

2. This verse is so closely joined to the preceding verses that it cannot be understood without reading them, but when those verses are read along with this one, this one becomes very plain.

The "cause" which made Paul send Timothy to learn about their faith, is the "tribulation" (mentioned in 3:3-4) which he knew would befall them and indeed had.

3. Paul was mainly concerned about the *faith* of the Thessalonians. He sent Timothy to learn about their *faith*. I Thess. 3:7. Their faith was his main concern rather than their physical welfare or even their survival. There is a rather obvious point in this for us.
4. Of course, "the tempter" is Satan. I Thess. 2:18. Satan's temptations could have turned the Thessalonians away from the faith.
5. Satan tempts us "by any means." Some of his methods are smooth and slick. Some of them are iron-fisted and cruel. Satan can tempt people by incontinency. I Cor. 7:5. Satan beguiles and corrupts us from the simplicity that is in Christ. II Cor. 11:3.
6. When Satan's temptations are successful, the preacher's *labor* is in vain. (The word *labor* used here is *kopos*. For its meaning, see notes on I Th. 1:3, par. 2.) Paul often expressed the fear that his work might be *in vain*.

Gal. 2:2—"Let by any means I should run, or had run *in vain*."

I Cor. 3:15—"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Phil. 2:16—"That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run *in vain*, neither laboured *in vain*."

7. The fact that Paul's work among the Thessalonians would have been *in vain* if Satan had successfully tempted them, shows that people CAN be lost, even after they are once saved.

No one can deny that the Thessalonians were saved. They were elect. I Th. 1:4. They had the joy of the Holy Spirit. I Th. 1:6.

As long as they remained saved, Paul's work among them could not have been in vain. The fact that Paul feared that his work among them might be in vain proves that they could become lost again. They were elect, but not unconditionally elect.

STUDY SUGGESTION

Turn now to the "Did You Learn?" questions at the end of chapter 3, and see if you can answer questions 10 to 18.

Text (3:6)

6 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;

Translation and Paraphrase

6. But now since Timothy has come (back) to us from you, and told us the good news about (your steadfast) faith and your love, and (how) that you have (such affectionate and) good recollection of us at all times, desiring to see us, just as we also (desire to see) you (again),

Notes (3:6)

1. "As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Proverbs 25:25. The news which Timothy brought back to Paul from Thessalonica was fully that refreshing to him.
2. This verse (3:6) starts a new section in the outline, entitled "Joy upon Timothy's return." (3:6-10).
3. Timothy and Silas came to Paul in Corinth. Acts 18:1,5. It was there that he wrote I & II Thessalonians.
4. The fact that Paul writes, "Now when Timothy came," seems to indicate that he sat down and wrote this letter almost immediately upon Timothy's return.
5. Here is what Timothy's report about the Thessalonians contained:
 - (1) Good news about their faith (inward religion).
 - (2) Good news about their love (outward religion).
(The word translated "charity" actually means "love.")
 - (3) The report that they had good remembrance of Paul always.
 - (4) Also the news that they desired to see Paul again.
This was an encouraging report in every way.
6. You have no doubt often heard it said that the phrase "preach the gospel" means "bring good news." That is true, and this meaning is clearly pointed out in this verse. Paul uses the same word (*euaggelizō*) to describe Timothy's bringing a good report to him, that is used in many other places to describe preaching the gospel of Christ. Timothy's report was good news of one kind. The gospel is also good news, but of a greater kind.

Text (3:7-8)

7 for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: **8** for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Translation and Paraphrase

7. Because of this (good news about you), we are (greatly) comforted, brethren, about you (even) in all our distress and tribulation on account of your faith.
8. (This comfort means more to us than you can imagine), because now we live if you stand fast in the Lord.

Notes (3:7-8)

1. The depth of Paul's longing for the Thessalonians can be seen in his statement, "We live if ye stand fast in the Lord." This statement implies an opposite one: "We die if you don't stand fast."
2. Paul had certainly been in affliction and distress before Timothy returned from Thessalonica with good news. Before Timothy's arrival he had not even been stirred to preach. Acts 18:5. In Corinth the Jews blasphemed against him. Acts 18:6. The Lord even saw fit to appear to Paul in Corinth to encourage him. Acts 18:8-9.
3. Paul urged the Thessalonians to "stand fast" in the Lord. It may not be enough in itself to "stand still," but we certainly ought to "stand" against the onslaughts of Satan and not to yield. Ephesians 6:11, 13, 14. "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to *stand*." I Cor. 15:1: "The gospel . . . wherein ye *stand*."
4. The people of a church are so close to a minister that they have power to make his life happy or supremely miserable. The ministerial life and energy of even an apostle seemed dependent on the sympathy, faith, and steadfastness of the brethren. Elijah wanted to die when he thought that all the people had forsaken Jehovah. I Kings 19:4. John the apostle had no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in truth. III John 4.

Text (3:9)

9 For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

Translation and Paraphrase

9. For what kind of thanks can we (possibly) repay to God (that would truly show our feelings) about you? For (such thanks would have to be great enough to include all the joy in which we rejoice on account of you (as we pray) before our God;

Notes (3:9)

1. This verse all boils down to a simple question: "How can we ever be thankful enough for you?"
2. The question begun here in 3:9 extends on through the tenth verse, where it is extended into a description of how Paul prayed long and hard for them. To make the question more apparent in our paraphrase, we have inserted the question mark into the ninth verse, and made a separate sentence out of the last half of verse nine and all of verse ten.
3. Paul felt like he should "repay" or "recompense" back to God sufficient thanks to show how grateful he was for the Thessalonians. Paul found this to be impossible, for he was too thankful for the Thessalonians to express it.
4. The expression, "joy wherewith we joy," is rather a Hebrew way of expressing tremendous, superlative joy.

Text (3:10)

10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Translation and Paraphrase

10. (For we do pray) night and day, more than can be measured, asking (God to make it possible for us) to see your face (once again), and to perfect the things which are lacking in your faith.

Notes (3:10)

1. Paul candidly states in this verse that the faith of the Thessalonians was imperfect. He indicates in chapters four and five what some of the things were which were lacking in their faith.
2. Perhaps it seems rather blunt to tell someone, as Paul told the Thessalonians, "I want to come and see you, so I can perfect your understanding and development." This is especially so in matters of religion, where usually every man's way is clean in his own eyes. Prov. 16:2. But undoubtedly the Thessalonians had the right attitude, and knew very well that they were im-

- perfect in faith and knowledge. They doubtless would have been extremely glad to have had Paul instruct them further.
3. Paul prayed "exceedingly." The word means "superabundantly," "beyond measure."
 4. The way Paul prayed day and night concerning the Thessalonians reminds us of the way King David often prayed in the night. Psalm 119:55. Have you ever awakened in the night, and found yourself thinking about God's law and desiring to pray to God?
 5. New converts are only spiritual babes. I Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:13; I Corinthians 3:1. New converts need to be taught to observe all the things which Jesus commanded us. Matt. 28:20. They need to recognize their limited knowledge and development in spiritual things. They should not be appointed to positions of leadership in churches. I Tim. 3:6, 10. However, they can grow rapidly. And when they have been taught, they should not hold back from serving Christ just because they feel inadequate for the work of witnessing for Christ.
 6. Paul prayed for two things concerning the Thessalonians:
 - (1) That he might see their face.
 - (2) That he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith.
 7. The prayer of Paul that he might get to visit the Thessalonians was answered in due time, for Paul visited Thessalonica on his third missionary trip, and again afterwards. See Introductory Section VI, paragraphs 27 and 28.

Text (3:11)

11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you:

Translation and Paraphrase

11. But (now) may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our path (once again) unto you.

Notes (3:11)

1. There are numerous brief prayers, such as this one, in the Thessalonian epistles. I Thess. 3:11-13; 5:23; II Thess. 1:11; 2:16; 3:5, 16. These written prayers show the character of Paul's mind. He could break into prayer in speaking or writing at any time. He prayed without ceasing. We should develop a similar habit of praying to God at every moment of joy or need. It should be just as easy as talking to any dear loved one.

3:11,12 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

2. The prayer which is started in this verse (and goes to the end of the chapter) forms the conclusion of Part One of I Thessalonians. There is also a prayer near the end of Part Two (at 5:23).
3. This prayer that God would direct Paul's path back to the Thessalonians was answered in due time. See the notes on I Thess. 3:10, par. 7.
4. There is a very notable, even if incidental, testimony to the glory of the Lord Jesus in this verse. Note that Paul addresses his prayer BOTH to God and to Jesus. Evidently Jesus answers prayers as well as God.

But while the subject in this verse is PLURAL (God and the Lord Jesus), the verb is SINGULAR. (This is not apparent in English, but the Greek text shows it plainly.) This should go far to prove that God and Christ Jesus are ONE in the godhead, even though they are separate personalities. (This very Scripture was used by Athanasius against Arius back in the fourth century, to prove the deity of Jesus.)

5. The American Standard Version and the Greek text omit the word "Christ" after Jesus. The word "Christ" is not found in most of the ancient texts. Its omission does not affect the thought one bit.

Text (3:12)

12 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;

Translation and Paraphrase

12. And may the Lord (Jesus) make you to increase and (even) abound in love for one another, and (also) toward all (men), just as we (do) unto you.

Notes (3:12)

1. It humbles us to read this prayer of Paul. For we notice that Paul asks the LORD to make them increase in love. We dare not forget at any time, that though we may teach and labor and set an example with all our power, it is the *Lord* who transforms men. We may plant and water, but it is the LORD that gives the increase. I Cor. 3:6. We cannot do God's work for Him.
2. There are two requests in this prayer: (3:11-13)
 - (1) That God may direct our way unto you. 3:11

- (2) That God will make you to increase and abound in love.
3:12
- (a) In love toward one another.
 - (b) In love toward all men.
3. Paul addressed the second petition of his prayer to the *Lord*. The Lord is Jesus. Acts 2:36; 10:36.
 4. The petition in 3:12 is for the *increase of their love*. Love is the greatest thing in the world. Faith, abilities, knowledge, and even good works, without love are of no avail. I Corinthians 13:1-3. "This is the message which ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." I John 3:11.
 5. For the Thessalonians to have loved all men, in the face of the abuse they were receiving, was indeed a development of character that only God could produce. Christians must love all men, even their enemies and persecutors. True followers of Jesus do not persecute even the worst of men. They may rebuke them and withdraw from them, but they do it out of a desire to lead them to a change of mind, and not as a punishment.
 6. Paul's prayer that the Lord might make their love to increase, seems to have been answered rather definitely. For in II Thess. 1:3, we find Paul expressing thanks that "the charity (love) of each one of you all toward each other aboundeth." God does answer prayer.
 7. After reading Paul's expressions of unlimited love for the Thessalonians in 2:17, 3:8-9, etc., it almost staggers us to read here in 3:21 that Paul says his love for them was increasing. How could it do so? But surely Paul was telling the truth.

Text (3:13)

13 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.

Translation and Paraphrase

13. (We long to see such love abound among you) so that (by means of love) he may establish your hearts (to be) unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all of his holy ones. (Amen)

Notes (3:13)

1. The goal of Paul's fervent prayer for the Thessalonians is something that the world does not want in any degree. Paul agonized

that they would be “unblameable in holiness before God.” People in the world are proud of, and distinguished by, how wicked they can be. Whoever can curse the most violently, drink the most liquor, have the most wives and women, and make the most cutting remarks against “blue-nose,” “Victorian,” “Puritan” Christians is the most esteemed among the world’s elite.

2. Paul prayed that we might be *stablished* unblameable in holiness. “Stablish” (or “establish”) means to “set fast, place firmly, fix, make firm, render constant.” Holiness is not to be a Sunday style, but is to be the well-established pattern of our whole lives.
3. The Thessalonians would become “unblameable in holiness” as the result of the increase of their love. (I Thess. 3:12) You cannot build a holy life without a sincere foundation of love.
4. This holiness within us is to be fully exhibited at the “coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We shall never reach the “unblameable” perfectly attained stage in this life, but we shall reach it at the coming of the Lord Jesus. “When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” I John 3:2. Do you have the hope of being like Jesus (and God) when He appears? “Every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he (Jesus or God) is pure.” I John 3:3.

(The word “coming” in this verse is *parousia*. See notes on 2:19, par. 7, concerning this word.)

5. The Lord Jesus will come *with all his saints*. The word here translated *saints* simply means “holy ones.” It is applied to angels as well as people. It probably refers to angels in this verse. Jesus will come back with His holy ones, the angels. (See Special Study on page 247, “The Coming of the Lord With All His Saints.”) Will you be unblameable in holiness when you see Jesus, the holy one, with all His holy angels? God grant us determination and His help that we shall so be.
6. Many ancient manuscripts of the Bible have “Amen” at the close of this verse. We include it in our paraphrase. The “Amen” here fittingly closes not only this prayer, but the whole Part One of the epistle.

STUDY SUGGESTIONS

1. We urge you now to go back and review the outline of chapter 3 (which is found at 2:17).
2. Also we urge you now to answer (preferably by writing out) questions 19 to 38 from the section that follows immediately.

CHAPTER THREE

DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over I Thessalonians, chapter three)

1. What is the chapter topic of chapter three (2:17—3:10)?
2. Why have we included 2:17-20 with the chapter topic of chapter three?
3. What is the title of the section, 2:17-20?
4. What had Paul endeavoured to do after being driven from Thessalonica? (2:17)
5. Paul was separated from the Thessalonians in presence, but not in what? (2:17)
6. Who had hindered Paul from doing what he desired to do? (2:18)
7. What four things were the Thessalonians unto Paul? (2:19-20)
8. When would the Thessalonians be Paul's crown of rejoicing? (2:19)
9. What is the Greek word which is translated "coming"? (2:19)
10. What is the section (or paragraph) 3:1-5 called in the outline?
11. Whom did Paul send to Thessalonica for him? (3:2)
12. Where was Paul when he sent him? (3:1)
13. What two things was this man to do for the Thessalonians? (3:2)
14. Unto what are we appointed as Christians? (3:3)
15. What had Paul told the Thessalonians while he was still with them would happen? (3:4)
16. Paul was mainly concerned about the _____ of the Thessalonians. (3:5)
17. Who did Paul fear had tempted them? (3:5)
18. What effect would there have been on Paul's labor if the Thessalonians had yielded to temptation? (3:5)
19. What is the section 3:6-10 called in the outline?
20. With what does Part One of I Thessalonians close? (See outline)
21. Give the Scripture limitations of this conclusion.
22. Where did Timothy and Silas come to Paul? (3:6)
23. What four things did Timothy report about the Thessalonians to Paul? (3:6)
24. How long after Timothy brought his report from Thessalonica was it before Paul wrote I Thessalonians? (3:6)
25. What effect did Timothy's report have on Paul? (3:7)
26. Paul declared, "Now _____ if you stand fast in the Lord." (3:7)
27. Was Paul fully able to express his thanks for the Thessalonians? (3:9)

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

28. For what two things relating to the Thessalonians did Paul pray that he might be permitted to do? (3:10)
29. Was the faith of the Thessalonians perfect? (3:10)
30. When was Paul's prayer request to visit the Thessalonians granted? (3:10)
31. To whom does Paul address his prayer in 3:11?
32. Paul prayed that the Thessalonians might increase in what? (3:12)
33. Toward whom was this increase to be shown? (3:12)
34. What did Paul pray would be established unblameable in holiness? (3:13)
35. When would these be established unblameable? (3:13)
36. What other expression means the same as "saints"? (3:13)
37. Who are the "saints" who will come with Jesus? (3:13)
38. Write out, or recite, from memory I Thess. 3:12-13. It begins, "And the Lord make you to . . ."

I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter topics

1. The Walk of the Christian.

2. The Dead in Christ and the Lord's Coming.



"The dead in Christ shall rise first——," I Thess. 4:16

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

I Thessalonians, chapter four

Chapter Topics—1. The Walk of the Christian. 4:1-12

2. The dead in Christ, and the Lord's coming.
4:13-18

1. The Thessalonians had "received _____ how they ought to walk and to please God." 4:1
2. In instructions on how to "walk," Paul urged that they "would _____ and _____." 4:1
3. The commandments of Paul were given "by the _____." 4:2.
4. "Your _____" was the will of God for the Thessalonians. 4:2
5. From what were the Thessalonians to abstain? 4:3.
_____.
6. What should we know how to possess in sanctification and honor? 4:4. _____.
7. What people live in the "lust of concupiscence?" 4:5.
_____. (The notes will explain these words.)
8. No man should "go beyond (or go too far) and _____ his brother in the matter." 4:6
9. Who is the avenger of sins? 4:6. _____.
10. God has not called us "unto _____ but unto _____." 4:7
11. Whom do we despise when we despise Paul's commands? 4:8.
_____.
12. Concerning what did Paul not need to write to the Thessalonians? 4:9. _____.
13. Who taught the Thessalonians to love one another? 4:9.
_____.
14. What three things did Paul tell them to do in 4:11?
_____;
_____;
_____.
15. For what two reasons were they told to work? 4:12.
_____;
_____.

