in Corinth

Then Timothy returns with his report!

- their faith in Jesus was strong...the Seed had taken root!
Their hearts were good soil
- they were comforted and encouraged during intense persecution because they were looking for the imminent return of Jesus Christ
- their fruit (Gal 5:22-23) was abounding...they loved Paul as he loved them
- the Lord has protected their minds from the lies and distorted messages from false teachers
- their hunger for fellowship remains strong

we were comforted:

the “boomerang” effect of the Thessalonian report:

- Paul desired to comfort them in their affliction...and is himself comforted by their faith!
- it resulted in this letter being written...the first book of NT

we find comfort and encouragement in the faith of others in times of affliction and distress.

when healthy, each part of the Body ministers to the other parts

this is how the Church prospers in times of persecution

v8 we live if you stand fast:
“Your steadfastness gives me strength. I can endure persecution knowing you are strong and faithful.”

we encourage each other...strengthen each other...love each other

thru each other, we can hear our Captain
“Steady as she goes, my beloved.”

Heb 2:9-10

Heb 5:8-9

Heb 12:1-3

1 Peter 4:19

v9-10 what thanks can we render...praying exceedingly that we might see your face:
we see the thankful heart of a man of God

“How can I express my thanks to God for your

- well-being
- faith
- steadfastness?”

we also see the prayerful heart of a shepherd.

His preaching and their receiving the Gospel of Grace is not enough!

His fervent desire is that they

- grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ
- mature and become stronger and even more fruitful

Heb 5:13-14

Rom 10:17...so he wanted to return to complete his teaching that they would grow and mature in Christ

Paul desires to complete that which he has started...in spite of persecution in that place

Paul never let persecution keep him away from anywhere

Discipleship...

- the building up of the faith...
- sharing the Word of God...because the more we know of the Word, the greater is our faith
- is mission-critical work...and it never ends...
- going back...in the face of persecution
- yet is often overlooked in many churches

don't be negligent to our Commission of “making disciples”

v11 direct our way unto you:
we see the loving heart of an estranged shepherd to be re-united

Ps 37:23 the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he
delights in his way

Prov 16:9 a man's heart devises his way but the Lord directs his steps

v12 the Lord make you to increase:

The Bible says

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 John 4:8 | God is love |
| John 15:1-5 | Jesus is the vine |
| Gal 5:22 | love is the fruit |
| John 3:30 | love grows when self dies |
| 1 Cor 3:6-7 | the increase belongs to the Lord |

The world knows we are disciples of Jesus by our love one for
another...only by abiding in Jesus are we able to do that

we can feel the love of the Lord in this fellowship!

The Christmas Eve service was overflowing with God's love

v13 hearts unblameable in holiness:
the Love of God establishes our hearts...and results in holiness

a fading message in the church today – holiness and purity
too many pastors are more concerned with

- self-esteem
- “church building” programs
- being “Seeker friendly”...making others feel good so they will come back
- not offending with “sin”, “repentance”, “submission”, “denial of self”

...and in so doing are compromising with the world and bringing the world into the church...which instead is called to be holy...separate from the world

pray for a strengthened heart in every pulpit

At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“Steady as she goes, my beloved. Be faithful to your calling.”

- Until Jesus returns
- Because Jesus is returning

Since we do not know when...we need to be ready now!

By walking in holiness and purity

Because when He comes “in the twinkling of an eye”, we will not have time to say

- “I’m sorry, forgive me!”
- “Can you wait while I clean up the mess I made?”

THE promise

- helps us endure whatever the world throws at us...
 - motivates us to live holy and pure
- 1 John 3:3 every man that has this hope purifies himself

purity and THE promise are developed in Ch 4 & 5

1 Thessalonians Chapter 4

Because Jesus Christ is returning soon, we have lots of motivation to live holy lives

The Holy Spirit thru Paul continues His exhortation to Godly living in

- Love
- Holiness
- Purity

v1 Furthermore:

in light of Jesus' soon return, The Holy Spirit thru Paul has some very strong words for us

- beseech = "to plead with" i.e. not small talk
- exhort = "to implore" i.e. not a casual invitation
- ought = "must" i.e. not merely a suggestion

the strong words are applied to

1. walking – every moment...not just a slice of time on Sunday
2. pleasing God – His excitement...more than an "atta boy"

the words are strong because God's intense desire that we increase to overflowing

- with His love and grace
- in the riches in heavenly places in Christ Jesus

and that we NOT wander around looking for the boundary of God's love, "pushing the envelope" of God's grace

- How close can I live to the world and not get into trouble with the Lord? (looking for loopholes in the Word of God)
- Is what I want to do right or wrong, is it sin or not?

Instead, the question is, "Will it please God?"

The issue is pleasing God...

