

PAUL TO THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

Chapter 1

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. (*Compare 1 Corinthians 1:1-3.*)

COMMENTS:

Paul left Philippi after his brief imprisonment, and the conversion of the Jailor's family (**Acts 16**), to travel about one hundred miles to Thessalonica. Following his usual custom, he went first to the Synagogue of the Jews. He used his visit to preach Jesus as the Christ for three sabbaths, and succeeded in converting some Jews, a "multitude" of "Greeks" (probably proselytes), and several "chief women" (**Acts 17:1-4**). The next verses of Acts 17 tell of the violent jealousy of Jews, a jealousy probably provoked by Paul's success in persuading Gentiles to "turn unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God" (**1 Thessalonians 1:9**).

Using tactics of the mob, the Jews employed some men of the "rabble" to drag some of the brethren before the magistrates, accusing them of sedition. This atmosphere was not conducive to further effort on the part of Paul and his close companion Silas, so they were "sent away...by night" to Berea (**Acts 17:5-10**).

Paul probably labored in Thessalonica much longer than the three weeks mentioned by Luke, because he received gifts from the church at Phillipi at least twice while he was there (**Philippians 4:15-16**). However, his time there was short enough to cause him some anxiety about their continued faithfulness and stability. Chapters 2 and 3 are filled with concern for them, and expressions of relief in learning that they had achieved remarkable growth in the face of persecution from their "countrymen" (**1 Thessalonians 1:14**).

These two letters to this exemplary church stress the close spiritual and emotional relationship between them and Paul. The lessons to be learned from them are important in the establishment of proper mutual respect between a local church and its teachers.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is the expression "church of the Thessalonians" a proper name for a church?____
_____Why?_____
2. What other apostle besides Paul had a co-worker named Silvanus? (1 Peter 5:12)
_____Was he the same man who worked with Paul?_____
3. Is Silvanus the same as Silas, do you think?_____

Chapter 1

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of *you* in our prayers; (See *Colossians 1:3*; and *Philippians 1:3-4*.) 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope (Compare *Galatians 5:6*, & *Romans 8:25*.) in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father; (Compare *2 Thessalonians 1:3-4*.) 4 knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election (See *Colossians 3:12ff*, *1 Peter 2:9*.), 5 how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and *in* much assurance (See also *2:13*.); even as you know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us (See *Mark 16:20*, & *Luke 9:6*.), and of the Lord (See *Matthew 4:23*), having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit (See also *2:14*.); 7 so that you became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For from you has sounded forth the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith toward God is gone forth (Compare *2 Corinthians 2:14*.); so that we need not to speak anything. 9 For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how you turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, (Compare *Philippians 4:9*.) 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. (Compare *Matthew 3:7-12*, and *1 Corinthians 1:4-8*.)

COMMENTS:

The care of all the churches was assumed by Paul (*2 Corinthians 11:28*), but the "church of the Thessalonians" gave him much joy, especially since he had been able to be with them only a short time. The very shortness of that time had caused Paul to wonder if these new Christians, many of them converted from heathen idols, could bear up under the novelty of their unfamiliar profession, in view of the persecution of their countrymen.

Paul could "remember" with pleasure their "work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope," while he was with them, and he found assurance in the strong evidence of their "election," which was revealed by their ready and gracious reception of the truth that the Gospel was from God (See *2:13*). But, he especially wants them to remember "what manner of men" he and his co-workers showed themselves to be among them (he will deal with this fully in the next chapter). He does have some assurance that they remember him in an affectionate way, because they "imitated" his work, and that of the Lord, by spreading the gospel throughout Macedonia and Achaia, a work so efficient that Paul and his co-workers were not needed there again. Paul says that those who were the beneficiaries of that work reported that they were influenced indirectly by the way Paul "entered" in among the Thessalonians, turning men from idols to the "living and true God," and causing them "to wait for the Son from heaven" to

deliver them from divine wrath.

QUESTIONS:

1. What other churches did Paul pray for continually?

2. What three things about the church at Thessalonica did Paul remember?

3. In what way did the Thessalonians evidence that they were of the "elect?" _____

4. In what way did they imitate Paul and his co-workers?

5. Into what places did their "faith toward God" go forth?

6. Did the way Paul entered in among the Thessalonians appear in the "report" of those who benefitted from the work of that church?

_____What was reported?

7. From what will Jesus deliver us, when he comes from heaven?

8. Do we imitate the work of Paul in this church? _____

For yourselves, brethren, know our entering in unto you (*See 1:9.*), that it has not been found vain: 2 but having suffered before and been shamefully treated, as ye know, at Philippi (*See Acts 16:16-40.*), we grew bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict (*See Acts 17:1-9.*). 3 For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: 4 but even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak (*Compare 2 Corinthians 4:7, 13.*); not as pleasing men, but God who proves our hearts (*Compare Galatians 1:10-12.*). 5 For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as you know (*Compare Psalm 12:1-3.*), nor a cloak of covetousness (*See Vs. 9 below.*), God is witness; 6 nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ (*See John 12:42-43; and 2 Corinthians 10:8-13.*). 7 But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherishes her own children (*Compare Vs. 11.*): 8 even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were become very dear to us. 9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God (*See 2 Peter 2:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; and 2 Corinthians 12:14-18.*). 10 You are witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and righteously and unblamably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe (*Compare 2 Corinthians 1:12, 13:6.*): 11 as you know how we *dealt with* each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging *you*, and testifying, 12 to the end that you should walk worthily of God (*Compare Ephesians 6:4; and 1 Corinthians 4:15.*), who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

COMMENTS:

(Vs. 1-8) This chapter starts with an expression that might be a key to the confidence Paul had in this church. Fifteen times in these two letters, Paul says, "you know," or "you remember." (In the first letter, he uses such expressions in 1:5; 2:1, 2, 5, 9, 11; 3:4, 6; 4:2, 9; and 5:1, 2. In the second letter, they appear in 2:5, 6; and 3:7.) Two other times, he tells them, "you were taught" (in the first letter at 4:9, and in the second letter at 2:15). Paul still had anxiety over their spiritual state, and he may have used these expressions simply to help them remember what they had been taught.