CHAPTER FOUR

16. Concerning what did Paul not want them to be ignorant? 4:13.
_____.
17. Paul gave them information so "that ye _____
not, even as others which have no _____. 4:13
18. What event gives us assurance that the dead will rise again?
4:14.
_____.
19. The dead Christians are described as "them which
_____ in _____. 4:14
20. Whose word did Paul speak? 4:15. _____.
21. "We which are _____ and remain unto the
_____ of the Lord shall not prevent (or go ahead
of) them which are _____. 4:15
22. With what three things will the Lord descend from heaven?
4:16. _____;
_____;
_____.
23. Before we are all caught up, "the _____ in Christ shall
rise _____. 4:16
24. After the Christian dead are raised, "we which are
_____ and remain shall be _____ up
_____ with them in the _____,
to meet the _____ in the _____. 4:17
25. How long shall we remain with the Lord? 4:17.
_____.
26. What are we to do with these words of Paul? 4:18.
_____.
27. Memorize I Thess. 4:13-17.

I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER FOUR

- Chapter Topics—1. *The Walk of the Christian.* 4:1-12
2. *The Dead in Christ and the Lord's
Coming.* 4:13-18

Outline

- I. The walk of the Christian; 4:1-12
A. Abound according to the apostles' teaching; 4:1-2
B. Abstain from fornication; 4:3-8
1. This is the will of God; 4:3
2. Know how to possess your vessel; 4:4-5
a. In sanctification and honor;
b. Not in lust like the Gentiles; 4:5

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

3. No one should defraud his brother; 4:6-7
 - a. The Lord is the avenger of all such.
 - b. God has not called us to uncleanness; 4:7
4. We despise God when we disobey; 4:8
- C. Practice brotherly love; 4:9-10
 1. Paul did not need to write about this; 4:9a
 2. They were taught by God to do this; 4:9b
 3. The Thessalonians did this; 4:10a
 4. They needed to increase more and more; 4:10b
- D. Study to be quiet; 4:11a
- E. Do your own business; 4:11b
- F. Work with your own hands; 4:11c-12
 1. As Paul had commanded them; 4:11c
 2. That they might walk honestly toward outsiders; 4:12
 3. That they might have need of nothing.
- II. The Lord's Coming; 4:13-5:11
 - A. The dead in Christ and the Lord's coming; 4:13-18
 1. We should not be ignorant about this; 4:13
 2. Jesus's resurrection gives us assurance; 4:14
 - a. We believe that Jesus died and arose.
 - b. Even so will God bring the dead in Christ with Him.
 3. The living shall not precede the dead; 4:15
 4. Events at the Lord's coming; 4:16-17
 - a. The Lord descends;
 - (1) With a shout;
 - (2) With the voice of the archangel;
 - (3) With the trump of God.
 - b. The dead in Christ rise first; 4:16
 - c. Those which are alive are caught up with them; 4:17
 - d. We meet the Lord in the air; 4:17
 - e. We shall ever be with the Lord.
 5. Comfort one another with these words. 4:18

THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTLINE

Of I Thessalonians, chapter four

Chapter four includes two distinct topics.

The first of these concerns the *walk* of the Christian, that is, the way he lives. In this world the gospel depends very heavily upon the lives of those who believe it for its success. Also the salvation of those who believe the gospel depends on how they continue to

walk. For these reasons the teaching about the walk of the Christian is very urgent.

The second section about the dead in Christ and the Lord's coming is always of much interest. The discussion about the Lord's coming extends on into the next chapter (to 5:11), where the matter of the times and seasons of the Lord's coming is brought up and discussed.

Text (4:1-2)

1 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. 2 For ye know what charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

Translation and Paraphrase

1. (Now) therefore, brethren, (changing the subject to some remaining matters.) we ask you and urge (you) by the (authority and goodness of the) Lord Jesus, that, just as you have received from us (teachings concerning) how you ought to walk (that is, how to live your lives each day) and (how) to please God,—as indeed you are walking—(we urge you not merely to continue doing as you are, but) that you will increase (and even exceed) more (and more in doing so.)
2. For you know what (the) commandments (were, which) we gave to you through the (authority and commission of the) Lord Jesus.

Notes (4:1-2)

1. In all of Paul's letters to Gentile churches, there is a closing exhortation to purity of life, a warning against such sins as the Gentiles commonly practiced. These exhortations to the Thessalonians begin with the fourth chapter, and continue through the fifth.
2. It is hard for us to visualize the degeneration of pagan society and morals. In one of the rooms uncovered in Pompeii, the city that was buried by the volcano Vesuvius in 79 A.D., there is a frieze picturing immoral scenes. This was the atmosphere in which many of the Gentiles of Paul's time wanted to live.
3. Paul's prayer that they might be "unblameable in holiness" is carried right over into this new chapter with very specific instructions as to what they should do to be holy. Paul was always careful in his instructions to his converts to dwell on the practical side of Christianity, for—

Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
That to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

4. Chapters four and five of I Thessalonians make up Part Two of the epistle, which is entitled in the outline "Exhortations and Teachings."
5. The first part of chapter four (4:1-12) deals with the "Walk of the Christian." The word *walk* refers to the way we live, as if life were a journey through which we are walking. Paul uses the word *walk* in this manner nearly thirty times in his epistles.
6. No one could ever say that Paul was shy about asserting his authority, and claiming divine approval. Paul declares that the Thessalonians had received "of *us* how ye ought to walk," and that his commandments were "by the Lord Jesus."

Although Paul may appear to have been rather forward, we are thankful that he was not shy about these things, because Paul told us the truth, and we must know the truth to be saved. Throughout this chapter Paul asserts his inspiration.

This leads us to repeat a necessary teaching: We must follow what the *apostles* said if we are going to be saved. The apostles spoke the words which Jesus gave to them. The Holy Spirit led *them* into all truth. John 16:13-14. No church council, pope, or modern day prophet has any thing new from God to add to what the apostles said. Therefore we must do what the apostles said, and abound more and more in the way they taught us to walk and to please God.

7. The American Standard version inserts a phrase, "even as ye do walk," after the words "please God" in 4:1. This addition has much support in the oldest New Testament manuscripts. It indicates that the Thessalonians had made a great change in their way of living since they had received the gospel.

Text (4:3)

3 For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication;

Translation and Paraphrase

3. For (among other things) this is the will of God (for you—yes, it is even) your sanctification, (the process of your becoming free from sin and consecrated to God—and it is this:) that you should abstain from (every form of) sexual vice.

Notes (4:3)

1. Christianity never delivers us, as by the stroke of a magician, from the lusts and wickedness which have become habitual in the heathen world. Rather a long and constant fight is necessary for vanquishing them.
2. For example, fornication was considered no sin among the Gentiles. Therefore, Paul often had to warn about it in his letters. "Fornication" refers to unlawful sexual intercourse in general. "Adultery" is generally used to describe the sin of married people who are unfaithful. "Fornication" is a broader term. It includes adultery and all related vices. Notice some of Paul's words about fornication:
 I Cor. 6:13—"The body is not for fornication."
 I Cor. 6:18—"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without (outside) the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."
 Hebrews 13:4—"Fornicators and adulterers God will judge."
 (See also Rev. 21:8)
3. If our sanctification is the will of God, we ought to give more attention to the subject than we usually hear given. "Sanctification" is the action of making us free from sin and consecrated to God. It is the opposite of "pollution." It means "holiness" in its general sense, and the same word which is translated "holiness" is the one translated "sanctification." Sanctification (or holiness) is commanded in I Peter 1:12. In Hebrews 2:11 Christ is described as "he that sanctifieth" us.
4. In this verse Paul makes it very plain that the "sanctification" that he is referring to is "abstaining from fornication." There are other things necessary in sanctification, of course, but that is the only matter that Paul is dealing with in this verse.
5. It would be wrong to quote just part of this verse—"This is the will of God, even your sanctification"—and then by using that part of the verse to urge people to seek a "second work of grace." Some denominations hold to a doctrine that after a person has been saved, he may have a second work of grace, a sanctification by baptism of the Holy Spirit, in which all desire for and practice of sin is taken out of his nature.
 John the apostle says, "If we say we have no sin (present tense), we deceive ourselves." I John 1:8. Surely this verse cancels out any doctrine that we can be so totally sanctified that we utterly cannot sin.

6. The two stages in sanctification:

(1) Sanctification at conversion.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." The spirit of every believer is sanctified, cleansed, and set apart for the Master's use at conversion. I Cor. 6:11; Heb. 10:14; I Peter 1:2; II Thess. 2:13; Eph. 5:26.

(2) Sanctification after conversion.

Hebrews 12:14: "Follow... the holiness (or sanctification) without which no man shall see the Lord." Sanctification is something we must follow or pursue (Gr., *dioko*) constantly. We cannot get a one-shot inoculation of sanctification that will permanently guarantee our immunity against sin.

"Now being servants of God, we have fruit unto holiness (or sanctification)." Romans 6:22.

Text (4:4)

4 that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

Translation and Paraphrase

4. (And) that each (one) of you should know (and act like you knew) how to (get hold of yourself and) get possession of your own vessel (your body, so as to live) in sanctification and honor.

Notes (4:4)

1. It is no honor to commit fornication. It is an honor to be modest, pure, and (for the unmarried) virgin.
2. What do you think Paul means by telling us to possess our *vessel* in sanctification and honor? What is the *vessel* he refers to? The natural thought that comes to our minds is that the vessel is our *body*, and that we are to keep control of it, and not permit ourselves to look upon a woman to lust after her, nor to commit fornication. We believe that this is the correct meaning of the verse.
3. However, many scholarly interpreters say that the *vessel* is a wife, and that Paul in this verse is telling the men to procure for themselves wives as vessels for the satisfaction of their passions, rather than for them to commit fornication. Now it is a fact that the word *vessel* is used in I Peter 3:7 to describe a woman. And it is interesting to note that the Revised Standard Version of the Bible and the versions of Moffatt and Goodspeed

all boldly insert the word "wife" into their versions. This is more of an interpretation than it is a translation.

4. Here are our reasons for thinking that the *vessel* to which Paul refers is our body and not a wife:
 - (1) There is nothing particularly spiritual in knowing how to take a wife. In fact the wicked are often the most proficient in doing it.
 - (2) In I Cor. 7:8, 27, 32-33, 38, Paul rather discourages marriage for many people. It therefore seems unlikely that he would here recommend marriage as a universal panacea for fornication.
 - (3) The verses both immediately before and after this one caution us about fornication and lust. This leads us to think that this verse must refer to controlling our bodies and not to marrying a wife.
5. It is beyond question that in the Scriptures our bodies are often called *vessels*. Note I Sam. 21:5; "Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the *vessels* of the young men are holy." Also II Cor. 4:7: "We have this treasure (the gospel) in earthen vessels (referring to the fact that our bodies are made of dust)." See also II Tim. 2:21; Acts 9:15; Romans 9:21-23.
6. We mentioned that some versions of the Bible boldly interpret the word "vessel" as "wife." But others just as openly interpret it as "body." So Phillips, New English Bible, and Amplified New Testament.
7. This verse is similar to Romans 6:19: "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members to righteousness unto holiness (or sanctification)."

Text (4:5)

5 not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God;

Translation and Paraphrase

5. (By possessing our vessel in sanctification, we shall) not (live) in the passion (which) lust (arouses) as (do) the Gentiles who do not know God.

Notes (4:5)

1. The big word "concupiscence" in this verse (pronounced—kon-KUE-pi-s'ns) will derail the thought of most readers from what this verse says, as it is a stranger in modern English.

Actually, the word simply means "ardent desire, hence, sexual lusts." (Webster's Collegiate Dict.)

The American Standard Version translates "lust of concupiscence" as "passion of lust."

2. There is little difference in meaning between the words "lust," "concupiscence," and "passion." Thayer says that the phrase "passion of lust" is a genitive of apposition. The word translated "concupiscence" (*epithumia*) may be a slightly more comprehensive term, describing desire and lust as a way of life; whereas the word translated "lust" (*pathos*) can refer to a more momentary passion, the ungovernable desire. Hence in our paraphrase we have rendered the phrase, "the passion (which) lust (arouses)."
3. Some men think that nothing can be done about sexual passions except to gratify them. This verse teaches us that this is not so. We can pray to God for deliverance. We can deliberately turn our minds toward other matters. We can do physical work which will absorb the energy that is showing itself in the form of lust.
4. Once again here Paul emphasizes the moral degeneration of the Gentiles. "The heathen moralists condemned unchastity only in the case of a child-bearing wife, as it would wrong her husband not to know the paternity of her children." (B. W. Johnson) See also paragraph 2 of the notes on 4:1-2.
5. The statement that the Gentiles do not know God is more than just a casual bit of information. It is a judgment upon them. The reason that they do not know God is that they refused to have God in their knowledge. Romans 1:28. God will take vengeance on them that know not God. II Thess. 1:8. "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not." Jer. 10:25. See also Ps. 79:6; Gal. 4:8; I Cor. 15:34.

Text (4:6)

6 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.

Translation and Paraphrase

6. (And) that none (of you) should go too far and (covetously) take advantage of his brother in the matter (of sexual vice). Because the Lord is (an) avenger (who will punish severely when He deals with all) of these things, just as we told you previously and most solemnly charged (you)."

Notes (4:6)

1. The phrase "in any matter" is interpreted by some scholars to refer to business dealings. Therefore they say that the teaching of this verse is that we should not cheat one another in business. (Indeed we should not do that.)
2. However, the fact that the matter of sexual vice is discussed in the verses immediately before and after this verse leads us to think that this verse also deals with that subject.
3. Also the phrase "in any manner" is rendered "in *the* matter" in the Greek text and the American Stan. version. While this reading is a bit uncertain, it is probably the correct one. *The* matter to which it refers would, therefore, seem to be the matter under discussion in the verses just preceding, the matter of sexual vice.
4. For us to covet and take another man's wife would be to "go beyond" (and overreach) what we have a right to do. It is "going too far." (The same word is used in 2 Cor. 7:2; 12:17-18.)
5. No one can commit fornication without defrauding and wronging someone. It is a sin that always wrongs and hurts others, and not just ourselves. By it men can wrong someone's wife, or future wife, someone's sister, someone's marriage or future marriage, someone's home or family life. Besides that, it is a sin against GOD. Psalm 51:4. And it is a sin against our own body. I Cor. 6:18.
6. Many Scriptures teach that God is an avenger, one who punishes and takes vengeance. Psalm 94:1-2; II Peter 2:3; Rom. 2:9-11, 16. The successful thief may conclude that crime has no penalty. But God's justice will not be thwarted.

Heathen gods were often pictured as indulging in human vices. But the true God is the avenger of vices.

7. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he had already forewarned them about this matter of sexual vice. Compare Gal. 1:9. Evidently when the apostles of Christ once spoke, their teaching was not to be modified later to suit someone's pleasure and convenience.

Text (4:7-8)

7 For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. 8 Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you.

Translation and Paraphrase

7. For God has NOT called us (into his kingdom) upon (the basis of liberty to practice moral) uncleanness, but (he has called us) in sanctification (or holiness).
8. Consequently, he who disregards (this command) is not disregarding (any mere) man (like myself) but the (very) God who also gives to you His Holy Spirit.

Notes (4:7-8)

1. God told the Israelites in olden times: "I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy." Leviticus 11:44.
2. The same instructions are given to Christians: "Be ye holy; for I am holy." I Peter 1:16. Therefore we beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims in this world, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. I Peter 2:11. Avoid entertainments, reading material, and thoughts which are immoral and lustful. These things are fighting against your soul.
3. "For God did not call us with a permission of impurity, but in sanctification." (Rotherham's translation of 4:7.)
4. It is a serious thing to despise the preacher's message, for you are actually despising and rejecting God in so doing. Jesus said to His disciples, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." Luke 10:16.
5. Note that it is in the voluntary power of a man to resist or accept truth. But it is not in man's power to escape the consequences of that choice.
6. The Holy Spirit is given to every one who repents and is baptized. Acts 2:38; 5:32; Gal. 4:6. "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" I Cor. 6:19.

The Holy Spirit had brought joy to the Thessalonians. I Thess. 1:6. God had given them the Holy Spirit. They therefore could not honorably disobey God when He had given them such a blessing.

Text (4:9-10)

9 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; 10 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;

Translation and Paraphrase

9. But concerning brotherly love, you have no need that (anyone) should be writing unto you. For (verily) you yourselves are God-taught to love one another.
10. For indeed you do that (very thing) to all the brethren which are in all of Macedonia. But we (must) urge you, brethren, to exceed (your past good works and abound yet) more (and more).