Don't live on the edge...live in the mainstream of God's will for you

v2 commands...by the Lord Jesus:

Matt 22:37-40

John 6:28-29 (Hab 2:4)

John 15:12-14

v3 this is the will of God...sanctification:
sanctification = "purification, holiness"

it is God's will that I be

- Pure and holy
- Conformed into the image of Jesus

the vessels in the tabernacle were sanctified...used ONLY in the worship of God...and are a picture of our lives are to be

Jesus has purchased us with the highest of prices...we do not belong to ourselves but to Him...so we are to live completely to please Him

abstain from fornication:

the only direct prohibition...the only sin mentioned...is sexual sin

background: life at the time in a Greek town in the Roman Empire

- hundreds of gods and the worship of many of them involved sexual activity
- soaring divorce rates
- the crumbling of the family unit..."family" had no value
- culturally expected for men to have
 1. wives – rearing of legitimate heirs
 2. concubines – carnal pleasure
 3. mistresses – excitement

into that society came the Gospel with God's message of

- holiness
- purity
- marital faithfulness...

foreign concepts in the minds of the locals

the sex drive is a gift from God...His design for sexual activity is beautiful intimacy between husband and wife...ONLY

fornication is a corruption...a perversion...of that beautiful gift

sexual purity is a highly important issue in the Word of God

Acts 15:19-20 regarding the Gentile believers

Abstain from Idols

Things strangled

Blood

Fornication

Sexual sin is very serious sin in God's eyes because it is sin that

- wounds the soul of God's beloved creature
- is ugly and painful bondage...not beautiful intimacy
- is spiritual unfaithfulness and idolatry...the worshipping a false god in the flesh vs True God in Spirit and in truth

fornication = any sexual activity outside of God's design for it between husband and wife...sex between

- man and woman (outside of a marital relationship)
- boy and girl
- man and girl
- man and boy
- boy and woman
- girl and woman
- boy and boy
- girl and girl
- human and creature

v3-5 possess in sanctification and honor, not in the lust:

it is God's will that we learn how to control the urges of the flesh...not to be controlled by the urges of the flesh

God calls us into a decision to "refrain from" sexual sin...
to flee like Joseph fled

- grounded in the will of God for his life
- aware of his surroundings vs oblivious like so many of us
- aware of his own heart...not deceived by his flesh
- determined (decided in advance...not in the heat of the moment) to not compromise God's will...which he knew was always the VERY best for him

Note: anything contrary to the will of God is sin

- determined to not get surprised or trapped by a subtle enemy
- constantly watching...at the first hint of trouble, he fled...
"escaped by running away"...from sexual sin and to following God in righteousness, holiness, and purity

1 Tim 6:11

2 Tim 2:22

sexual purity is a spiritual issue
1 Cor 6:19-20

the decisions surrounding sexual purity are

- obedience (doing what you know God says to do)
- denial of self vs indulgence of self
- making right choices thru the submission of your will

sexual purity is compromised by the lack of self-control

- unrestrained emotions (“I love you!”)...which is NOT agape
- unrestrained urges of the flesh (“I love me!”)

So, we adults must

- Protect our thought life...fantasies become realities if we don't
- Be like Joseph...grounded, aware, determined, watching
- Rejoice in the safe boundaries given us by Abba Father

And we parents of teenagers and soon-to-be-teenagers must...LISTEN!!!!

- Have our eyes wide open all the time...the pressure they face is intense and relentless
- Not be foolish...not blindly trusting our “Christian” children
- Keep the “leash” short for their protection
- Teach them the Word of God
- Pray, pray, pray

But, blinded by sexual sin, you say to me...or your child says to you...

“You don't understand!

I love him/her!

I want to see him/her!

I want to talk with him/her!

I am going crazy being apart from him/her!”

God does not care about your agony...because you are agonizing over something that is harmful to you, something that is destructive

- Physically – STDs scar...maim...kill
- Emotionally – when your heart is ripped out and stomped on...and other vital relationships and trusts are broken...requiring a restoration process that is slow, painful, and difficult
- Spiritually – estrangement from Him
Jer 5:25 sins have turned away good things from you
Is 59:1-2 separated between you and your God, have hid His face from You, that He will not hear

God cares about your obedience and your right choices.
He cares about you, your physical, emotional, and spiritual health!
When we submit to His will, He re-aligns and heals our feelings

We need to learn how to restrain the urges of the flesh in order to walk
pleasing to God

v6 to go beyond and defraud:
“to take advantage of”

Applications

1. In the context of fornication...sexual sin
how many boys/men have told a girl/woman, “I love you”
for the express purpose of taking her to bed?
(really saying “I love me!”)
Girls/ladies, those are “fleeing” words!
Boys/men, snap out of it and realize Who you are
attempting to con!
God takes this affront personally and will avenge the sin of
taking advantage of another!
2. In the business realm
Thessalonica was a very large commercial center
Business was conducted in an aggressive dog-eat-dog way
Anything went...no rules...just win, baby!
Everyone was looking for an angle to take advantage of the
other guy

the Lord is the Defender of the weak and the defenseless.