Notes (4:9-10)

1. In the second century, the scoffing writer, Lucian, in speaking about Christians, declared, "It is incredible to see the ardor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are all brethren."
2. Lucian was right. We are brothers. We have brotherly love, because we are taught of God to love one another. Brotherly love is not a natural thing in man. Hatred is the natural instinct in sinful mankind. Titus 3:3. Love is "God-taught." (Rotherham.) Compare John 6:45; Isa. 54:13. God taught the Thessalonians to love one another. Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Gal. 5:22. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. Romans 5:5.
3. INTERPRETER'S BIBLE observes that the word "brotherly-love" (*philadelphia*) is almost absent from the Greek of the pre-Christian period, and where found, refers to love for a natural brother. In the New Testament it is always love for a Christian brother.
4. Brotherly love as a Christian duty is laid upon us in other verses also. See Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1; I Peter 1:22; II Pet. 1:7. Brotherly love is combined with hospitality in Heb. 13:1-2.
5. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." John 13:34. The whole gospel taught us to love one another, and love is the essence of the gospel.
6. Love of the brethren is quite the opposite of the passion of lust, concerning which Paul spoke in preceding verses. Uncleaness is an offense against brotherly love.
7. We may love one another and do many other good things, but it is always needful for us to increase and abound more and more in doing good. I Thess. 4:1, 10; 3:12; Phil. 1:9; II Th. 1:3.

Text (4:11-12)

11 and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; 12 that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.

Translation and Paraphrase

11. And (we beseech you) to make it your goal (because of your love of honor) to lead a quiet (settled) life, and to keep busy with your own affairs, and to work with your own hands, just as we commanded you;
12. So that (by thus working) you may walk (or live) in a manner that will present a good appearance to those (who are) outside (of the kingdom of Christ), and (so that) you may have a lack of none (of the necessities of life).

Notes (4:11-12)

1. There is nothing that some people dread as much as being quiet. They delight in a row, and if one is not in progress, they stir one up.
2. "The Greeks were naturally mercurial and restless." (McGarvey.) Note how the Athenians sought only to hear some new thing. Acts 17:21.
3. We must *study* to be quiet. This means to make it our ambition to live a quiet settled life. A peaceful spirit cannot be attained without studied effort. The word "study" (Gr., *philoteomeomai*) means "to be fond of honor . . . to be ambitious, to strive earnestly, to make it one's aim." (Thayer)
4. Being "quiet" (Gr., *esuchadzo*) means "to lead a quiet life, rest, keep quiet." It describes those who are not running hither and thither, but staying at home and minding their business.
It is very hard to live quietly in our age with its blare, honking horns, hurry, clatter, rush, activities, TV, etc. How can we "be quiet"? We grant that it is not easy, but its rewards are great.
5. The exhortation to "Study to be quiet," is repeated as a *command* with greater force in II Thess. 3:12. Obviously they did not heed Paul's *exhortation* to work in this letter. So a stronger approach was used.
6. We should be ambitious to work at our own business and not meddle in other people's business. The Greeks were a restless

people, often given to intermeddling in the business of other people.

7. "Every fool will be meddling." Prov. 20:3. Christians do their own business and leave other people's business alone. "Be not eavesdroppers, or news droppers. Wide ears and wide tongues dwell together." (Jewell)
8. Supporting ourselves by working with our own hands is definitely commanded in God's word. See Eph. 4:28. Paul's own hands often supported him. Acts 20:34. He left us an example, and Paul's example of a gentleman is not one whose hands are too dainty for work.
Many people make it their life's pattern to do just as little work as they can get by with, and then to depend upon unemployment compensation, or state, county, or federal welfare to care for them. Such people need the nobly independent attitude of Paul.
9. Many Bible interpreters have speculated that the Thessalonians were loafing and living off their Christian brethren, because they expected Christ to come at any moment. There is utterly no hint in the Scriptures that this was the case. Nothing in the Scriptures connects any false ideas about Christ's return with the people not minding their own business.
10. Paul gives two reasons why they should be quiet, and mind their own business, and work:
 - (1) To present an honorable appearance to outsiders.
 - (2) To lack none of the necessities of life.
11. I Thess. 4:12 brings out the stern reality that people on the outside of the church view our manner of living as being more important than what we teach, and that idleness and parasitic behavior are especially reprehensible to them. Human nature is more impressed by appearances than by doctrines.
12. A spirit of quietness, combined with honest labor, brings to us a satisfying independence, causing us to "have need of nothing." (The Revised Standard Version renders "nothing" as "nobody." This is a permissible rendering, as the word may be either neuter or masculine. We should have need of nothing, and have to depend on nobody.)
13. With the close of verse 12, we end, the section 4:1-12, which is entitled "The Walk of the Christian." Notice again, and memorize the six points in this section:
 - (1) Abound according to the apostles' teaching; 4:1-2
 - (2) Abstain from fornication; 4:3-8

4:12,13 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

- (3) Practice brotherly love; 4:9-10
- (4) Study to be quiet; 4:11
- (5) Do your own business; 4:11
- (6) Work with your own hands; 4:11-12

STUDY SUGGESTION

Turn now to the "Did You Learn?" questions at the close of chapter four, and see if you can answer questions 1 to 26.

Text (4:13)

13 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.

Translation and Paraphrase

13. But we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those (of our Christian brethren) who are sleeping (in death), so that you may not be burdened with sorrow as indeed the rest (of mankind) who have no hope (so often are).

Notes (4:13)

1. A Christian missionary to American Indians wrote in Dec. 1962: "Tonight there is heard the sorrowing of our poor Indian people as they chant their sacred funeral songs, beat the seven sacred tom-toms, mingled with the weeping and wailing of those who have no hope. Oh, how the FEAR of DEATH seems to GRIP those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ." (John Runyan, McKinley Indian Mission)
2. The sorrow of the brethren at the time of death is aggravated by their ignorance of the future destiny. Upon the walls of the catacombs beneath Rome are found epitaphs for the dead who were buried there long ago. Some of the pagan epitaphs say things like these:
 - "Live for the present hour, since we are sure of nothing else."
 - "I lift my hands against the gods who took me away at the age of twenty though I had done no harm."
 - "Traveller, curse me not as you pass, for I am in darkness and cannot answer."

But on the tombs of the early Christians in the catacombs are found epitaphs that sing with the bright cheer of immortality:

"Here lies Marcia, put to rest in a dream of peace."

Lawrence, to his sweetest son, borne away of angels." (From *Fox's Book of Martyrs*)

3. This verse (4:13) opens a new section, having the topic "The Dead in Christ, and the Lord's Coming." The section covers 4:13-18. Paul opens this section by saying, "We would not have you to be ignorant." Paul used similar expressions in numerous places in his writings to introduce new topics. See Rom. 1:13; 11:25; I Cor. 10:1; 11:3; 12:1; II Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:12; Col. 2:1.

Christians have no excuse for being ignorant about their faith, and there certainly is no honor in being ignorant.

4. "Sleep" is a common metaphor for death in the Scriptures, being used fifteen times in the N.T. See I Cor. 15:6, 20. "Sleep" implies the possibility of an awakening. The grave become the couch in which the body rests until the awakening at the resurrection.

But those who say that the spirits of the dead also sleep, greatly pervert the meaning of "sleeping" in death. For the Scriptural descriptions of souls after death, see Rev. 6:9-11 and Luke 16:22-24. See also Special Study VI page 253, "Questions About Spirit and Soul."

5. Does this verse teach that it is wrong to weep at the death of our loved ones? Of course not. Jesus himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus. John 11:35. Devout men carried Stephen to his burial weeping. Acts 8:2. See also Acts 9:39.

The thing which we are not to do is to weep *as those who have no hope* weep. They often wail and carry on in uncontrollable sorrow. We who have a hope of reunion at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ should not weep as if death ended everything eternally.

6. Aeschylus, the Greek tragic dramatist (525-456 B.C.), said, "Once dead, there is no resurrection more." The apostle Paul said, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible." The pagans had no hope in death. Eph. 2:12. Christians have great hope in death.
7. This paragraph about sorrowing over the Christians who had died, indicates that the Thessalonians had a misunderstanding about the subject. What we know about the difficulty is only what we can infer from this paragraph (4:13-18). But it appears that the Thessalonians, expecting a speedy return of the Lord, feared that in some way the Christians who had died would not share the glories and benefits of the Lord's return.
8. It has been well suggested that Christians should mourn for those who are living in sin, and not for the dead who are in the Lord.

Text (4:14)

14 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.

Translation and Paraphrase

14. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose (again from the dead, we have the assurance that) in the same manner (as God raised up Jesus) God will also through Jesus (and the salvation Jesus provides) bring those who have fallen asleep (into eternal life and glory) with him (that is, with Jesus).

Notes (4:14)

1. Although Paul begins this verse by saying, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again," we must not think for a moment that Paul doubted that Jesus died and rose again. While our version uses the word, "If," to begin the sentence, the Greek construction (*ei. w. indic.*) is one which is used when one wished to assume that what he said was true.
2. The evidence that Jesus did rise from the dead is overpowering. He was seen alive after his death and resurrection on at least ten occasions, over a period of fifty days, by as many as five hundred people at once. We must believe that Jesus arose, if we expect to be saved, Romans 10:9. See also Rom. 4:25.
3. The phrase, "sleep in Jesus," is literally translated "those who have fallen asleep *through* Jesus."

This phrase, "through Jesus," should probably not be connected with "asleep" but with God "bringing" them.

We say this because the Devil has the power of death. Heb. 2:14. And it is therefore not likely that Paul meant to say that Christians fall asleep through the work of Jesus. Rather, Paul surely meant that through Jesus (and the salvation He provides) God will bring those who have fallen asleep back from the dead with Jesus.

The Revised Standard Version renders this clearly: "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep."

4. I Corinthians 15:12—"If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some of you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" The fact that Jesus arose, never to die again is a proof that we also can rise from the dead. The fact that Jesus promised that He would resurrect the dead, combined with the power He exhibited when He arose Himself, makes us absolutely con-

fidant that "there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29.

5. The word "sleep" in this verse is an aorist (a kind of past tense) passive participle, and is probably best rendered "those who have fallen asleep," rather than as "them which sleep." Concerning the use of the word "sleep" to describe death, see notes on I Thess. 4:13, par. 4.

Text (4:15)

15 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.

Translation and Paraphrase

15. For this we tell you (not by our own guesses or hopes, but) by the (very) word of the Lord, that we which are living (and) remaining (alive on earth) until the coming of the Lord, (that) we shall most certainly not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep.

Notes (4:15)

1. If we had only Paul's hopes or opinions as support for our hope that the dead will be raised, it would not be very solid assurance. But Paul informs us that what he speaks is the very "word of the Lord." Since the Lord Himself informed Paul about this matter, we place our total reliance upon it.
2. The expression, "word of the Lord," is often used to describe the prophetic messages which God gave to various men. See Micah 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Jer. 1:2; Luke 3:2, and many other such references.
3. Paul uses the phrase, "*We* which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." But the *we* in this verse does not indicate that Paul expected to be living when Christ returned. In II Cor. 4:14, Paul used the word *us* in such a manner that indicates that he expected to be resurrected: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up *us* also by Jesus."

Neither here, nor elsewhere in the New Testament is the coming (parousia) of the Lord stated to be very soon (by human standards of time). Some people in New Testament times assumed that it would be that way, but Paul never said so.

4. Concerning the word "coming" (parousia), see notes on I Thess. 2:19, par. 7.

4:15,16 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

5. What did Paul mean when he said that we which are alive when the Lord comes back shall not *prevent* them which are asleep? The word *prevent* now means to hinder or restrain. But in 1611, when the King James version was translated, it meant to "go before" or "come before." It is from the Latin word *praevenio*, meaning "to come before, to get the start of."

David said in Psalm 119:147: "I prevented the dawning of the morning and cried." David did not keep the morning from dawning. What he meant was that he got up before the dawning of the morning to pray.

Paul meant, then, that those who are alive when Christ returns will not go ahead of, or have a head start on, those who will have died before that time.

6. Paul uses a very strong negative (*ou me*) to affirm that we who are living will most certainly NOT go ahead of those who have died before the Lord's coming.
8. For the significance of the word "sleep" as applied to the dead, see notes on I Thess. 4:13, par. 4.

Text (4:16)

16 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;

Translation and Paraphrase

16. Because the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with the awakening cry, (and) with the voice of (Michael) the archangel, and with the trumpet of God (sounding forth), and (then) the dead (which are) in Christ (the Christians) will rise first.

Notes (4:16)

1. Jesus is not going to send any substitute or assistants back to the earth for Him. "The Lord HIMSELF shall descend from heaven."

Rev. 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

(The fact that those who pierced, or crucified, him will see him, indicates that they too will be resurrected.)

2. Three sounds are to accompany the Lord's coming:

(1) *A shout*. We think that this shout will be the Lord's own cry. For John 5:28 says that all that are in the graves shall

hear *his voice*. This word *shout* (Gr., *keleusma*) means an order, or command, specifically a stimulating cry such as is given to rouse animals or horses by charioteers, or as a signal to men.

When our Lord was on earth, he did not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. Isa. 42:2. But when He returns, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence," Psalm 50:3,4

(2) *The voice of the Archangel*. Michael (not Gabriel) is the archangel. Jude 9; Rev. 12:7. (Where did people ever get the idea that Gabriel will blow the trumpet?) Rotherham translates the word "archangel" as "chief-messenger," and that is literally correct.

(3) *The trumpet of God*. The trumpet of God was heard at Mt. Sinai, when God gave the law to Moses. It blew "exceeding loud," so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. See Ex. 19:16; Heb. 12:19. This trumpet will be equally frightening when it is heard again.

I Cor. 15:52: "At the last *trump*, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."

Matt. 24:31: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet."

3. When the Lord comes and the dead are raised, "the dead shall be raised INCORRUPTIBLE, and we shall be CHANGED." I Cor. 15:52. Christ is going to change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Phil. 3:21.
4. Personally, we believe this verse about the Lord's coming, and the trumpet, etc., literally. However, one author says in reference to this verse: "We must not look for literal exactness where things are depicted beyond the reach of sense." Such an attitude as this is often only a pious way of explaining away what the Scriptures say.
5. Sometimes people connect this verse with Rev. 20:5:
 "The dead in Christ shall rise *first*." I Thess. 4:16.
 "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Rev. 20:5.

This is a good example of "grasshopper exegesis," that is, the practice of jumping around in the Scriptures, combining pieces of verses here and pieces of verses there, and producing conclusions not actually taught by any of the Scriptures.

We cannot connect I Thess. 4:16 with Rev. 20:5, because the word *first* in I Thess. 4:16 has no reference at all to what is to happen to the rest of the dead, such as are mentioned in Rev. 20:5.

6. With what, then, is the word "first" in I Thess. 4:16 contrasted? It is contrasted with the catching up of the living Christians. "The dead in Christ shall rise *first*."

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them." (I Thess. 4:17)

To place any other significance upon the expression that the "dead in Christ shall rise *first*" can only be speculation.

Actually the Scriptures indicate rather plainly that there is only going to be ONE resurrection of all the dead. John 5:28-29: "The hour (singular) is coming in the which ALL that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good—and they that have done evil." Acts 24:15: "There shall be a resurrection (singular, not plural), both of the just and unjust."

"The first resurrection" mentioned in Rev. 20:4-5 is a resurrection of "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus." Nothing is said about any bodily resurrection there. It is a resurrection of souls, whatever that may signify. The bodily resurrection is mentioned later in Rev. 20:13.

7. To gain a true picture of the events connected with the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the dead, we should by all means notice Matthew 24:29-31:

"Immediately AFTER the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Notice that this Scripture destroys the idea that Christ will come secretly and take the church out of the earth leaving sinners behind. (See Special Study II page 242, "A Secret Rapture Considered.") For Christ's elect are to be gathered at the same time that all the tribes of the earth shall mourn.

It also rules out the idea that there will be a tribulation period AFTER Christ returns. For notice that the elect will still be here after the tribulation, and that then Christ will come and send his angels to gather them. (See Special Study IV page 247, "The Coming of the Lord With All His Saints.")

8. Besides this Scripture in Matt. 24:29-31, we ought also to consider Matthew 13:40-42. It tells what is going to happen to the wicked when Christ comes;

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire: so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Text (4:17-18)

17 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.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. Then (after that,) we who are living (and) remaining shall at the same time be caught up with them (the resurrected saints) in (the) clouds, unto (the) meeting with the Lord in the air. And in this manner we shall be (united) with the Lord (to be with him) always.
18. Wherefore (seeing that we have such a glorious hope), comfort (and exhort) one another by these words.

Notes (4:17-18)

1. There is a gospel song entitled, "The Meeting In the Air." That is a fine title. I Thess 4:17 talks about *meeting* the Lord in the air, and the word *meeting* is actually a noun (Gr., *apantesis*, meaning "meeting"). Will you join in that "meeting in the air" with the Lord?
2. I am sure that no Christian will have acrophobia (fear of heights) when our bodies have been transformed, and we have been caught up in the air. "Caught up" means "to seize, carry off, snatch out or away." It is the same word used in Acts 8:39 to describe how the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip after he baptized the Ethiopian.
3. Many Scriptures teach that the Lord is coming with clouds. Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:30. The Lord's presence is often associated with clouds and smoke. Exodus 19:18; Isa. 6:4; Psalm 18:11-12; Matt. 17:5

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4. Note that we are to meet the Lord in the *air*, the atmospheric region.
5. The glorious meeting with the Lord shall never end.
6. This Scripture brings to our minds other blessed passages:

John 14:3—"I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

John 17:24—"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." (Jesus wants us to be with him. Death can be a fulfillment of the desire of Jesus for us to be with him personally.)