In Paul’s stronger terms, He is the Avenger of the wrongs inflicted on
them

Gal 6:7-8 Be not deceived, God is not mocked, will reap what sow

Heb 10:30 Vengeance is mine, says the Lord

v7 God has called us...unto holiness:
uncleanness: “impurity”

holiness: “purification”

same Greek word translated “sanctification” in v3-4

God has called us to be clean in body, soul, and spirit...

Who can be holy apart from the power of the Holy Spirit?

v8 he therefore that despiseth:
to despise this exhortation is to despise God...because God has established
the rules and the boundaries of holy living

despiseth: “violates another”
fornication is the violation of

- God
- God’s beautiful gift
- Yourself, the Temple of the Holy Spirit
- Another person, either a child of Satan or a child of God (in which case, also the Temple of the Holy Spirit)

Fornication prostitutes that which is priceless...purity...for a cheap thrill

Fornication carries a very steep price...how can it be worth it?
Is 1:18...and flee fornication

How do we walk pleasing to God?

- flee fornication
serving a false God
love God with all your heart, soul, strength
- do not lie, cheat or steal
love your neighbor as yourself

Matt 22:37-40

God help us!!!!

We NEED the power of the Holy Spirit to walk pleasing to God...

- Holy
- Pure
- Faithful
- Honorable

Because...in the context of this letter...Jesus is coming back! Soon!
And we don’t know when....

v9 But as touching:
“with respect to”

Paul changes subjects to the command of Jesus that we love one another
v2

love:

He is writing of *phileo* (brotherly affection) but acknowledges they don't need instruction from him because God has supernaturally instructed them on *agape* (God's sacrificial, unconditional love)

an example...the fellowship after service on Sunday and Thursday
(could be BEFORE also...if did not “just-in-time” schedule)
the “gathering” ministry

v10 ye do it toward all:
this is a Spirit-filled Church...filled with God's love
The love of the Lord has spilled out of their hearts and houses into the entire area of Macedonia

but we beseech you...increase:

Yet,

- who can ever get enough of God's love? Of the Spirit of God?
Covet the fruit of the Spirit, love, in your life
- who can love too much?
Be a funnel of God's love

Don't just be filled...be an overflowing cup

Next subject: working...pulling your own weight

v11 study to be quiet:
“labor, strive” “to keep still”

to be quiet in a restful, peaceful sense

it’s a tough study, isn’t it!

- Slow down
- be still
- listen

and do your own business:

Why is Paul saying this? What is the issue?

Paul, in town for only 3 Sabbaths, taught them the very important doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus Christ...”at any time”

And, by faith, they clung to this truth

some even took advantage...(v6)

- Quit their jobs
- Dropped out of school
- Stopped living
- Became sponges...leeches...on a Body characterized by
Love
Grace
Kindness
Forgiveness
2nd and 3rd and 4th and...chances
- Became gossiping busy-bodies

Strive to keep still and go quietly about your business...

- to occupy (doing the work of the Lord)...and
- to work hard at your own occupation

Don’t expect someone else to provide for your needs...support yourselves.

Note: a lingering problem since mentioned again in 2 Thes 3:10
Don’t be ashamed when the Lord does return!

v12 That ye may walk honestly:

work and be a productive member of society...in so doing you will

1. have your needs met
2. more importantly, be a decent witness and ambassador of Christ to the unbelievers who are watching you.

As we sojourn in this strange land as Abraham did, the Christian should:

- live a quiet life
God highly values a meek and quiet spirit
1 Peter 3:4
- live a Christ-centered life...
walk the walk...before you talk the talk
talk the talk...as given opportunities by the Lord...
walk the walk...after you talk the talk...because
“What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what
you are saying.”
- work
be busy...work hard
to gain the respect of unbelievers so that you will have
credibility when you share the Gospel
and to not be a burden on others...to carry your own weight
1 Tim 5:8
work is a blessing from God
Eccl 5:19

You may be the only Bible some people will ever read...how does your
life represent God?

v13 I would not have you to be ignorant:
next subject: the status of believers who have died before Jesus returns

he did not want them to be ignorant...because they were...concerning
them which are asleep

asleep = physically dead
John 11:1-14

What happens after the physical death of a child of God is radically
different from what happens after the death of an unbeliever
John 11:21-26

Yet Lazarus was already physically dead...so what did Jesus mean?

Deaths in the Bible

1. physical: separation of man's spirit from his body
2. spiritual: separation of man's spirit from God

Jesus was saying: "Though you will die physically, you will never die
spiritually if you believe in Me."

man is physically born in a condition of spiritual death

That's why Jesus said, "You must be born-again."

Now He is saying, "If you are born again, you will never die spiritually."

So a spiritually alive man will die physically...but he can never die!
he simply moves into a body made in heaven equipped for eternity
in the very presence of God

for the child of God, physical death is

- a change of address
- a point of transition
- NOT an end

But when an unbeliever dies, he is utterly dead...

- was always spiritually dead (separated...not ceasing to exist)
- now is physically dead
- dead forever...no more life
- into utter darkness and torment

that ye sorrow not, even as other which have no hope:

Paul did not want them to be ignorant...because they were
He needed to address some misconceptions and questions floating around
about the Resurrection as it relates to the return of Jesus Christ

“Since my husband died before Jesus came, what happened to him?”
they were thinking that those who had died physically before Jesus
returned had missed out on His glorious kingdom on earth!

Regarding sorrow...

- rather than “choke our tears” back for fear of not looking spiritual, we should sorrow/grieve when loved ones move on...to grieve is part of the human condition
- the grief for a believer who has moved on...which includes the innocent children...is a selfish grief – we miss them!
- But the grief for an unbeliever who has died is a hopeless grief – we will never see them again

v14 if we believe:
“since” we believe...

them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him:
this is not teaching “soul sleep” in the grave with the body
“sleep in Jesus” vs “sleep in the grave”

2 Cor 5:8 to be absent from body is to be present with Lord

1 K 17:17-22 Elijah & the son of the widow of Zarephath
“the soul of the child came into him again”

Acts 7:55-60 Stephen “Lord, receive my spirit”...he fell asleep

2 Cor 12:2-4 Paul “caught up” and sent back

Rev 6:9-10 Trib saints – souls under the altar

v15 we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord:
“we” includes Paul!

He believed he would live to see Jesus return
How much more should we!

shall not prevent them which are asleep:
prevent = “precede”

those of us who are alive when Jesus returns will not enter into His
presence before those who have died...
in fact they precede us...they have gone on before us (v14)

v16 for the Lord Himself shall descend:

Jesus Christ does not send an angel, He comes personally for His Bride

He is coming...for me!!!

He is leaving the right hand of the Father in heaven to come to the
atmosphere...for me!

with a shout...voice...trump of God:
the return of Jesus will be announced by

- a shout

what does Jesus say?

John 11:43 Lazarus, come forth!

Rev 4:1 Come up hither!

- the voice of the archangel

Michael is THE arch (one-of-a-kind) angel

He stands for Israel

Dan 12:1

Rev 12:7

He is involved in the pivotal event by which God
turns His attention from the Church and
back again to Israel!

There is a significant change here –
the Church is “out” and Israel is “in”
2 Witnesses, the 144,000, Joel 2

- the trumpet of God

not the trumpets of God’s wrath in Revelation...
this one is to comfort us (v18)

and the dead in Christ shall arise first:
and those who are asleep will awake!

Amen!

v17 Then we which are alive shall be caught up:
then...and only then (1 Cor 14:40) (think life is out of control? It's not)

- those who still have physical life will be caught up
caught up = "to snatch away, to take by force"
e.g. Lot

Latin translation of the Greek is the source of "Rapture"

notice again that Paul includes himself in the "we"

- we will meet the Lord...and those brothers and sisters who preceded us...

- in the air

This is NOT the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ!
He does not go to the earth...but to the atmosphere
He does not come to judge...but to collect His Bride

Notice that Jesus comes right into Satan's domain...
the prince of the power of the air...
to snatch His Bride away!

- and we all shall be with Him forever!
For us, the children of God who believe BEFORE Jesus comes to the clouds,
 1. the trials and tribulations
 2. the tears and the pain
 3. the suffering and the persecutionwill all be over...and we will enter into our rest and our inheritance

v18 comfort one another:

in context of the misunderstanding by the Thessalonians, comfort those who are grieving their physically dead loved ones...we are going to see them again...in the clouds...with Jesus...and then forever!

God's truth regarding life and death...

- comforts us concerning those loved ones who are born again
1 Cor 15:20-26, 51-57
2 Tim 1:10
Heb 2:14-15
Rom 5:10
Rom 8:1-2
Rev 1:18
- motivates us to share the love of Jesus Christ NOW...because He alone offers hope beyond the grave

For us today, since v17 is true,

- all the trials and tribulations
- all the tears and the pain
- all the suffering and the persecution

can be endured in this life...for we are more than conquerors

with the awesome truth of the Lord's soon return, the world cannot discourage me!