Rev. 21:3 and 22:3 speak of eternally dwelling with God.

7. Because of all the glorious hope we have in Christ's second coming, we are commanded to tell Christians who mourn, that they will meet their dead in Christ on that day when Christ appears, and that in sweet union and communion they will ever be with their Lord and their loved ones.
8. The word "comfort" is the same word also translated "exhort." The coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead is both a comfort and a stimulus to us to serve Christ more fully. On the meaning of "comfort" or "exhort," see notes on I Thess. 2:3, par. 2.

STUDY SUGGESTION

We urge you now to turn to the "Did You Learn?" questions which follow immediately, and try to answer (preferably by writing out the answers) questions 27 to 46

DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over I Thessalonians, chapter four)

1. What is the title and Scripture limitation of Part Two of I Thessalonians?
2. What is the first topic of chapter four, and what are the Scripture limitations of it?
3. What did Paul include in all of his letters to Gentile churches? Why? (4:1-2)
4. What does Paul mean by the word "walk"? (4:1-2)
5. List the six points (A to F) in the outline of the first topic of chapter four.
6. By whom did Paul give the commandments which he gave? (4:2)
7. What is fornication? (4:3)
8. What is sanctification? (4:3)

CHAPTER FOUR

9. What are the two stages in sanctification? (4:3)
10. What is the "vessel" which we should know how to possess? (4:4)
11. What other interpretation is sometimes given to the word "vessel"? (4:4)
12. Did the Gentiles regard immorality as sin? (4:5)
13. What is concupiscence? (4:5)
14. How had it come about that the Gentiles did not know God? (4:5)
15. What does the phrase "go beyond" in 4:6 mean?
16. By doing what sin will we "go beyond and defraud" our brother? (4:6)
17. Who is the avenger of sins? (4:6). What is an avenger?
18. God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto what? (4:7)
19. If we despise (or disregard) Paul's teaching on holiness, whom are we actually despising? (4:8)
20. Concerning what subject did Paul not need to write them? (4:9)
21. Who taught them to love one another? (4:9)
22. Explain the sentence, "Study to be quiet." (4:11)
23. Whose business should we do? (4:11)
24. Were the Thessalonians loafing because they expected the Lord's coming very soon? (4:11-12)
25. Was Paul's exhortation about working carried out by the Thessalonians? (4:11-12). How do you know?
26. For what two reasons should we be quiet and work? (4:12)
27. What is the second chapter topic of I Thessalonians, chapter four, and what are its Scripture limitations?
28. Concerning what did Paul not want them to be ignorant? (4:13)
29. For what is "sleep" a common metaphor? (4:13)
30. Are we forbidden to sorrow for our dead? (4:13)
31. In what way are we to "sorrow not"? (4:13)
32. What misunderstanding did the Thessalonians apparently have about the dead Christians? (4:13)
33. What fact gives us assurance that the dead shall rise? (4:14)
34. Did Paul teach that Christ was coming within his lifetime? (4:15)
35. What does the word "prevent" in 4:15 mean?
36. With what three sounds will the Lord descend? (4:16)
37. Who is the archangel? (4:16)
38. At what occasion on earth has the trumpet of God been previously heard? (4:16)

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

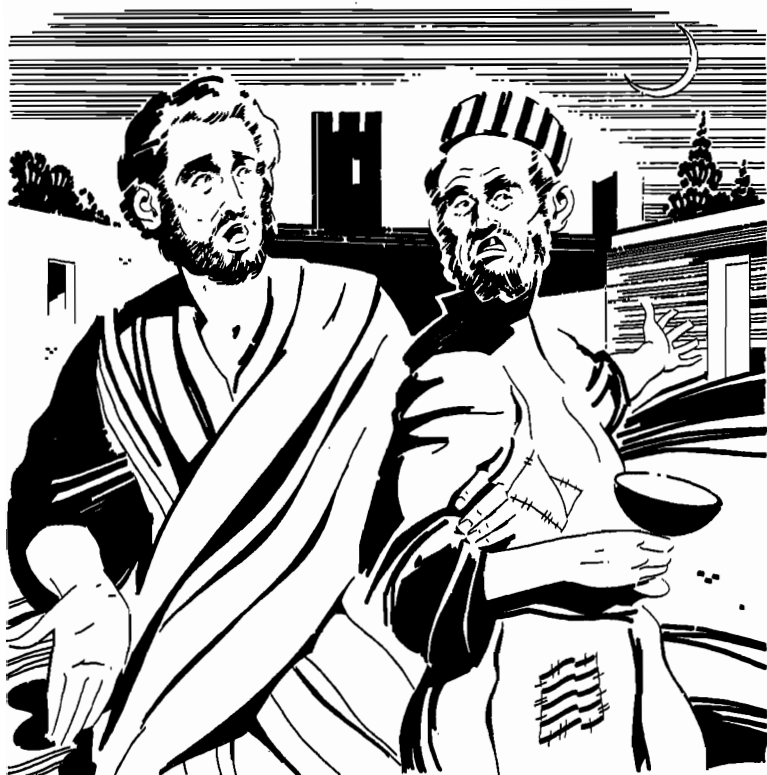
39. Who shall rise first when Christ returns? (4:16)
40. With what does the word "first" make a contrast? (4:16)
41. Why cannot we connect the statement that the "dead in Christ shall rise *first*," with Revelation 20:5? (4:16)
42. What will happen after the dead in Christ are raised? (4:17)
43. Where shall we be caught up to meet the Lord (4:17)
44. How long shall we be with the Lord? (4:17)
45. What should we do with the words about Christ's coming and the resurrection? (4:18)
46. Write out (or recite) from memory I Thess. 4:13-17. It begins, "But I would not have you——."

I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter Topics

1. Times and Seasons of the Lord's Coming. 5:1-11

2. Practical Exhortations. 5:12-22



"Let us not sleep (and be drunken) as do others; but let us watch and be sober." I Thess. 5:6, 7

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

I THESSALONIANS CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter Topics:—1. Time and Seasons of the Lord's

Coming. 5:1-11

2. Practical Exhortations. 5:12-22

1. Concerning what did Paul have no need to write to them? 5:1.
_____ and _____.
2. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a _____ in the
_____." 5:2.
3. What will people be saying when the Lord returns? 5:3.
"_____ and _____."
4. True or false (circle which)—Those who are saying, "Peace
and safety," will escape on the day of the Lord. 5:3.
5. Christians are not in _____. 5:4.
6. True or false (circle which). The day of the Lord will overtake
Christians as a thief. 5:4.
7. Christians are "children of _____ and children of the
_____." 5:5.
8. As children of the day, what should we not do? 5:6 _____
_____.
9. As children of the day, what should we do? 5:6. (two answers)
_____; _____.
10. What two things are done in the night? 5:7 _____;
_____.
11. Rather than being drunken, we are to "be _____."
5:8
12. What spiritual armor are we to put on? 5:8
(1) _____;
(2) _____.
13. God has "not appointed us to _____, but to _____
_____ by our Lord Jesus
Christ." 5:9
14. Christ "_____ for us," that whether we are alive or dead,
"we should _____ with him."
5:10
15. Paul begged the Thessalonians "to _____ them which
_____ among you, and are _____ you in the
Lord and _____ you." 5:12.

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16. The Thessalonians were to "_____ them very _____ in love for their work's sake." 5:13
17. "Be at _____ among yourselves." 5:13
18. "_____ them that are unruly." 5:14
19. "_____ the feeble-minded (or faint-hearted)." 5:14
20. "_____ the weak." 5:14
21. "Be _____ toward all men." 5:14
22. "See that none render _____ for _____ unto any man." 5:15
23. "_____ evermore." 5:16
24. "_____ without ceasing." 5:17
25. "In every thing _____." 5:18
26. "_____ not the Spirit." 5:19
27. "_____ not prophesyings." 5:20
28. "_____ all things; _____ that which is good." 5:21.
29. "_____ from all _____ of evil." 5:22
30. "The very God of peace _____ you wholly." 5:23.
31. Paul prayed God that their "whole _____, and _____, and _____ be preserved blameless unto the _____ of our Lord Jesus Christ." 5:23
32. We shall be preserved blameless, because God, who calls us, is _____. 5:24
33. What did Paul ask the Thessalonians to do for him? 5:25.
_____.
34. With what were the Thessalonians to greet their brethren? 5:26.
_____.
35. Unto whom was this epistle to be read? 5:27 _____
_____.
36. What did Paul wish would be with the Thessalonians? 5:28.

_____.
37. Memorize I Thess. 5:1-2, 23

CHAPTER FIVE

I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER FIVE

- Chapter Topics—1. *Times and Seasons of the Lord's Coming*, 5:1-11
2. *Practical Exhortations*, 5:12-22

Outline

- II. The Lord's Coming; 4:13-5:11
 - A. The dead in Christ and the Lord's coming; 4:13-18
 - B. Times and seasons of the Lord's coming; 5:1-11
 - 1. Comes as a thief; 5:1-3
 - a. No need of Paul to try to write to them; 5:1-2
 - b. When men are saying, "Peace and Safety;" 5:3
 - c. As travail upon a woman
 - 2. Will not come to Christians as a thief; 5:4-11
 - a. Why it won't overtake us thus; 5:4-5
(We are not in darkness.)
 - b. What we should be doing; 5:6-8
 - (1) Let us not sleep; 5:6
 - (2) Let us watch;
 - (3) Let us be sober; 5:6-8a
 - (4) Put on the armor of God
 - (a) Breastplate of faith and love;
 - (b) Helmet of the hope of salvation; 5:8-10.
 - (5) Comfort and edify one another; 5:11
 - III. Practical exhortations; 5:12-22
 - 1. Know them which labor among you. 5:12-13
 - 2. Warn the unruly; 5:14
 - 3. Comfort the faint-hearted; 5:14
 - 4. Support the weak; 5:14
 - 5. Be patient toward all men; 5:14
 - 6. Render to no man evil for evil; 5:15
 - 7. Rejoice evermore; 5:16
 - 8. Pray without ceasing; 5:17
 - 9. In everything give thanks; 5:18
 - 10. Quench not the Spirit; 5:19
 - 11. Despise not prophesyings; 5:20
 - 12. Prove all things; 5:21
 - 13. Abstain from all appearance of evil; 5:22
- CONCLUSION
- 1. Prayer for their entire sanctification; 5:23-24
 - 2. Request for prayer; 5:25

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3. Command to greet the brethren; 5:26

4. Command to read the epistle; 5:27

5. Benediction of grace; 5:28

(You should now memorize the two chapter topics of chapter five, and the two divisions (1 and 2) in section 5:1-11.)

THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTLINE

Of I Thessalonians, chapter five

The first eleven verses of this chapter are actually a continuation of the discussion of the Lord's coming, which was started at 4:13.

In 4:13-18 Paul discussed the relation of the *dead in Christ* to the Lord's coming. In 5:1-11, Paul discusses the relation of the *living* to the Lord's coming.

The Lord's coming will affect the living in two completely opposite ways. Neither the Christians nor the unsaved can know the times and seasons of the Lord's coming. But to sinners that day will come as a thief, bringing destruction. To Christians it will *not* come as a thief, because they are always watching, and spiritually awake, and sober.

What a sermon it makes to compare the way the Lord's coming will come like a thief to sinners, but to the children of God, since they are always looking for His coming, it will *not* come as a thief.

Paul closes his epistle with some brief pointed exhortations. The exhortations may be brief, but their application is very broad.

Text (5:1)

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you.

Translation and Paraphrase

1. But concerning the (general) times (when the Lord may return) and the (particular) seasons (when that would be most likely to occur), brethren, you have no need that (aught) should be written to you (giving you further information on the subject).

Notes (5:1)

1. When we think about the Lord's second coming, we all long to know **WHEN** it may be. We are like the disciples who asked Jesus, "Master, *when* shall these things be?" Luke 21:7. We have an expectancy of the Lord's coming. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:20. This expectancy naturally raises the question, "When?"
2. In the outlines we have entitled the section 5:1-12 as "Times and Seasons of the Lord's Coming." The section is closely connected with the preceding section, 4:13-18. Both are listed under

the heading, "The Lord's Coming," in the outline.

3. There are three points of resemblance between sections 4:13-18 and 5:1-11:

- (1) Both sections tell how people will fare on the day of the Lord. 4:13-18 tells how the dead in Christ will fare on that day. 5:1-11 tells how the living will fare on that day.

- (2) Both sections raise a problem, and both give an answer to the problem.

- (a) 4:13-18 raises the problem, "What will happen to the dead in Christ when the Lord comes?" Answer: They will be resurrected before the living are caught up.

- (b) 5:1-11 raises the problem, "Exactly when is the Lord coming?" Answer: No one can know, but since Christians are always watching, his coming will not take us by surprise.

- (3) Both sections close with an exhortation to comfort one another. 4:18; 5:11

4. The expression, "times and seasons," is also found in Acts 1:7 and Daniel 2:21. "Times" refer to time in general. "Seasons" refer to limited portions of time, with the added notion of suitability. Note the paraphrase for this distinction.

5. Many people have set the date for the end of the world and the Lord's coming, and all have been wrong. Any such efforts are bound to be in vain.

Jesus said, "It is not for you to know the time or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Acts 1:7. While Jesus was on earth he said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, nor the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Matthew 24:36. We think that Christ NOW has been given authority over and knowledge of the future (for this is suggested by Revelation chapter 5), but it still remains true that NO MAN on earth knows when Christ is coming. "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." Matthew 24:44.

6. God changes the times and seasons. Daniel 2:21. God had a time set to destroy Nineveh, but He changed His mind when Nineveh repented. Jonah 3:4, 10. Perhaps God has changed His time schedule on the return of Christ, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. II Peter 3:9.

7. The Thessalonians knew that the coming of the Lord would be unpredictable and unexpected. Paul had told them that. There-

5:1,2 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

fore it was unnecessary for him to go into a discussion of the times and seasons. Probably God had not revealed anything on this subject to Paul anyway.

8. Some interpreters make a distinction between the "day of the Lord," discussed in 5:1-11, and the taking up of the saints (the "rapture") discussed in 4:13-17. They maintain that the "Day of the Lord" discussed here is several years after the taking up of the saints, and follows a great tribulation.

This interpretation always reminds us of the bed of Procrustes. Procrustes (in mythology) placed his guests on a bed, and stretched short men and chopped off tall men to fit it. There is not the slightest suggestion in the text that this paragraph (5:1-11) is talking about a different event from that discussed in 4:13-18. If one did not have a certain theory about what will happen when Christ returns, he would never from this Scripture itself (4:13-5:11) get the idea that two different events were being described. We should not force the Scriptures to fit our theories, but make our theories to fit the Scriptures.

(For our reasons for questioning the idea of two returns of Christ, a secret rapture, followed by a tribulation, see notes on I Thess 4:16, and the Special Studies on pages 238-260, particularly studies II and IV.)

Text (5:2)

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

Translation and Paraphrase

2. For you yourselves know very clearly (how) that (the) day of the Lord is coming (unexpectedly just) as a thief (comes) in the night.

Notes (5:2)

1. The coming of the Lord will be like the coming of a thief in that it will be unannounced and unexpected. It will NOT be like the coming a thief in being quiet, sneaky, and concealed. His appearance will be like lightning that comes out of the east and shines even unto the west. Matt. 24:27.
2. The Thessalonians may have sent an inquiry to Paul when Timothy returned from Thessalonica: "Tell us precisely (Gr., *akribos*) when the Lord will return." Paul here writes that they already know "precisely" (or perfectly) that nothing can be known on the subject.

3. Numerous Scripture passages compare the Lord's coming to a thief:

Matt. 24:43—"If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the *thief* would come, he would have watched."

II Pet. 3:10—"But the day of the Lord will come as a *thief* in the night."

Rev. 3:3—"If thou dost not watch, I will come as a *thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I come unto thee."

Rev. 16:15—"Behold, I come as a *thief*; Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments."

4. It is difficult to imagine how the day of the Lord could come as a *thief* if only seven years before that day every eye had seen the Lord, and all the saints had been taken out of the earth, and a great shout and the trumpet of God had been heard, and a period of great tribulation had followed.
5. The expression, "day of the Lord," is used frequently in the Old Testament. It is applied to numerous occasions when God's judgment has been poured out upon sinners. Amos 5:18-20 uses it to refer to Israel's destruction by Assyria. Zephaniah 1:14-18 uses it to refer to the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by Babylon. Joel 2:1-3 uses it to refer to a locust plague that was near at hand. It is applied to the end of the world in II Peter 3:10.

We mention these uses of the expression, "day of the Lord," because some interpreters seem to apply automatically any Scripture that uses the expression, "day of the Lord," to Christ's second coming, regardless of what the context is referring to.

Text (5:3)

3 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.