Our blessed hope comforts us while we are in enemy territory

I do not have perfect understanding...but I have complete comfort!

2 areas of comfort

1. the Rapture (4: 13-18)
2. salvation from God's wrath (5:1-11)
we can stand against the wrath of Satan – we have a Shield
but none can stand against the wrath of God

we are nearer the Rapture this year than we were last year!
The words of Rom 13:11-14 have never been more true.

In our walks with Jesus, we don't have time for "chili today, hot tamale"
We all must be on-fire...every day

There is no time for

- Inconsistency...gathering only when feel like it
- Complacency...distracted by the things of the world
- Lukewarm-ness...neglecting your relationship with the Lord

I want to be busy occupying, busy about the Lord's work...
seeking and saving the lost from the wrath of God to come!
(there are lost people in the Church too!)

I do not want to be ashamed when the Lord returns!
I want to live a pure and holy life!

Like never before, it is time for each of you to attend to the things of the
Lord.

Don't we all want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."?

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 5

v1-2 times and seasons...no need that I write...day of the Lord:

Day of the Lord” = 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ...to earth...

as Judge and Conquering King...a time of God’s judgment

Is 13:6-13

Zeph 1:14-18

Joel 2:1-11

Rev 6-20

NOT the resurrection and the Rapture in Ch 4...the taking out of the Bride...but this is the “coming to” of Jesus Christ to earth

“I don’t need to tell you ‘when’ because

- I have already taught you these things
They understand these things perfectly = accurately
- I don’t know when. Jesus said
Matt 24:3-22, 36-42
Acts 1:6-7

‘No man’ includes me so if I were to tell you when, that would make me a false prophet and you should stone me to death.”

when Paul wrote this

- the Temple was standing
- Jerusalem belonged to the Jews
- The Roman Empire ruled
- The Jews were not scattered

About 16 years after Paul wrote this the Romans

- leveled Jerusalem
- burned down the Temple
- scattered the Jews

then centuries later, Rome fell

but now, right before our eyes

- Israel exists again as a nation (1948)
- Israel regained Jerusalem (1967)
- the Jews have returned to the land
e.g. recent immigration from the “north country”
- the Temple could be erected in months...there are plans
- Rome is arising

So, since 1948, we are in the “season” leading up to the 2nd coming of
Jesus Christ
Yet the world is oblivious to the fact that they are on the verge of God’s
judgment for their sin...as was the case when Noah preached

The earth is suffering the birth pangs that Jesus forewarned.
And all the end times prophecies

- have happened
- are happening
- are on the horizon

Can the hour be much longer?

Where are your eyes?

- On that new car?
- New house?
- Promotion at work?
- Pretty little thing in the next office?
- That sensitive and caring man down the hall?
- Or are they looking around at all the lost souls running out of
time to accept God’s gift of grace...
- Are they looking up...because the Lord is coming back!
Luke 21:28 when these things begin to come to pass,
then look up and lift up your heads, for your
redemption draws near

Before the Day of the Lord, Jesus Christ is coming personally for me
Therefore, I need to be in a constant state of readiness

v3 peace and safety:

notice the shift in pronouns from “ye” to “they”

- v1 brethren, ye, you
- v2 yourselves
- v3 *they, them, they*

man, thru the auspices of the UN, thinks he can achieve peace and safety

- global government
- global economy
- global religion

“Finally! We can have peace now that those Christians are gone!”

What happens when the “peace and safety” is proclaimed?

1. sudden (“sudden and unexpected”) destruction (“ death, ruin”)
2. no escape

No escape:

As all mothers here will attest...when travail...labor...starts, it cannot be
stopped
the birth pains just gets more intense and more frequent

God is longsuffering, but at some point, "Enough is enough!"
On the Day of the Lord, God's wrath will not trickle down from heaven...
it will flow like a flood (the 2nd Flood) as all heaven breaks loose
And no one will escape

the world is in travail...in labor...on the eve of judgment
because it hates Jesus Christ

How can there be

1. Peace without the Prince of Peace?
2. Safety without the Lord, our High Tower?
3. Escape without The Way to escape (1 Cor 10:13)?

v4 But...are not in darkness...overtake you:
a contrast of spiritual conditions from the "they" in v3

the person with a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ will not
be surprised by end times events.
Those who are awake and alert understand what's going on around them

Warning: the world and the things of the world lull us into spiritual
dullness...so watch out!

v5 children of light...not of the night:
light: purity and righteousness
darkness: sin

the distinction between the saved and the lost is every bit as stark as
bright light and total darkness.
Jesus is the boundary, the dividing line

notice that there are no children of the dawn/dusk...
all darkness flees from the Light of the world...
leaving only those in the light and those in darkness

there is no fence to straddle
only two camps

1. For
2. Against (undecided = against)

v6 not sleep:

“to lie down to rest”...not physical death

if I lay down, I fall asleep

the same is true spiritually...when we stop growing and stop occupying...

when we get complacent and inconsistent and lukewarm...

we fall into a spiritual stupor

as long as we are on earth, we have no vacation from the Lord’s work...

no days off...our rest comes later

those who are busy about the Lord’s work have no need of a wake-up

call...and won’t hit the “Snooze” button and sleep thru the alarm

watch:

the opposite i.e. “to keep awake, to be vigilant”

the Christian walk is not a lazy-day stroll, it is a vigorous and vigilant

march behind enemy lines.

soldiers on the front lines do not get complacent or inconsistent or

lukewarm!!!

be sober:

“to abstain from wine, to be discreet”...to have a clear mind and eyes

alcohol

- deadens the senses
- blurs the vision
- clouds good judgment
- a depressant that will put you to sleep

those who drink deeply of the things of the world suffer the same effects

spiritually

v7 in the night:

another contrast of spiritual conditions between “ye” and “they”

v4 ye, brethren, you

v5 ye, we

v6 us, us

v7 *they, they*

those who are asleep and/or are drunk are dull and unperceptive of what is going on around them i.e. are oblivious to reality

v8 faith...love...hope

we who are born-again and alert and sober are “dialed in” to reality
reality is spiritual

beyond the vapor of the physical universe, which will burn in the Day of
the Lord (2 Peter 3:10) is the eternal reality of the spirit...which
can only be perceived with

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1. clear eyes of faith | Eph 2:8-9 |
| 2. a soft heart of love | 1 Cor 13:13 |
| 3. a clear mind with hope | Titus 2:13 |

But until the Lord snatches us up to the air to be with Him, we occupy
hostile territory in the face of a relentless enemy...who never
sleeps and is always watching for whom he may devour.

accordingly,

- be sober (1 Peter 5:8)
- put on the armor of God (Eph 6:10-18)

The breastplate (faith and love) protects our heart...

- the deepest part of our being
- the seat of the spirit

The helmet (hope) protects our mind

- our consciousness
- the seat of the soul

NEVER go out into the world unprotected!

only a drunk would not put on his armor before going out to battle...

v9 God has not appointed us wrath:
how could the truth of a pre-Tribulation Rapture be more clearly stated?
in v3 and v7, “they” face destruction...are asleep...are drunken
a stark contrast with what “we” face

although we bear the brunt of Satan’s wrath, we are saved and spared
God’s wrath (Rev 6-16)

Rom 5:8-9 But God commended his love toward us in that
while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
Much more then, being justified by his blood, shall
we be saved from wrath thru him

1 Thes 1:10 he has delivered us from the wrath to come

In Gen 18, Abraham quizzes the angels God sent to destroy S&G
Will God destroy the righteous (Lot) with the wicked? What if...
50?
45?
40?
30?
20?
10?

No. The Lord will not destroy until the righteous are removed
2 Peter 2:9 (Lot taken out by force, snatched away)

But to obtain salvation:

obtain: “purchased, possessed, to be preserved”
just as Mordecai knew God would preserve His people, we know
we are preserved in Christ Jesus no matter what the enemy
throws at us

Jer 25:15-17

On Calvary, Jesus drank this cup of God’s fury and punishment for
us...so we would not have to!

we are paid for...and sealed
Satan cannot

- pay a higher price than the sinless blood of God the Son...
so the purchase is absolutely secure
- break the seal of God...
Eph 4:30

v10 whether we wake or sleep:
for all believers, both physically dead and alive, when He returns

v11 comfort yourselves:

“Continue to comfort yourselves with this awesome truth!”

the wrath of the holy and just God has come for those who believe...
and is coming for those who do not believe
But I will not face it!
What great comfort!

If you are born again,

- be comforted that you have been spared the wrath of a holy and jealous God Who calls Himself a consuming fire
- get down on your knees and pray for all of your unsaved family and friends

Pray

- John 6:44 and Luke 10:22
- by name
- Fervently
- Without ceasing

If you are not born-again, get on the Ark before the 2nd Flood erupts!
You MUST be born again.

Being a good person does not cut it because entrance into the kingdom of God requires perfection

My dad

- The man I have most respected and admired
- The smartest man (razor-sharp mind + common sense)
- Wonderful sense of humor – quick, funny, insightful
- The most decent man I have ever known
- The most honest and fair man
- A most loving father
- Hard working, selfless provider
- A great man...a great father...but not perfect...
- And I do not know where he stood with Jesus...the only decision that matters in this life

If you aren't perfect either...you NEED Jesus! Right now!