Translation and Paraphrase

3. (For) when they are saying, (It is a time of) peace and security, then unexpected destruction shall come upon them, just as labor pains (come upon the woman that is with child. And they shall (most certainly) not escape (from the terrors of that day).

Notes (5:3)

1. They shall not escape: They will not be able to conceal themselves in the dens or the rocks and mountains. Rev. 6:16. The drunkard will have his cup at his lips, the swearer his oath in his mouth, the murderer his gun in his hand, and some in the act of adultery.

2. How little men know about the true danger to their souls: When they are saying, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction: As it was in the days of Jeremiah, men will be saying, "Peace peace, when there is no peace." Jer. 6:14. And as it was in the days of Noah, "they knew not till the flood came and took them all away; thus shall it be in the coming of the son of man." Matt. 24:39.
3. Luke 21:34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with dissipation and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." (The word translated "unawares" in Lk. 21:34 is the same word (*aphnidios*) translated as "sudden" here in I Thess. 5:3.)
4. The statement, "They shall not escape," is emphatic in form (using *ou me*, as in I Thess 4:15). Our translation and paraphrase renders it, "They shall (most certainly) not escape."
5. Note that the fate of sinners is said to be "destruction." "Destruction" (Gr. *olethros*) does not indicate annihilation of body and soul. But it describes the total ruin of everything the sinner is and hoped for. The word is used in this sense by Greek writers. For a full discussion of its meaning and uses, see notes on II Thess. 1:9.

Text (5:4)

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief:

Translation and Paraphrase

4. But you, brothers, are not in (the) darkness (like the unsaved people in the world who do not watch for the Lord's return. For if you were, it would happen) that the day (of the Lord) would come upon you as a thief (just as it is coming upon them).

Notes (5:4)

1. Here is a happy reversal: The day of the Lord is coming like a thief. But that day will NOT overtake Christians like a thief, because they are always watching for it. The Lord comes as a thief in the night, but we Christians are not in the dark.
2. What a joy it is not to be in spiritual darkness. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." II Cor. 4:6. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." Isaiah 60:1-2.

3. A few ancient manuscripts render this verse, "that that day should overtake you as *thieves*." (Moffatt, Goodspeed, Rotherham, and American Standard Vers. margin give this rendering.) This rendering gives the meaning that if we are living in the spiritual darkness of sin, the day of the Lord will surprise us as thieves are surprised when the police appear unexpectedly. Actually this reading has little support in the ancient texts, and we mention it only in case you see it in some version, and wonder about it.

Text (5:5)

5 for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness;

Translation and Paraphrase

5. (But you cannot be in such darkness,) for you are all sons of (the) light (seeing how the Lord has shined upon us), and sons of (the) day. We (Christians) are not (sons) of (the) night nor of darkness.

Notes (5:5)

1. Thieves and evil doers work at night, because they are evil. They hope that the darkness will cover their activities. "For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." John 3:20-21.
2. Christians are children of the light and of the day. The light of Christ has shined upon them. They have come to the light, and put away sinful things, for these are the works of darkness. Therefore God has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ." II Cor. 4:6.
3. When we are out of the darkness and in the light, we have such comforting assurance. We know our sins are forgiven. We know there is a life to come. We know that we have eternal life. I John 5:13.
4. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." John 8:12. Compare I John 1:5-6.
5. Ephesians 5:8: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."
6. Romans 13:12: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

5:5-7 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

7. Paul makes a shift in this verse, so as to include himself with the children of light: First, "*Ye are*;" Then, "*We are*."

Text (5:6-7)

6 so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night.

Translation and Paraphrase

6. Wherefore then, let us not fall asleep, as the rest (of mankind who are in spiritual darkness have done), but let us be watching and be sober (alert and wary).
7. For those who are sleeping sleep in the night (of spiritual ignorance and darkness), and those who get drunk are drunken at night.

Notes (5:6-7)

1. If you were told that a certain child came from a wealthy home, you might say, "I suppose he has lots of nice clothes." This would seem like an inevitable conclusion, since wealthy people do usually have nice clothing.

Likewise there are certain things that are inevitable for us as children of light. (The Gr. conj. *ara oun* indicates the logicalness or inevitability of the conclusion.)

2. As children of light, we should NOT——

(1) sleep; (2) Be drunken.

As children of light, we should——

(1) Watch; (2) Be sober; (3) Put on the armor of righteousness. 5:8.

3. Obviously "sleep" in this verse refers to being asleep about spiritual things. Many people are just as unaware of sin, salvation, the Lord's return, and everlasting life as sleeping people are unaware of the time of day.

"And, that knowing the time, that now it is high time to *awake out of sleep*; for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed." Rom. 13:11.

4. Watching is a most necessary thing for the children of light. We need to watch for our Savior, watch the devil, watch ourselves, and watch what is going on around us. We "watch," not to be meddlesome, but to protect our own souls, and to help others to walk in the right way. "Be sober, be *watchful*; your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about." I Peter 5:8 (American Stan. vers.). See also Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:31; Matt. 26:41; 24:42; Luke 21:36.

5. Furthermore it is necessary for us to *be sober*. This means to be calm, collected, and alert in our thinking. Compare I Tim. 3:2. A person cannot be sober when he is drunken, for alcohol destroys the ability to think clearly.
6. Our Lord personally warned about being drunken, and fighting, and eating with the drunken, while we are waiting for the Lord to return. See Matt. 24:48-50; Luke 12:45-46. Such a person will be cut in sunder, and have his portion with unbelievers. (As you think of these matters, note how well the picture at the start of this chapter illustrates the thought.)
7. It is an obvious fact that "they that be drunken are drunken in the night." The apostle Peter defended himself against a charge of drunkenness, by declaring that men would not be drunken at nine o'clock in the morning, the time it happened to be. Acts 2:15.

Not only is the drunkard most likely to be drunken in the hours of darkness, but he lives that way because he is in spiritual darkness to begin with.

Text (5:8)

8 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.

Translation and Paraphrase

8. But (rather than sleeping and being drunken) let us who are (children) of the day be sober, (and this we can do by) putting on a breastplate of faith and love, and (as) a helmet (the) hope of salvation.

Notes (5:8)

1. When the captain of our salvation returns, will we be alert, disciplined, armed soldiers, or will we be drunken, sleeping, sprawling slackers lying about in the barracks?
2. Paul urges upon us the necessity of being *sober*. This is the opposite of both sleeping and being drunken. The Greek word (*nepho*) means to be calm and collected in spirit. It is the same word as is used in 5:6.
3. Paul's thoughts in this verse are echoed in Romans 13:12-13: "The night is far gone (and) the day is almost here. Let us then drop (fling away) the works *and* deeds of darkness and put on the full armor of light. Let us live *and* conduct ourselves honorably *and* becomingly as in the (open light of) day; not in

5:8-10 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

revelling (carousing) and drunkenness, not in immorality and debauchery (sensuality and licentiousness), not in quarreling and jealousy." (*Amplified New Testament*)

4. The Scripture often compares righteousness, faith, and such things to armor such as soldiers wear. See Isa. 59:17 and Ephesians 6:13-17.
5. The breastplate of *faith* and love will protect the heart from evil thoughts, and keep us watching for the Lord's coming.

Since *faith* cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17), we ought to devote time to reading or hearing the word of God every day. But very few Christians even spend fifteen minutes a day with God's word. And few churches are truly grounded in the word of God. We need to take more seriously this command to put on the breastplate of *faith* and love.

6. Love must be combined with faith. "Though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing." I Cor. 13:2.
7. In this verse Paul urges us to put on the hope of salvation as a helmet. In Ephesians 6:17, salvation itself is called the helmet. A helmet serves both as a protection in battle, and as an adornment when the battle is won. Our salvation is a protection to us. God will not let Satan tempt us more than we can endure. I Cor. 10:13. Our salvation is an adornment, shining from our faces in friendliness, happiness, seriousness, kindness, and assurance.
8. The Christian life is——
 - (1) A battle requiring armor. I Thess. 5:8.
 - (2) A prize-fight, requiring self-discipline. I Cor. 9:26-27.
 - (3) A race requiring training and patience. I Cor. 9:24; Heb. 12:1.

Text (5:9-10)

9 For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Translation and Paraphrase

9. (We have this hope of salvation) because God (in His work of setting us into his kingdom for his own use) has not appointed us to (suffer the terrors of his everlasting) wrath (against sin),

but (he has appointed us) unto the obtaining of salvation through the Lord Jesus, the anointed one.

10. (The Lord Jesus Christ is he) who died for us (bearing our sins in his own body) so that whether we (live and) are watching (when the Lord returns) or (die and) are sleeping (at that time), we might live together with him.

Notes (5:9-10)

1. Christ's death is so perfect a guarantee of salvation that even death cannot rob us of it. Whether we are alive or dead when Christ comes, we shall live together with Him. Our fellowship with the Lord will be uninterrupted by either life or death.
2. Christians have not accepted God's offer of pardon without God responding to their acceptance. For God has *appointed us* unto salvation.

(The word here translated "appoint" (*tithemi*) is in the Greek middle voice. In this voice it means "to place for one's self." (Thayer.) We have emphasized this meaning in our paraphrase by the rendering, "In his work of setting us into his kingdom for his own use.")

3. The *wrath* of God awaits the disobedient and drunken. See Luke 12:45-46; I Thess. 5:7. See notes on I Thess. 1:10, paragraph 8.
4. The "wrath" (to which we are NOT appointed) is wrath (Gr., *orge*) or indignation which has arisen gradually and become more settled. It is not a fit of anger (Gr., *thumos*) which rises and then subsides.

God has been infinitely patient with sinners. But His just wrath has been building up for a long time, and will finally bring upon them their just destruction.

5. Some interpreters think that the "wrath" mentioned here refers to a tribulation period to occur on earth after Christ has taken the church out of the world at the "rapture."

However, "wrath" here is not opposite to "rapture," but is opposite to "salvation." The wrath probably refers to hell, and such judgments upon sinners. (See the notes on I Thess. 4:16, and Special Studies II and IV.)

6. There is considerable meaning in the word "obtain" in the phrase "obtain salvation." This word (Gr., *peripoiesis*) means an "obtaining, or a preserving, or preservation." (Thayer) The same word is used in II Thess. 2:14: "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus." Also in Heb. 10:39: "We are of them who have faith unto the *saving* of the soul."

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The idea is that salvation (safety and deliverance) is something that can be obtained and held onto, or it can be lost unto us. (How terrible to lose such a valuable thing:)

It is a blessed consolation, that God has not appointed us unto wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation. Christians do not fear the judgment day. Their sins have been taken away, and will be remembered against them no more. Their sins, having once been laid on Jesus, will never be laid on them.

7. The fact that Christ died for us is an essential part of the gospel. I Cor. 15:3; Rom. 5:8.
8. The result of Christ's death is that, for those who accept him, whether they live, they live unto the Lord, or whether they die, they die unto the Lord. Rom. 14:8.
9. It will make no difference in our fellowship with the Lord, whether we have died and are asleep when He returns, or whether we are living and watching. In either event we shall live with Him.

Text (5:11)

11 Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do.

Translation and Paraphrase

11. Wherefore comfort (and exhort) one another, and each one of you build up the other (in the most holy faith), even as (I know) you are doing.

Notes (5:11)

1. This passage is very comforting, but there is no comfort in it for those who are not saved. Only those who are watching for the day of the Lord Jesus, so that that day will not overtake them as a thief, will find any comfort in this verse (and the preceding ones).
2. The word "comfort" used here is the same one translated "exhort" in other places. Note Heb. 3:13. For its meaning, see notes on I Thess. 2:3, par. 2.
3. This command to comfort one another is similar to that in I Thess. 4:18.
4. The word *edify* means to "build up." So often people tear one another down, and discourage one another. What we say to one another is tremendously important. Often a word of encouragement can change a person's entire outlook and attitude, and actions.

This word translated "edify" is also used in Jude 20: "*Building up* yourselves in your most holy faith." Also it is in Rom. 15:2: "Let each one of you please his neighbor for his good to edification."

STUDY SUGGESTIONS—

- (1) Review the outline of 5:1-11.
- (2) Turn ahead to the "Did You Learn?" questions at the end of chapter five, and see if you can answer questions 1 to 18.

Text (5:12-13)

12 But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 and to esteem them exceedingly highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Translation and Paraphrase

12. But we do request of you, brothers, that you give heed to those who toil among you, and are (appointed to be) over you in the Lord, and who admonish you.
13. And (that you) regard them highly, (yes even) beyond measure in (your) love (that you show,) because of their work (which they do for your sake. And) keep peace among yourselves.

Notes (5:12-13)

1. These verses begin a section of *Practical Exhortations*. (5:12-22.) There are thirteen of these exhortations. See outline. We sum up the first exhortation to say, "Know them which labor among you."
2. An excessive modesty prevents many ministers, evangelists, and elders from calling attention to the sacred work which they do, and to the respect with which it is to be regarded. Such a modesty is most harmful to the church. Let not the minister hesitate, even at the risk of being thought egotistical, to speak on this subject and enforce the New Testament teaching.
3. Roman Catholics are forced to knuckle down to the authority of their priesthood. Protestants have rightly rebelled against such unauthorized tyranny. But generally they have gone too far the other way. They not only disregard human authority in religion, but God's authority too. Without fear of God they neglect to worship, never pray nor pay, and feel no obligation to work. They do not hesitate to find fault with minister, even when he speaks the word of God. My brethren, let us take the yoke of Christ upon us. We are slaves of a divine Lord.

4. It is possible that Paul inserted the command here concerning the respect due to elders and evangelists, because some of the Thessalonians were insubordinate, and despised those with gifts such as prophesying. I Thess. 5:20.
5. Three duties of those who are "over you in the Lord" are indicated:
 - (1) Labor; (The word means *toil*.)
 - (2) Rule
 - (3) Admonish
6. Two duties toward those that are over us in the Lord are laid down for us:
 - (1) Know them.
 - (2) Esteem them highly.
(The adverb, "very highly," used here is the same word used by Paul to describe his longing to return to Thessalonica in I Thess. 3:10. Appreciation for the ministry and eldership should be most warm.)
7. The expression, "*Know* them which labour among you," of course means more than just to get acquainted. It is a Hebrew way of expressing "to have regard for; cherish, pay attention to."
8. The duty of Christians to be obedient to their church elders and evangelists is also taught in other Scriptures:
 - (1) Heb. 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief."
 - (2) I Cor. 16:16: "That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth and laboreth."
9. Nothing is indicated in these verses that would warrant our assigning to different church officers the various responsibilities of laboring, ruling, and admonishing. All of these jobs are to be done by the elders of churches. I Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5, 9; Acts 20:28. Also preachers (or evangelists) must labor and admonish people. Titus 3:10; II Tim. 4:2.
10. It is easy for some men to abuse their authority, and take too much power unto themselves because they love the preeminence. III John 9.

Those who are leaders among the churches of Christ are not to rule over their brethren like the kings of the Gentiles rule. Luke 22:24-26. Whosoever would be greatest shall be the serv-

ant of all. Jesus forbade us to assume titles of honor, like "Father" or "Rabbi." Also the title, "Reverend," belongs to God alone, and should not be worn by the Lord's servants. See Psalm 111:9.

We notice that in I Thess. 5:13, that those who are "over you in the Lord," are to be esteemed very highly *for their work's sake*, rather than because they hold some office with a high-sounding title.

The Lord's church does not have any "district ministers," "state secretaries," "district superintendents," cardinals, patriarch, or popes.

11. As true as all this is, we feel that among many churches people need to be MORE subject to authority, and not less. Of course, the authority must be God's authority, and rest upon Scriptural teachings.
12. "Admonish" means to "warn, exhort, place in one's mind."
13. Paul concludes his exhortation about the church's attitude toward its minister by saying, "Be at peace among yourselves." Let there be peace between the minister and his flock, between the members themselves, and between ministers in different places.
14. If we have a factious spirit and cannot get along with our brethren in the church, or with the elders or preacher, we should take the matter to the Lord in prayer immediately, with humiliation and self-judgment.
15. Some of the Thessalonians were not working to support themselves. II Thess. 3:11-12. It is easy to imagine that this caused tension in the church, and may have partly been the reason Paul said, "Be at peace among yourselves."

Text (5:14)

14 And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all.

Translation and Paraphrase

14. But we exhort you, brothers, warn those who are (idle and) not obeying orders; encourage the faint-hearted; support the weak; be longsuffering toward all (men).

Notes (5:14)

1. No one enjoys being told he is wrong or being warned about something he is doing. Warning many people merely makes them stubborn. But Christians should both expect and appre-

ciate warnings and exhortations that are given from God's word by sincere people who are more advanced in the faith than they are.

2. Paul urged the Thessalonians (in 5:12) to obey those who admonished them. Now in this verse, they themselves are instructed to admonish (or warn) others.
3. The word "unruly" (Gr., *ataktos*) means "disorderly, out of the ranks (often so of soldiers), irregular." The INTERPRETER'S BIBLE says that the Greek papyri sometimes uses the word to refer to idleness and loafing, and that is probably its application here.
We say this because II Thess. 3:11 says, "We hear that there are some which walk among you *disorderly*, working not at all, but are busybodies." The word "disorderly" in II Thess. 3:11 is the same one as is translated "unruly" here in I Thess. 5:14.
4. In I Thess. 5:8 Paul compared Christians to armored soldiers. Now he says, "Don't be disorderly, or out of the ranks." Paul himself was not "disorderly" among them. II Thess. 3:7. Too many Christians are like soldiers out of line. Their actions interfere with the forward march of the whole church.
5. "Admonish (warn and seriously advise) those who are out of line—the loafers, the disorderly." (*Amplified New Testament*)
6. This verse is "an admonition against a too strictly disciplinarian spirit. The disorderly are not too hastily to be considered apostates, nor are the fainthearted to be regarded as cowards, nor the weak called blacksliders, nor are any to be hastily cast out." (McGarvey)
7. Paul's second Thessalonian letter indicates that these people who were unruly and disorderly and not working did not obey his exhortation and warning here in I Thessalonians. Therefore, in the second letter, Paul dealt with them roughly, saying, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." II Thess. 3:10.
8. The feeble-minded are not those who are mentally weak, but those who are faint-hearted and easily discouraged. They are the timid ones, those easily discouraged by persecutions, or cast down by trouble.

We do not condone their faulty understanding or weak will, but we must make concessions to their weakness and support them. We comfort, exhort, and encourage them. I Cor. 8:12.

Paul himself set an example of encouraging the fainthearted.

For in I Thess. 2:11, he tells how he exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you as a father does his children.

Furthermore, God Himself comfort the fainthearted. Isa. 57:15: "I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

9. The idea in the phrase, "Support the weak," is to "stick with them." Hold the weak firmly to you.

The law of the jungle says that the weak shall perish and only the fittest survive. The law of Christ is that the strong shall support the weak. Romans 15:1: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

Every church has people in it who are weak in knowledge, trust, courage, and strength. Let us stick to these people and support them until they become strong and can uphold others.

10. To be "patient" (Gr., *makrothumeo*) means to "persevere patiently and bravely in enduring misfortunes and troubles; to be patient in bearing the offences and injuries of others; to be mild and slow in avenging." (Thayer.) It is the very opposite of being exasperated, short tempered, and despairing.

It takes a lot of long-suffering and patience before some of the children of God develop into the kind of people they should be. See I Cor. 13.4.

Text (5:15)

15 See that none render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all.

Translation and Paraphrase

15. See that none (of you) return to anyone (an) evil (deed) for (an) evil (deed), but (rather) always seek (to do) the good (thing, both) to each other (as Christians), and (also) to all (men).

Notes (5:15)

1. This teaching about not returning evil for evil is contrary to everything the world does and believes. But it is repeatedly commanded in the Scriptures.

Prov. 20:22: "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee."

Matt. 5:39: "But I say unto you that ye resist not evil." See also Romans 12:17-21; I Peter 3:9; Matt. 5:39-41.

5:15-17 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

2. The caution to "see" is a warning that this practice of returning evil for evil can creep into our actions without our being aware that it is happening.
3. Note that the practice of not returning evil for evil, but rather returning good, is to be done by Christians to two groups:
 - (1) Among themselves;
 - (2) To all men.
4. Savonarola said years ago, "A Christian's life consists in doing good and suffering evil."
5. Four ways to react—
 1. The cruel (or Communist) way . . . Return evil for good.
 2. The common way Return evil for evil.
 3. The courteous (or civil) way Return good for good.
 4. The Christian way Return good for evil.

Text (5:16-17)

16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing;

Translation and Paraphrase

16. Rejoice always (in tribulation as well as in comfort).
17. Pray without ceasing. (Always be in an attitude of communion with God.)

Notes (5:16-17)

1. Christianity is not sullen and sour, but full of joy, so full of joy that saints can be joyous even when the world frowns. Christianity is not recommended by sepulchral tones and suppressing every outward manifestation of gladness.
2. "Rejoice evermore" means "rejoice always." The word "rejoice" is found in Paul's letters more than two dozen times. See Phil. 3:1; 4:4. Paul even rejoiced in his sufferings. Col. 1:24; Acts 16:25; See also I Peter 4:13.
3. The secret of true joy is to avoid trying to be happy, and just go on quietly doing our work and service. Then happiness will come to us without our looking for it. But chasing happiness itself is like chasing rainbows. It is always just beyond reach.
4. I Thess. 5:16 is actually the shortest verse in the Bible. Perhaps you have thought that "Jesus wept" was the shortest verse. (John 11:35.) In the English Bible it is the shortest. But in the Greek text John 11:35 actually has three words and sixteen letters, while I Thess. 5:16 has only two words and fourteen letters. The shortest verse in the Old Testament is I Chronicles 1:25.

5. How can we "pray without ceasing"? We cannot always be saying words in prayer. However, we can always be in an attitude of prayer, and break out spontaneously in prayer at opportune times. Review the notes on I Thess. 3:11, paragraph 1.
6. The command to pray always was also given by Christ. See Luke 18:1. Paul also stated it in other Scriptures. See Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2; Ephesians 6:18.

Text (5:18)

18 in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward.

Translation and Paraphrase

18. Give thanks in every thing (that happens to you), for (doing) this is the will of God for you in (your service to) the anointed one, Jesus.

Notes (5:18)

1. We should not only feel thankful for God's benefits, but also always *express* our thanks. No doubt exists but that all ten of the lepers whom Jesus healed were thankful for their healing, but only one of them came back and expressed the thanks that were due. Luke 17:15-18.
2. It has been well observed that it is backwards to have only one day a year for Thanksgiving, and three hundred sixty-four for grumbling. We ought to have one day a year for expressing our grumbles, groans, grunts, and grouching, and three hundred sixty-four days a year for blessing the Lord who satisfies our mouth with good things.
3. Ephesians 5:20: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Text (5:19)

19 Quench not the Spirit;

Translation and Paraphrase

19. Do not quench (and put out the fire of) the (Holy) Spirit, (for he both brings conviction to you, and endows you with gifts and miracles).

Notes (5:19)

1. On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon all flesh, the Spirit came with the appearance and likeness of *fire*. Acts 2:1-3, 16-17. The Holy Spirit caused men to

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- prophecy, see visions, work miracles, and do many other wondrous things. Acts 2:17. These miraculous works of the Spirit continued throughout the early generations of the church.
2. In this verse Paul compares the Spirit to a *fire* which can be quenched.
 3. The statement about not quenching the Spirit refers primarily to not quenching the miraculous gift and powers that the Spirit empowered men to do. The Thessalonians were to give free expression to the prophesying, speaking in tongues, etc., that the Holy Spirit might perform in them. For a list of the gifts and workings of the Spirit, see I Cor. 12:7-10.
 4. The fact that the Thessalonians could *quench* the Spirit harmonizes with what Paul said in I Cor. 14:32: "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." Unlike what happens in most modern cases of speaking in tongues (so-called), when people exercise these gifts in a state of uncontrollable ecstasy, the people in New Testament times who had these gifts were in perfect control of what they said, and could even suppress the revelations entirely.
 5. Numerous other Scripture references contain similar exhortations about not quenching or suppressing the workings of the Spirit. See Numbers 11:28-29; I Cor. 14:39; Luke 9:50.
 6. Should we in our time permit and encourage a free exercise of speaking in tongues and such gifts? We will not say "No" to anything that God's Spirit does. But in view of the plain Scriptural predictions that miraculous works of the spirit, such as tongues, prophesying, etc., were to cease (I Cor. 13:8; Zechariah 13:1-3), and in view of the fact that these gifts were given by the laying on of the apostles' hands (See Rom. 1:11; Acts 8:17-19), we do not expect to see such things as speaking in tongues and prophesying in our own time. (For further discussion of this matter, see the notes on I Thess. 5:20, and the notes on Ephesians 4:13 in *THE GLORIOUS CHURCH*, by the author of this book.)
 7. Even if we do not have miraculous workings by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is still very definitely at work within us. See Philipians 2:3. The Spirit stirs us to do things for the Lord, brings conviction of sin to us, and many other things. When you may think of a job you ought to do for the Lord because His word commands it, go do it; don't quench the Spirit. If we suppress

the Holy Spirit's message to our conscience, we shall soon lose our fire, become lukewarm, and then cold and formal.

8. But remember, in all matters, the Spirit leads us by the word of God, and if any spirit leads us otherwise, it is not the Spirit of truth, but the spirit of error. I John 4:6.
9. The Scripture speaks of "resisting the Spirit" (Acts 7:51) and "grieving the spirit" (Eph. 4:30) and "doing despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29). Sinners may "resist the spirit" by rejecting the message which is preached. See Genesis 6:3. But only believers can "quench" or "grieve" the Spirit.

Christians can quench the Spirit by disobeying the word of God, by living sensual lives, by ignoring their consciences, and by disregarding the counsel of those who are led by the Spirit.

Text (5:20)

20 despise not prophesyings;

Translation and Paraphrase

20. Do not treat with contempt (the) prophesyings (which your) teachings may give through divine inspiration).

Notes (5:20)

1. This negative command, "Despise not prophesyings," is equivalent to an emphatic positive: "Don't despise prophesyings; rather delight in them."
2. This verse is closely related to the verse preceding it, "Quench not the Spirit." Both refer to restraining the work of the Spirit as He sought to do miraculous things.
3. The office of the *prophet* and prophesying was very important in the early church. God's revelation was made known unto the apostles and *prophets* by the Spirit. Eph. 3:5. The church was built upon the foundation of the apostles and *prophets*. Eph. 2:20. The prophets were second in the church only to the apostles. I Cor. 12:28. Prophesying was greater than speaking in tongues or any other spiritual gift. I Cor. 14:1-5. Paul told the Corinthians to, "Covet to prophesy," I Cor. 14:39.
4. Therefore, to despise and treat with contempt the utterances of their inspired teachers was a serious wrong.
5. Silvanus himself, who joined with Paul in sending this letter, was a prophet, Acts 15:32; I Thess. 1:1.

6. How does this verse apply to twentieth century Christians?

If we interpret the word "prophesyings" to refer merely to the preaching of the gospel and to teaching believers to observe whatsoever Christ has commanded us, then certainly people need to be warned to "Despise not prophesyings." For there is a general disregard for God's word and the instruction of the Scriptures in our time.

7. However, we cannot honestly nor accurately say that the word "prophesyings" (Gr., *propheteia*) means simply preaching. This word is found nineteen times in the New Testament, and in every reference it indicates speaking by supernatural revelation or help. See II Pet. 1:20-21 and Rev. 1:3 for examples.

The same thing is true of the related verb, *propheteuo*, which means "to prophesy." It is found twenty-eight times in the New Testament, and in every reference where it occurs, it has a plain or implied reference to supernatural assistance in speaking. Notice Luke 1:67; Acts 2:17; Acts 19:6; etc.

8. The question then arises, "Are such supernaturally inspired 'prophesyings' still to be found in the churches?"

We think not. Paul plainly predicted that "when that which is perfect is come," such partial things as prophecies would fail. I Cor. 13:8-10. Zechariah the prophet prophesied that in the day that a fountain for sin and uncleanness was opened that the prophet would pass out of the land. Zech. 13:1-3.

9. Both the predictions of Paul and of Zechariah appear to us to have been fulfilled.

We now have a perfect salvation and a perfect revelation of the will of God given to us in the New Testament. Therefore, surely "that which is perfect" (not "*he* who is perfect") has already come, and prophecies should have failed and tongues ceased in the churches long ago.

Concerning Zechariah's prophecy we notice that—

- (1) The blood of Jesus has long ago been shed, and a fountain thereby opened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.
- (2) The prophets and the unclean spirit were to pass out of the land in that day (or time).

In view of these two Scriptures, we feel that the office of the *prophet* as it existed in the times of the apostles has ceased in the churches of God.

10. Therefore, the only way that we in our times could “despise not prophesyings” would be to despise the messages of God’s prophets and apostles that have been preserved for us in the Holy Scriptures. This we should NOT do, John the apostle cautions us in Rev. 22:18-19:

“I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the *prophecy* of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this *prophecy*, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

With this warning reverberating in our minds, we should take heed to “despise not prophesyings.”

Text (5:21-22)

21 prove all things; hold fast that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.

Translation and Paraphrase

21. Test all things (whatever you may hear or see. Then) hold fast (only that which is) the good (in the mixture of good and evil that constantly confronts us).
22. Depart from every (thing that has the) appearance of evil.

Notes (5:21-22)

1. Many people accept any teaching, simply because “Our preacher said so,” or because they have always thought it was that way. The command to “Prove all things” forbids such a gullible attitude. We should not accept anything we hear or see until we know it is in harmony with God’s word.
2. In our life we are always confronted with a mixture of evil and good in everything. Therefore we must prove (or test) all things, and hold fast only to that which is good.

Paul urged the Philippians to “approve the things that are excellent,” Phil. 1:10. (The same Gr. verb, *dokimadzo*, is used both in Phil. 1:10 and I Thess. 5:21.)

Error is never so dangerous as when it is mixed with some truth.

3. The command to “Prove all things,” may have had reference to the “prophesyings” mentioned in 5:20. While they were not to despise prophesyings, yet they were to test all things. The apostles commanded us to “Try the spirits whether they are of

God." I John 4:1. (The word "try" in I John 4:1 is the same Gr. word that is translated "prove" in I Thess. 5:21.)

Some of the early Christians had the gift of "discerning of spirits" which would enable them to spot false teaching without the aid of written Scriptures. We who have the Scriptures have a perfect yardstick to measure all things against.

4. Not only were the Thessalonians to hold fast to that which was good, but to avoid all appearance of evil. This would be very difficult for them to do in their pagan surroundings. They would have to be careful about where they went, whom they were seen with, under what conditions, etc. This would be difficult, but with God's help not impossible. II Thess. 3:3.
5. Most English versions of the Bible seem to prefer to translate 5:22 in some way similar to that in the American Standard version: "Abstain from every form of evil."

The translation hinges on the meaning given to the word *eidos* (translated "appearance" in the King James version). Basically the word means "external appearance, form, figure, shape." (Thayer.) It can mean "kind" or "form," as in the American Standard version. But it seems to us that the King James translation, "Abstain from all *appearance* of evil," is to be preferred.

6. There is a play on words in 5:21-22 which is not apparent in the English versions. We will try to bring it out by the following contrast:
 - (1) In 5:21, we are told to "hold fast" (Gr., *katecho*) that which is good.
 - (2) In 5:22, we are told to "hold off" (Gr., *apecho*) from all appearance of evil.
7. Keeping away from evil is essential for the child of God. God is holy and we too must be holy. Note Exodus 23:7; Job 1:8; 2:3. We must not use the members of our body as servants of unrighteousness. Romans 6:13, 19.
8. Avoiding all *appearance* of evil means that Christians should avoid going to places where people might think they were doing evil. To go into a night club, pool hall, tavern, etc., even for a legitimate reason, might cause some one to think we were indulging in evil. We should not only avoid the evil itself, but we must avoid even the appearance of evil.

Text (5:23)

23 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.

Translation and Paraphrase

23. But (now) may the God (who is the creator and giver) of peace (may he) his own self consecrate you in every respect (even unto the end of the age). And may your entire spirit, and soul, and body be (kept from sin and found) blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus, the anointed one.

Notes (5:23)

1. Just as Part One of I Thessalonians closed with a prayer (3:11-13), so also Part Two closes with this prayer in 5:23.

Paul's prayer in this verse is that the God of peace may do two things for the Thessalonians:

(1) Sanctify them wholly.

(2) Preserve their entire nature blameless unto the coming of Christ.

2. This closing prayer of Part Two reflects both the greatness of the heart of Paul and the greatness of the power of God. Meditate a minute about how great the requests in this prayer are.
3. The title, "God of peace," means "the peaceful God." Also it carries the idea that God is the creator and author of peace.

This title, "God of peace," is also found in Romans 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; II Cor. 13:11; Heb. 13:20; II Thess. 3:16.

How thankful we should be that the true God is the God of peace, and not of hate and war.

4. To "sanctify" means to "render sacred, declare holy, consecrate, separate from things profane, dedicate to God, purify." To "sanctify" is to separate something from God, and consecrate it to holy uses.

The entire nature of Christians is being sanctified. For a discussion of "sanctification," see the notes on I Thess. 4:3.

5. We are to be sanctified "wholly." The word "wholly" (Gr., *holoteles*) means perfect, complete in all respects, and through all time. It is a combination of two words, one meaning "whole" and the other meaning "end." We have tried to bring out this double significance in our translation and paraphrase by rendering it "in every respect (even unto the end of the age)." (The word *holoteles* is used as a predicate adjective, almost as an adverb.)

It is comforting to think that we shall be wholly sanctified. We shall no longer be in danger of temptation. We shall not lose anything that is dear to us on earth. If we have lost a mother whose saintly disposition has made her memory dear, we can be comforted to know that God is not permitting any of her precious nature to escape His preservation and sanctification. The best that is on earth will become better and none of it will be lost.