In light of

- the imminent return of Jesus Christ to the air for His Bride
- the looming 2nd coming of Jesus Christ as Conquering King and Judge

Paul talks about our lifestyles...how we are to live right now

v12-13a them which labor among you...over you...admonish you...esteem them:
a word regarding those who labor for us in the Lord...

be mindful of your pastors and teachers who

- “work to the point of fatigue”...and...
- “stand before you”...(not “over” as in “higher”)
- to put the things of the Lord “in your mind”

respect the work that they do.

v13b be at peace among yourselves

as disciples of Jesus Christ, our lives are governed by God’s love

- our relationships
- our words
- our actions
- our lifestyles

when God’s love reigns supreme in our hearts, there is “peace in the land”

In no other human relationship is God’s love more vital than in marriage

the secret to a blessed marriage, men, lies in telling your wife

3 little words every day – “You’re right, dear!”

in so doing...Rom 12:18 if be possible, as much as lies in you,

live peaceably with all men

v14 warn them that are unruly:
we are all included in this verse!
1. unruly
2. feebleminded
3. weak

warn (“admonish” in v12) the unruly (a military term meaning
“to be out of rank, disorderly, insubordinate”)
e.g. rebellious teenager

we are to warn/caution those in the Church who are

- living in sin...
- not walking right with the Lord

in meekness and love, “Repent! You don’t have time to be wandering
around in your relationship with the Lord! He is returning
SOON!”

who does the warning?

Only the Pastor? NO! ALL the brethren

comfort the feebleminded:

we are to comfort and encourage those in the Church who are

- “faint-hearted”
- “little-spirited”
- timid

in the things of the Lord

be attentive...and come alongside them with gentle patience to strengthen
and encourage those who are weak in the faith

e.g. Judges 7:23...after 7:3 and 7:20-21

support the weak:

“hold up” the weak in the faith

Paul’s reference to those caught in

- fear
- legalism/being judgmental

patient toward all men:

“longsuffering” with ALL men...even the insufferable!

- Unruly teenagers
- Mothers-in-law
- Co-workers
- Neighbors...

v15 none render evil for evil...but...which is good:
if someone in the Church wrongs you, don't seek to get even

do that which is good...to ALL men

- the insufferable
- the unlovely
- your enemies

this is a supernatural response...not a natural response
the natural response is why Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* movies
were so popular!

We see this exhortation with regularity in the Scriptures

1 Peter 3:8-12

Rom 12:17-21

Matt 5:43-47

There is no time to hold onto grudges and to be stumbled by our flesh

v16 rejoice evermore:
the church is to be joyful...ALWAYS filled with cheer...
regardless of circumstances

Joy is a mark of spiritual vitality...and it is infectious!

Prov 17:22 a merry heart does good like medicine
but a broken spirit dries the bones

But such little things cause us to lose our joy when get under our skin

- A flat tire
- A rude driver
- Spilled milk
- A ding in the car door
- A look from someone (Esther 5)
- An off-the-cuff remark by someone

in light of

- being forgiven our sins
- given eternal life
- delivered from God's wrath by the unconditional, sacrificial
love of Jesus Christ...

how can we ever get bummed out?

It's just that sometimes we need an attitude adjustment and a perspective
correction, right?

v17 pray without ceasing:
the church is to be praying...CONSTANTLY
a healthy prayer life is...ALL DAY

this means having a constant awareness of and communion with the
Lord...Who is near

I got to thinking about this...

My kids talk CONSTANTLY

(Some of you do, too...)

And this deeply convicted me because I am guilty of

- Selective hearing...tuning them out...focused elsewhere
- If I am busy, snapping, "What do you want!"

But my heavenly Father

- Always hears me the 1st time
- Never snaps at me
- Can always be interrupted
- Is never too busy for my petty concerns
- Every concern of mine is important to Him

1 Peter 5:7

Kinds of prayer

1. worship
 - the awareness of His presence RIGHT NOW
 - the awe of the LORD God Almighty
2. petition – my personal needs (certainly OK to pray this way!)
3. intercession – for the needs of others (standing in the gap)
4. listening – to hear what God has for you

why should I pray?

- We all need God's help behind enemy lines
- To sync up my will with God's will
- so God can work on me...and thru me

The Body of Christ has a weakness...prayer

Why is prayer such a weakness?

- Doubt – God won't or can't do it
- Pride – I'll do it myself
- It is hard work...resisted work
- Distractions – any reason to not pray
- Discouragement – being ripped off by the enemy of our joy

We forget...the enemy trembles when we pray!

Christians...and the Church...will grow on our knees...

v18 in everything give thanks...for this is the will of God for you:
the church is to be thankful...in ALL circumstances
not for all circumstances...how can we be thankful for...