6. The words, "I pray God," in this verse are written in italics because they are added to the text. They should not be included, because all *three* men—Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy—joined in sending this letter. The Amer. Stan. Vers. correctly omits the "I" here, as also in I Thess. 4:9.

7. This verse indicates that man has a three-fold nature:

- (1) He has a spirit.
- (2) He has (and is) a soul.
- (3) He has a body.

(For a full study and analysis of the Scriptural uses of the words, "spirit" and "soul," see Special Study VI, "Questions About 'Spirit' and 'Soul'.")

8. Concerning the difference between "spirit," "soul," and "body," we shall only make the following observations here:

- (1) "Spirit" (Gr., *pneuma*) is the life-principle in man. It is the divine breath that gives him life. It is the "inward man" (II Cor. 4:16) that feels, things, wills, decides, and lives.

- (2) "Soul" (*psyche*) refers to our personal identity. It includes all those things that make us a particular person—our life, our mind, our affections, our emotions, our whole self.

- (3) "Body" (*soma*) is almost a self-explanatory term. It is the "outward man" (II Cor. 4:16), the fleshly, material part of our being, to which life is given by the *spirit*, and which with the spirit becomes a living *soul*, YOU!

9. All three parts of man's nature—spirit, soul, and body—have presently been corrupted by sin. But they will all be sanctified wholly at the coming of Christ.

Our bodies will be sanctified when they are transformed at the resurrection of the dead. Until that time we must keep cleansing ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit. II Cor. 7:1; I Cor. 15:51-53.

10. While we ourselves need to do all we can to make ourselves ready for the coming of the Lord, it is GOD who actually preserves us and delivers us from sin.

Jude 24: "Unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Compare I Cor. 10:13; 1:8; Phil. 1:10.

11. As Paul draws this first epistle to the Thessalonians to a close, he points once again to the pole-star of our home, the coming (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Concerning the meaning of *parousia*, see notes on I Thess. 2:19, par. 7.)

It would be profitable for you at this time to go back to Introductory Section III and review what Paul said about the Lord's coming in the Thessalonian epistles.

Text (5:24)

- 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it.**

Translation and Paraphrase

24. He who calls you (into his kingdom and glory) is faithful, who will also do (this thing, that is, preserve our spirit, soul, and body blameless).

Notes (5:24)

1. In I Thess. 5:23, Paul prayed that God would sanctify us wholly, and preserve our spirit, soul, and body at the coming of Christ. If God were not faithful and did not help us to be sanctified, it would never be accomplished.
2. Christians both can and must trust God. We cannot let fear rule our lives. Fear will make us timid and hesitant. Faith in a faithful God will drive out fear.
3. Many Scriptures tell of the faithfulness of God. He never fails to do what He says He will do. See I Cor. 1:9; 10:13; II Thess. 3:3; I John 1:9; II Tim. 2:13; Deut. 7:9.
4. God calls us into His kingdom and glory. I Thess. 2:12. He calls us by the gospel. II Thess. 2:14.
5. We can be confident in what God can and will do. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. Eph. 3:20. He will perfect our good work until the day of Christ. Phil. 1:6.

Text (5:25-26)

- 25 Brethren, pray for us. 26 Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss.**

Translation and Paraphrase

25. Brethren, (please) pray (also) for us (continuously).

5:25,26 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

26. Greet all the brothers (your fellow-Christians) with an holy kiss.

Notes (5:25-26)

1. How very often Paul requested the prayers of his Christian brethren: See Eph. 6:19; Romans 15:30; Col. 4:3, 18; II Thess. 3:1-2; II Cor. 1:8-11; Hebrews 13:18. If an inspired apostle such as Paul needed the prayers of his brethren, how much more your preacher needs your prayers.
2. In 5:26 Paul lays upon us the duty of knowing and greeting all of our Christian brethren. They should be very dear to us. The people we associate with on Sunday ought to mean much more to us than the people with whom we mingle during the week. It is good to see churches where the members greet and talk freely to one another.
3. The kiss was a common greeting in the East in Bible times, and still is in places. Jesus criticized his host on one occasion by saying, "Thou gavest me no kiss." Luke 7:45. This was assumed to be part of a sincere welcome into a home.

This kiss was given on the cheek, the forehead, the beard, the hands, the feet, but not (in Palestine) the lips. There is reason to believe that, as a rule, men only thus greeted men, and women women. It was so enjoined in the Apostolic Constitutions (third century).

4. The "holy kiss" is also mentioned in I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Peter 5:14.
5. After checking all the references to kissing in the Bible (and they are numerous), it appears to us that people in Bible times just did NOT go around kissing everyone they met. It was something rather special. There were kisses of greeting, farewell, worship, respect, and kisses of affection between people very close (such as Ruth and Naomi), and kisses of pretended affection (Judas kissing Jesus, for example).
6. That unrestrained kissing was not the universal custom in Bible times is indicated by the fact that King David's son, Absalom, attracted a lot of attention to himself by kissing any man who came near to him (along with giving out flattery). If kissing had been extremely common, Absalom's actions would not have attracted the notice they did. II Samuel 15:5-6.
7. We read of the father kissing the prodigal son (Luke 15:20), Paul and the Ephesian elders weeping and kissing in farewell (Acts 20:37), Aaron greeting Moses with a kiss (Ex. 4:27), etc.

By far the majority of cases of kissing involved those of the same sex. (This was not always the case, however, as Jacob kissed Rachel before he even introduced himself. However, she was a relative, and he knew it even before she did! Gen. 29:11.)

8. Erotic kissing is never referred to in the Bible, except possibly in Song of Sol. 1:2, and in that place the couple were unquestionably married.
9. In this verse Paul did not say that we had to kiss every time we met or said "Good-bye." Neither was he instituting a new church custom or ordinance. Since kissing was a form of greeting common in the world of that time, he could not have meant to institute a new practice, but he is here purifying an old one, insisting that the greeting be *holy*. This instruction applies to all our greetings, whether they be by handshake, embrace, or occasionally a holy kiss. We see people here in America sometimes greet those who are very dear to them with an embrace or kiss. If such is the custom, let it be a *holy* kiss, and do not try to interpret Paul's words to mean that we ought to kiss all our brethren every time we meet them.

Text (5:27)

27 I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren.

Translation and Paraphrase

27. I adjure you by the Lord (and His authority, as a judge might demand of people under oath), that this letter be read to all the (holy) brothers (to your whole congregation).

Notes (5:27)

1. Paul evidently thought that his letter could be understood by the common people in the church, as he gave strict orders that it be read to all of them.

The Roman Catholic clergy has often held back the Bible from their people, saying that the laity cannot interpret correctly the Bible without an infallible guide. However, Lois, Eunice, the Bereans, the Ephesians, and many others all read and understood the Scriptures without any official interpreter to explain them. II Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Acts 17:11; Eph. 3:4.

2. Public reading of the Scriptures does more good than we ever dream of. People will make many applications of the word of God as the Holy Spirit lays it on their hearts.

5:27,28 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

3. When we read the Scriptures publicly, we might well remember the example of Ezra who read *distinctly* and gave the sense. Nehemiah 8:8.
4. Paul's command to the Thessalonians to read his epistle publicly is put in the form of a judicial oath. He placed them under oath to do this. This certainly emphasized the importance that Paul attached to his writings. (The force of this command as an oath is brought out in our paraphrase.) For a similar oath, see Acts 19:13.
5. Paul also commanded the Colossians to read their epistle to the Laodiceans, and that they likewise read the one from Laodicea. Colossians 4:16.

Text (5:28)

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Translation and Paraphrase

28. (Now) may the favor of our Lord Jesus, the anointed one, be with you. (Amen)

Notes (5:28)

1. The benediction of "grace" is found at the end of every one of Paul's letters (including Hebrews). See Romans 16:24; I Cor. 16:23; etc.
2. It is not found at the close of the letters by Peter, Jude, James, or John. The book of Revelation, however, closes with a benediction of grace. Rev. 22:21.
3. "Grace" means "favor," as explained in the notes on I Thess. 1:1, paragraph 12.
4. The word "Amen" is not given at the close of Nestle's Greek text (it is in the margin), nor in the American Standard version. But it is included in many ancient manuscripts, and we include it in our paraphrase. It seems such an appropriate closing, both here and at the end of Part One of the epistle. See notes on I Thess. 3:13, paragraph 6.
5. The postscript at the close of I Thessalonians in the King James version, "The first *epistle* unto the Thessalonians was written from Athens," is NOT part of the inspired text by Paul, and also it is not true. See Introductory Section IV, paragraph 4.

STUDY SUGGESTION—

Turn now to the "Did You Learn?" questions on the following pages, and answer questions 19 to 51.

CHAPTER FIVE

DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over I Thessalonians, chapter five)

1. What are the two topics of chapter five, and what are the Scripture limitations of each? (See outline)
2. What are the two divisions in the first topic of chapter five? (See outline)
3. What are three points of resemblance between sections 4:13-18 and 5:1-11? (5:1)
4. Concerning what subject did Paul say (in 5:1) that he had no need to write to them?
5. As what will the day of the Lord come? (5:1)
6. What will men be saying before the day of the Lord? (5:3)
7. What will come upon people as travail upon a woman with child? (5:3)
8. Why will not the day of the Lord overtake Christians as a thief? (5:4)
9. Of what are Christians children? (5:5)
10. Of what are Christians NOT children? (5:5)
11. What two things should the children of light NOT do? (5:6-7)
12. What three things should the children of light do? (5:6-8)
13. What armor are the children of light to put on? (5:8)
14. Unto what has God NOT appointed us? (5:9)
15. Unto what has God appointed us? (5:9)
16. Christ died for us, so that whether we wake or sleep we should do what? (5:10)
17. In I Thess. 5:11, what two things are the Thessalonians told to do for one another?
18. What word the word "edify" mean? (5:11)
19. How many practical exhortations are listed in the outline of section 5:12-22?
20. What two duties do we have toward them which are "over us in the Lord"? (5:12-13)
21. At what are we to be among ourselves? (5:13)
22. What does "unruly" in 5:14 mean?
23. What were some of the Thessalonians doing (or not doing) that caused Paul to call them "unruly"? (5:14)
24. What does "feeble-minded" in 5:14 mean?
25. What are we to do for the weak? (5:14)
26. Toward whom are we to be patient? (5:14)
27. What are we to return for evil? (5:15)

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28. When are we to rejoice? (5:16)
29. How can we pray without ceasing? (5:17)
30. What are we to give in every thing (or every experience)? (5:18)
31. To what is the Spirit compared in the verse, "Quench not the spirit"? (5:19)
32. To what does the statement about not quenching the Spirit primarily refer? (5:19)
33. How important were prophets and prophesying in the early church? (5:20)
34. To what activity does the word "prophesying" refer in the New Testament? (5:20)
35. What two Scriptures are given in the notes to support the view that "prophesyings" are not now to be found in the churches? (5:20)
36. What are we to do with all things? (5:21)
37. From what are we told to abstain in 5:22?
38. With what does Part Two of I Thessalonians close? (5:23)
39. What two things did Paul request that the God of peace might do for the Thessalonians? (5:23)
40. What are the three parts in man's nature? Explain what each is. (5:23)
41. Paul prayed that our entire nature might be preserved blameless at what event? (5:23)
42. Who is going to sanctify and preserve us? (5:24)
43. According to 5:24, the one who call us is _____
44. In 5:25, what did Paul ask his brethren to do for him?
45. What is the purpose of the holy kiss? (5:26)
46. Is the holy kiss a church ordinance? (5:26)
47. What did Paul command the Thessalonians to do with his letter? (5:27)
48. Under what form did Paul issue his charge to read his letter publicly? (5:27)
49. What is the benediction in every epistle of Paul? (5:28)
50. Recite or write out from memory I Thess. 5:1-2, 23.
 5:1-2 begins, "But of the times . . ."
 5:23 begins, "And the very . . ."
51. As a final question over I Thessalonians, see if you can say all the chapter topics of the epistle.

II Thessalonians

Introductory Section I

THE RELATIONSHIP OF II THESSALONIANS TO I THESSALONIANS

1. *II Thessalonians was sent only a few months after I Thessalonians.*
2. *The same three men (Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy) sent both of the Thessalonian epistles. And in both epistles, Paul was the main author.*
3. *II Thessalonians was sent from the same place as I Thessalonians, Corinth.*
4. *In both of the letters Paul expresses thanks for their faithfulness. I Thess. 1:2-3; II Thess. 1:3-4.*
5. *Both of the letters have the theme of Christ's second coming.*
(I Thessalonians discussed Christ's coming as it related to the dead and living saints. II Thessalonians discusses the coming as it relates to the everlasting perdition of the wicked, and to the man of sin who shall come before the Lord comes. See Introductory Section III of I Thessalonians.)
6. *Both epistles deal with the same problems:*
 - (1) *Persecutions and trials; I Thess. 3:3-4; II Thess. 1:4*
 - (2) *Misunderstanding about the Lord's coming.*
 - (a) In I Thessalonians there were questions about what would happen to the dead in Christ at the Lord's coming, and exactly when the coming would be.
 - (b) In II Thessalonians there was the problem that some believed that the day of Christ had already come. II Thess. 2:1-2
 - (3) *People who would not work. I Thess. 4:11; 5:14; II Thess. 3:10-11*

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Introductory Section II

CHAPTER TOPICS AND OUTLINE OF II THESSALONIANS

A. *Chapter Topics of II Thessalonians*

Chapter 1—"God's Righteous Retribution"

Chapter 2—"The Man of Sin"

Chapter 3—"Withdraw From Idlers"

(Memorize these chapter topics NOW. While these topics do not cover everything that is in each chapter, if you will only remember these, you will have a general idea of what is in each chapter of the whole epistle.)

B. *Outline of II Thessalonians*

(More complete outlines are given at the beginning of the notes on each chapter. Note that each chapter closes with a prayer. Aside from the chapter topics, you will not need to memorize more of this outline now. The outlines will be studied more carefully as each chapter is considered.)

CHAPTER 1—"GOD'S RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION"

- I. Address and greeting; 1:1-2
- II. Thanks for their faith and love; 1:3-4
- III. God's righteous retribution; 1:5-10
- IV. Prayer for God's blessings; 1:11-12

CHAPTER 2—"THE MAN OF SIN"

- I. Paul's entreaty about the Lord's coming; 2:1-3a
- II. The man of sin; 2:3b-12
- III. Thanksgiving for God's choosing the Thessalonians; 2:13-15
- IV. Prayer that they be comforted and established; 2:16-17

CHAPTER 3—"WITHDRAW FROM IDLERS"

- I. Request for prayer; 3:1-2
- II. Expressions of confidence; 3:3-5
- III. Withdraw from idlers; 3:6-15
- IV. Prayer for peace; 3:16

Conclusion; 3:17-18

Introductory Section III

FACTS ABOUT II THESSALONIANS

(Memorize all facts in *italics*.)

1. *It was written by Paul the apostle.* Silvanus and Timothy joined with Paul in sending the letter.

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2. *It was written from the city of Corinth*, during Paul's second missionary trip.

(That the letter was written at Corinth during the second missionary trip is evident from the fact that Silvanus, or Silas, was with Paul up till that time, and apparently never afterwards. Silas became separated from Paul while he was at Corinth, for he is never afterwards mentioned as being associated with Paul.)

3. *It was written about A.D. 53*, just a few months after Paul sent I Thessalonians.

(The time between the two was probably only as long as it took I Thessalonians to be delivered, and a report brought back to Paul from Thessalonica.)

4. *The following problems are discussed in II Thessalonians:*

(1) They were enduring *continued persecutions*. II Thess. 1:4

(2) *Some had been misled to believe*, either by a supposed revelation, or by misunderstanding Paul's teachings, or perhaps even by a letter which Paul supposedly wrote, *that the day of Christ had already arrived*. II Thess. 2:1-2. This notion had caused them to become shaken, troubled, and excited.

(3) *Some had not obeyed Paul's exhortation in I Thessalonians about working, and were not working at all*, but were meddling and being busybodies. II Thess. 3:10-11

In II Thessalonians Paul *commands* such people to work, and puts some teeth into his command.

Introductory Section IV

DID PAUL REALLY WRITE II THESSALONIANS?

Yes. It is beyond serious question that Paul wrote this letter.

Many very ancient Christian writers quote or refer to passages in II Thessalonians. Polycarp (70-156 A.D.) alludes to 1:4 and 3:15. Justin Martyr (about 150 A.D.) refers to 2:3. Irenaeus (130-190 A.D.) quotes 2:8. Clement of Alexandria (about 195 A.D.) quotes 3:2. Tertullian (about 200 A.D.) quotes 2:1-2 as part of Paul's epistles.

It would have been impossible for men as ancient as these to have regarded II Thessalonians as an epistle of Paul, if it were not well certified as a true apostolic epistle.

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Some modern authors have questioned that Paul wrote II Thessalonians on the supposed ground that *the teachings about the second coming of Christ in II Thessalonians differs from that in I Thessalonians.*

In I Thessalonians Paul supposedly indicated that Christ's coming was very near and would be within their lifetime. Then in II Thessalonians he indicates that there would first have to be a falling away from the faith, and the appearance of the man of sin before the Lord came.