- injury accident
- death of a child
- cancer
- child on drugs
- material prosperity (lose sight of the Lord)

Eccl 5:12

but certainly in all circumstances

Many experiences in this life...this sojourn in a strange land...that are
difficult and painful
this life is filled with suffering and hardship

but we have a Good Shepherd that goes before us in all of life's valleys

as a pastor, I got to thinking about this, too
my prayer for a building of our own
I am to give thanks that we DON'T have one!

This is very difficult for me to do...it is supernatural

Even though I know

- The expensive sound equipment would last longer
- The chairs would not get banged up...could even be upgraded
- The Sunday School would have all the space they need
- We could do more ministry
- More people would come (MANY people have left because we do not have a building)

I also know that God is doing something with us now...
in this place

- He is building a foundation for His building...in the hearts of people who love the Word of God
- He is not building a foundation upon a physical facility
- As evidenced by the fact that people are "coming out of the buildings" to come worship in this school!
- The work God is doing right now is work that must be done

so I give Him thanks

impossible to be thankful unless we have God's perspective

- He is sovereign...in control of every circumstance
- my life...my breath...is in His hands
- nothing happens to me but that which He allows
- All things work together for good for those who love God and are the called according to His purpose
- God loves me supremely...just look at the Cross!

When we keep God's perspective...and receive His comfort and strength...we can face any trial and endure any hardship

so give thanks to God ALWAYS

Phil 4:13

v19 Quench not the Spirit:

Don't throw water on the holy fire burning within you!

We quench ("extinguish") the Spirit whenever we

- exercise our will rather than submitting to God's will
- deny the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives
- are not Spirit-filled and Spirit-led ("Later!")
- do not do v14-18, 20-22
- stop loving

be open to the working of the Holy Spirit in and thru your life

v20 despise not prophesying:

don't despise the work of the Word of God in your life either

sometimes we hear the Word preached and we say, "Ouch!"

PTL!

- v21 Prove all things...hold fast to that which is good:
test EVERYTHING you hear against the Word of God...absolute truth
- that which sounds good and right
 - that which sounds wrong and deceiving

Acts 17:11 (after left Thessalonica)

True or False?

- Mohammed is The Prophet of God
- I must pay for my sins in Purgatory
- God helps those who help themselves
- As long as I am not hurting anyone, it doesn't matter what I do
- My motives count, not just my actions
- I am a nice guy so God will let me into heaven
- I am a helpless and hopeless sinner
- Go for the gusto...you deserve it
- Jesus is Michael the Archangel
- Jesus is the brother of Lucifer
- There is additional revelation from God in addition to the Bible
- We have victory thru surrender
- The way up is down
- When I am weak, then I am strong
- Jesus Christ is returning in May of 2004
- Mary was a perpetual virgin
- I go to church every Sunday and I tithe so I am OK with God
- I don't need to go to church, I can worship God alone
- Salvation is a gift from God
- You approach God thru Jesus, I approach God thru Buddha...
it doesn't matter
- God is in everything
- Everything is God
- Eat, drink, and be merry...for tomorrow we die
- He who dies with the most toys wins
- Jesus is coming back...very soon!

v22 Abstain from the appearance of evil

The question is not just

“Are you in sin?”

but it is also

“Does it appear to others like you are in sin?”

avoid EVERY evil...even the perception of it

Example: man and woman, not married, are living together

One or both are born-again believers

The Bible calls it fornication...so you go to them in love

“It’s not what you think. We are doing it only for finances.”

Yeah, right!

“We are sleeping in the same bed but not having sex.”

Oh, please! Are you Superman?! Or are you dead?

“We are sleeping in different bedrooms.”

Perhaps you are...but what does it look like?

To the outsider, it looks like sin...like evil

It may stumble a weaker brother/sister and cause them to sin

It may give the unbeliever cause to blaspheme God!

What would you think if you saw me walking out of a bar?

“I drink Coke and watch the football games.”

Who are you trying to fool?

Why would you do that there?

Bottom line: “Be holy, for I AM holy”

v23 God of peace sanctify you wholly:

Be set apart...COMPLETELY

Don’t have a divided heart, trying to serve both God and Mammon

Matt 6:24

Don’t be double-minded...unstable in all your ways

James 1:8

Your whole spirit and soul and body:

man is a minor trinity: spirit, soul, body

spiritual, emotional, physical

also notice the ranking/priority of the 3 given by the Holy Spirit thru Paul

1. spirit

2. soul

3. then...body

we often have the order reversed

v24 Faithful is He that calleth you:
Phil 1:6
even when we are not faithful, the Lord is

v25 Pray for us:
pray for me and Monica!

v26 holy kiss:
but a handshake would be better!

v28 grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you:
the Last Word = “grace”