This is a manufactured contradiction, not based on truth. Paul was so far from being mistaken in I Thessalonians about Christ's immediate coming, that he could distinctly remind the Thessalonians (in II Thess. 2:5) that he told them while he was yet with them, before he ever wrote I Thessalonians, that the falling away would precede the Lord's coming.

There have been other even more flimsy objections to the fact that Paul wrote II Thessalonians, such as the extreme similarities of parts of the two epistles, and the difference in Paul's apparent attitude toward the church in the two letters.

DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over the Introductory Sections of II Thessalonians)

1. What three men sent II Thessalonians? (Section I)
2. From what city was it sent?
3. How long after Paul sent I Thessalonians was it before II Thessalonians was sent?
4. For what was Paul thankful in both epistles?
5. What is the theme of both the Thessalonian epistles?
6. What three problems are dealt with in both epistles?
7. What are the chapter topics of II Thessalonians? (Section II)
8. With what does each chapter of II Thessalonians close?
9. During what missionary trip was II Thessalonians written? (Section III)
10. In what year was II Thessalonians written?
11. What had some of the Thessalonians been misled to believe about the Lord's coming?
12. What had caused them to have this misunderstanding?
13. What was the problem in Thessalonica about working?
14. What is a cause for which some have questioned the fact that Paul wrote II Thessalonians? Explain why this objection is not true. (Section IV)

II THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER ONE

Chapter topic:

God's Righteous Retribution



The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance——” II Thess. 1:7, 8

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

Chapter Topic: "God's Righteous Retribution"

1. True or false (circle which)—The same people that sent II Thessalonians also sent I Thessalonians. II Thess. 1:1; I Thess. 1:1
2. True or false (circle which)—Paul requested the same things to be unto the Thessalonians in the second epistle as he did in the first one. II Thess. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1
3. What did Paul feel bound (or obligated) to do? II Thess. 1:3.

4. What did the faith of the Thessalonians do? II Thess. 1:3. ____

5. What did the charity (love) of every one of the Thessalonians do? II Thess. 1:3. _____
6. Paul glorified (boasted) in the churches of God for the _____
_____ and _____ of the Thessalonians. II Thess. 1:4
7. True or false (circle which)—Persecutions had ceased from the Thessalonians after Paul wrote I Thessalonians. II Thess. 1:4
8. The patience and faith of the Thessalonians was a manifest token of the _____
_____ of God. II Thess. 1:5
9. God's righteous judgment upon the Thessalonians was working things out so "that ye may be _____
_____ of the kingdom of God." II Thess. 1:5
10. What does God recompense to them that trouble you? II Thess. 1:6. _____
11. Is this a righteous thing for God to do? II Thess. 1:6. Yes or No (circle which.)
12. What will God recompense to those who are troubled? II Thess. 1:7. _____
13. With what shall the Lord Jesus be revealed from heaven? II Thess. 1:7. _____
14. In what will Jesus take vengeance? II Thess. 1:8. _____

15. Upon what two classes of people will God take vengeance? II Thess. 1:8

_____;
16. With what shall the disobedient be punished? II Thess. 1:9. ____

CHAPTER ONE

17. This punishment will be in a place "from the _____ of the _____," II Thess. 1:9
18. The disobedient shall be punished "when he _____," II Thess. 1:10
19. Christ will come to be _____ in his _____, and to be _____ in all them that _____," II Thess. 1:10
20. Paul prayed always that God would "_____ you _____ of this calling," II Thess. 1:11
21. Paul prayed that God would _____ all the _____ of his goodness, and the _____ of _____ with _____," II Thess. 1:11
22. Note the two that will be glorified: II Thess. 1:12
 - (1) "the name of our _____ may be glorified in _____.
 - (2) and _____ (be glorified) in _____."
23. According to what will we be glorified? II Thess. 1:12. _____

24. Memorize II Thess. 1:6-9.

II THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER ONE

Chapter Topic, "*God's Righteous Retribution*"

Outline

- I. Address and Greeting; 1:1-2
 1. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy; 1:1
 2. To the church of the Thessalonians;
 3. Grace and peace; 1:2
- II. Thanks for their faith and love; 1:3-4
 1. Their faith and love increase; 1:3
 2. Paul boasted of them in other churches; 1:4
- III. God's righteous retribution; 1:5-10
 1. Their patience a token of God's righteous judgment; 1:5
 2. God will recompense trouble to the troublers; 1:6
 3. God will recompense rest to those troubled; 1:7a
 4. Retribution to be done when Jesus is revealed; 1:7b-10
 - a. Vengeance to be taken on the ignorant and disobedient; 1:8-9
 - b. Jesus to be glorified and admired in His saints; 1:10

1:1-3 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

IV. Prayer for God's blessings; 1:11-12

1. The petitions; 1:11
 - a. That God would count them worthy.
 - b. That God would fulfill all the good pleasure of goodness.
 - c. That God would fulfill all the work of faith with power.
2. The purposes for the petitions; 1:12
 - a. That the name of Jesus may be glorified in you.
 - b. That you may be glorified in Him.

Text (1:1-2)

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; 2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Translation and Paraphrase

1. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy (send greetings) to the congregation of the Thessalonians (who are) in God our father, and (in our) Lord Jesus, the anointed one:
2. (May divine) favor and peace (come to you) from God (the) father and (from the) Lord Jesus Christ.

Notes (1:1-2)

1. These two verses and I Thess. 1:1 are almost identical. Only a few words differ. Both of these verses are combined into one verse (1:1) in I Thessalonians. Please refer to the notes on I Thess. 1:1 for comment on these verses.
2. We are thankful that Paul could still address the Thessalonians in this letter with the same warm greeting that he did in his first letter. At least they were not like the Galatians who quickly departed from the gospel. Gal. 1:6.

Text (1:3)

3 We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth;

Translation and Paraphrase

3. We are obligated (by our sense of debt to God and our debt to you for your faith, hope, and love) to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, just as it is fitting, because your faith increases (so) greatly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another grows (so much);

Notes (1:3)

1. We rejoice when a church grows in number, budget, and the size of its building. But do we rejoice when a church grows in

faith and love? This was what made Paul thankful for the Thessalonian church.

2. This verse reveals that one of Paul's prayers had been answered. Paul had prayed in I Thess. 3:12 that the Lord would make them abound in love toward one another.

After sending I Thessalonians, Paul received the report back about the Thessalonians that their faith was growing exceedingly, and their *love* was abounding.

3. The expression, "We are *bound* to give thanks," indicates an obligation, such as a debt to be paid. Paul felt bound to give thanks for the Thessalonians, not merely because that was the nice thing to do, but because it was debt he owed.

This expression about being *bound* (or obligated) to give thanks is found only here and in II Thess. 2:13 in the whole N.T.

4. "As it is meet" (Gr., *axios*) means "as it is worthy," or "as it is fitting." The faith and love of the Thessalonians had weight and value that demanded an equal measure of thanks upon Paul's part. (The word *axios* means "of equal weight, of like value, worth as much." See notes on I Thess. 2:12, par. 4.)
5. The word translated "groweth exceedingly" (Gr., *hyperauxano*) means "to increase beyond measure."

The Thessalonians had grown much in their faith, as all Christians should. They had not lost their first love. Rather they had increased that love. We should ask ourselves if Paul could say the same thing about us that he said about the Thessalonians. For faith that does not grow usually shrinks.

6. In all of Paul's letters, except Galatians and Hebrews, Paul begins with a thanksgiving. We should likewise always express our thanks first, and then give our criticisms if we have any to offer.
7. We prefer to translate the word "charity" as "love." In modern times we think of *charity* as almsgiving and helping the poor. The Greek word *agape* used here means "love" rather than "almsgiving."

Text (1:4)

4 so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure;

Translation and Paraphrase

4. So (greatly has your faith and love grown) that we ourselves glory about you (expressing the pride and thanks that are due, when we speak) among the churches of God (telling them) con-

1:4,5 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

cerning your endurance and faith in all the persecutions and the afflictions which you endure.

Notes (1:4)

1. Paul was not a man to keep quiet about something good. He boasted about the generosity of the Macedonian churches to the Corinthians in II Cor. 8:1-5. Here he tells how he "gloried in" (1) the patience, and (2) the faith of the Thessalonians when he spoke to other churches.

It is always an encouragement and a stimulus to Christians to hear of the good work of churches elsewhere. Ministers do wrongly if they do not advertise to their people about such things.

2. Note here that Paul speaks of the churches as "churches of God." This is the name most often used in the New Testament to describe local congregations. The name "church of God" is used in I Cor. 1:2; 11:22; 15:9; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; I Thess. 2:14; II Thess. 1:1, 4; I Tim. 3:5, 15; I Cor. 10:32.

The term "churches of Christ" is used in Rom. 16:16. We should be happy to be a part of a group called either a church of God or a church of Christ.

3. The word "patience" (Gr., *hupomone*) has the meaning of *steadfastness*; also of endurance and expectation of help and victory. A man, such as Job, who endures one blow after another without giving up his trust in God has "patience."
4. Paul had sent Timothy to Thessalonica to exhort them concerning their faith. I Thess. 3:2. This verse indicates that their faith was doing very well.
5. Paul mentions here their "persecutions and afflictions." The same expression is used in Mark 4:17 in the parable of the sower, to describe the influences that caused those sown on rocky ground to wither.
6. There is little difference in meaning between the words "persecutions" and "tribulations." "Persecution" refers to "pursuit" or "persecution." Tribulation (Gr., *thlipsis*) means "pressure" or "affliction." (See notes on I Thess. 3:3, par. 2.)

Text (1:5)

5 which is a manifest taken of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer;

Translation and Paraphrase

5. (You must never become discouraged in these sufferings, for your steadfastness is) an (obvious) evidence of the (fact that

there is a) righteous judgment of God (coming upon mankind). Your steadfastness in suffering, combined with God's righteous judgment, shall work out unto a happy result, namely) that you (shall) be judged worthy of the kingdom of God, for which (I know that) also you are suffering.

Notes (1:5)

1. We come now to the main point of II Thessalonians, chapter 1, the topic of God's righteous retribution. (See outline.)

So often we see vice flourish and virtue perish. The Thessalonians probably wondered why they should be suffering persecution when they were trying to do the pure will of God. This problem of the prosperity of the wicked has always been perplexing to the righteous. Psalm 73 considers the problem. See also Job. 21:7-17. Many songs reflect on this matter, such as "We'll Understand It All By and By."

In this chapter Paul, like the writer of Psalm 73, considers the "end" of those who are prosperous, comfortable, persecuting, and ungodly. There is a day of righteous retribution on God's calendar, and He will equalize all things. Until that day we must trust in God, having faith that He will do what is right.

2. What is the *manifest token* of the "righteous judgment of God"? Is it the "persecutions and tribulations" in 1:4, or is it the "patience and faith" in the same verse? Either view is possible, but we prefer the view that the "patience and faith" is the "manifest token."
3. This would seem to be suggested by the fact that "persecutions and tribulations" are plural nouns, while "patience and faith" and "manifest token" are all singular. Since "manifest token" appears to be in apposition to a previous term, it seems most likely that it would refer to a singular word (or words) like itself.
4. The term "manifest token" (Gr. *endeigma*) means "evidence, token, or proof." (Thayer) Rotherham translates 1:5: "A proof of the righteous judgment of God."
5. The patience and faith of Christians often suggest to sinners and persecutors the possibility of a divine origin of the Christian faith, and divine punishment for those who oppose it. It seemed to suggest this to Gamaliel. Acts 5:38-40.
6. A remarkable case of how the patience and endurance of Christians convinced a man of the righteous judgment of God is the case of Justin Martyr (103-162 A. D.). As a youth he sought to find rest for his troubled soul by studying the philosophers, but

found himself growing none the wiser with regard to God. He saw a good deal of persecution of Christians and admired the endurance they displayed. One night, while walking near the sea-shore, he met an aged Christian, with whom he conversed freely, and by whom he was convinced of the truth of Christianity. He spent his life seeking to win men to the gospel and writing articles to defend the faith. During the reign of Marcus Aurelius, he refused to obey a command to sacrifice to pagan idols. Hence he was condemned to be scourged, and then beheaded, which was executed with all imaginable severity.

To Justin, the patient endurance and pure faith of the Christians was a proof of the divine nature of their religion. In our times, the world is also looking for the proof in our lives that the gospel of Christ is true.

7. A related verse to I Thess. 1:5 is Phil. 1:28: "And in nothing (be) terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an *evident token* of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." Note here again the thought that the patience and endurance of Christians is a proof to their adversaries that they are on the road to perdition (destruction) while the Christians are following the truth. They sense this, even if they won't face up to it, or do anything about it.
8. Often we hear people say that we can never be *worthy* of God's blessings. We ourselves believe as strongly as anyone that we are not saved by our own works of righteousness. Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:9.

But even so, this verse says that we "may be counted *worthy* of the kingdom of God," and indicates that being counted worthy is the result of our patience and faith as well as God's righteous judgment. So evidently it is wrong to say that a man can NEVER be worthy. (For the meaning of "worthy," Gr., *axios*, see notes on I Thess. 2:12, par. 4.)

This matter of being worthy is also emphasized in other verses, II Thess. 1:11: "that our God would count you *worthy* of this calling." Col. 1:10: "That ye might walk *worthy* of the Lord." I Thess. 2:12: "That ye would walk *worthy* of God." See also Rev. 3:4.

Let us freely admit that we are not saved by any works we do. But let us also realize that when once saved, Christians CAN and must live in a manner worthy of God. These facts do not contradict and exclude one another.

9. What is it that causes us to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God? Is it God's righteous judgment? Or is it our patience and faith? It is both. If either of these were lacking, we could not be counted worthy of God's kingdom.
10. The "kingdom of God" in this verse probably refers to the future and everlasting kingdom of God (as in II Peter 1:11) rather than to the church, which is also called the kingdom of God. Col. 1:13. It is a fact that God has already called us into the kingdom and glory, I Thess. 2:12. But it is also true that "through many tribulations we (Christians) must enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22.
11. All Christians will suffer in some degree and manner. If we do not suffer, we shall not be judged worthy of God's kingdom. Compare Hebrews 12:7-8.

Text (1:6-7)

6 if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire,

Translation and Paraphrase

6. (We say that your endurance will work out to this happy result,) assuming (as we do) that it is a righteous (and therefore a predictable) thing on the part of God, to repay affliction to those who are afflicting you,
7. And (to repay) rest to you who are being afflicted (along) with us. (And this will be done) at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven (when He comes) with his mighty angels.

Notes (1:6-7)

1. God is going to recompense (or repay) two things:
 - (1) Affliction to those who afflict you.
 - (2) Rest to you that are afflicted.
2. God has always repaid people according to their works. "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works." Rev. 18:6; 20:12. Those who afflict will receive affliction. Those that take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Matt. 26:52. See Josh. 7:35. Who can doubt that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to those who afflict his people?

Some people argue that God is too kind and loving to punish anyone. But the truth is that God could not be righteous and let sin and cruelty go unpunished. Those who cause you to suffer must be repaid for their wrongs if God is just and righteous.

1:6,7 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

3. There is a similarity in some words in 1:6-7 which is not brought out by the King James text, but is very plain in the American Standard Version:

"If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense *affliction* to them that *afflict* you, and to you that are *afflicted* rest . . ."

Thus also the *New English Bible*:

"It is surely just that God should balance the account by sending *trouble* to those who *trouble* you, and relief to you who are *troubled*. (Copyright, Oxford University and Cambridge University, 1961)

4. We must leave to God the work of taking vengeance. Romans 12:19: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," saith the Lord." This verse gives us encouragement that all sin will be justly punished, and also keeps in check our own poorly informed and poorly controlled instincts for punishing others.
5. Rest shall be given to the children of God when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven. Our eternal life is a time of *rest*, as well as service. Rev. 14:3: "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." Hebrews 4:9: "There remaineth therefore a *rest* for the people of God." We must work now. The rest will come later.
6. Rest (Gr., *anesis*) means a "loosing, relaxing, relief, rest." (Thayer). "The slackening of strings that have been pulled tight." (Preacher's Homiletic Commentary)
7. The parousia of the Lord is described in this verse as not only a "coming," but a "revelation" of the glory and judgment of the Lord. (For the meaning of *parousia*, see notes on I Thess. 2:19-20, par. 7.)

This word "revelation" (Gr., *apokalupsis*) means "an uncovering, a laying bare, instruction in things before unknown, manifestation, appearance," (Thayer) It is applied to the coming of the Lord in I Cor. 1:7; II Thess. 1:7; I Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13.

7. We notice that BOTH the rest and the tribulation which the Lord Jesus shall recompense will be given "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven."

This cancels out the idea that the saints will have been taken out of the earth to be with the Lord several years before Christ appears in glory to all mankind. For BOTH the saints and the sinners will receive their due recompense at the revelation of the Lord. The saints are not to receive their rest several years before the sinners get their tribulation, but both will receive