The first thing he wants them to recall is that his "entering in" among them "has not been found vain." He did not let his "shameful treatment" at Philippi hinder him from a bold proclamation of the Gospel, even though it created more conflict from jealous Jews. There was no "error, uncleanness, or guile" in his approach to them, but a work that sought only to please God, not men. No flattery was used, and Paul followed his usual custom of "taking wages" from established churches in other places, rather than seeking gifts from his immediate converts. Paul did not seek earthly glory, even to the point of avoiding "claiming authority as an apostle of Christ." His manner was gentle, like a nurse with her own children, and he committed his soul to them, as well as the Gospel. These actions were prompted by genuine affection for them.

(Vs. 9-12) Repeating some of the same thoughts in another way, Paul reminds them that

he "labored" in "travail," in order to avoid being a burden to them. However, it was just as important for them to remember the "holy, righteous, and blameless" behavior of Paul and his companions, and the fatherly way he dealt with them as his children.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the Thessalonians "know," according to verse 1? _____

2. What was the "shameful treatment" Paul suffered at Philippi? _____
_____What caused it?

3. What three things were not characteristic of Paul's exhortation? _____

4. Whom did Paul try to please, according to verse 4? _____
5. What three things were never found in the work of Paul "at any time?" _____

6. What "authority" could Paul "claim?" _____
7. To what did Paul compare his "gentleness," in verse 7? _____
_____In what way did he deal
with them, according to verse 11? _____

8. What did Paul impart to the Thessalonians besides the Gospel? _____

9. What two things about Paul's work did the Thessalonians remember,
according to verses 9 and 10? _____

Chapter 2

13 And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when you received from us the word of the message, *even the word* of God, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God (*Compare Matthew 10:40; and Galatians*

4:14.), which also works in you that believe (*Compare Philippians 2:12-13.*) 14 for you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus: for you also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews (*See Acts 6:8-14, 7:54-8:3.*); 15 who both killed the Lord Jesus (*See Acts 3:14-15.*) and the prophets (*See Matthew 23:34.*), and drove us out (*See Acts 9:22-30.*), and please not God, and are contrary to all men (*Compare Luke 11:46-54.*); 16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved (*See Acts 13:44-48, 14:19.*); to fill up their sins always: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. (*See Matthew 23:29-36.*)

17 But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire: 18 because we wanted to come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us (*Compare Romans 1:13, 15:22.*). 19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even you, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? 20 For you are our glory and our joy. (*Compare 2 Corinthians 1:13-14.*)

COMMENTS:

(Vs. 13-16) Paul remembers with joy their open reception of his word as the word of God. The proof was in the fact that they were willing to suffer ill treatment by their "own countrymen," just as the Christians in Judea had suffered. His indictment of the Jewish persecutors is confirmed in many passages. They might find comfort in the knowledge that "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

(Vs. 17-20) Paul wants to confirm their first impression of his motives and character by coming to see them, again. However, the hindrances to that plan are attributed to the opposition of Satan. Paul had to adjust his plans, whether the hindrance be of Satan, or the Holy Spirit (see **Acts 16:6**, and compare **2 Corinthians 12:7**). At the end, he shows the reason for his strong desire to see these remarkable saints again. They are his "hope, joy, crown and glory." Evangelists who experience an enthusiastic response from their hearers are entitled to have the same joys.

QUESTIONS:

1. What attitude caused Paul to "thank God without ceasing?" _____

2. What did this attitude cause the Thessalonians to "imitate," according to verse 14? _____

3. Name five accusations brought against the Jews by Paul: _____

4. Why would the Jews be punished, according to Jesus in Matthew 23:29-36?

5. What words does Paul use to express how strongly he desired to come and see the Thessalonians? _____

6. What words does Paul use to show how important they are to him? _____

Chapter 3

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone: 2 and sent Timothy, our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort *you* concerning your faith (*See Acts 17:13-15.*); 3 that no man be moved by these afflictions (*Compare Ephesians 3:13.*); for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed (*See Acts 9:15-16.*). 4 For truly, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and you know (*Compare 1 Corinthians 4:9-13; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; and Acts 20:22-24.*). 5 For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain (*Compare 2 Corinthians 11:3; and Philippians. 2:14-16.*). 6 But when Timothy came even now unto us from you (*See Acts 18:1-5.*), and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that you have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also *to see you*; 7 for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith (*Compare 2 Corinthians 1:4, 7:6.*): 8 for now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord (*Compare 3 John 3-4.*). 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; 10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith? (*Compare Romans 1:11-12.*)

COMMENTS:

(Verses 1-2) Paul was not "left behind at Athens" by Timothy (and Silas). The historical account of **Acts 17:1-18:5** shows that Timothy and Silas remained in Berea, while others conducted Paul to Athens. They left him there and returned, carrying a message to Timothy and Silas to come to him. The message also probably said that Timothy was to

visit Thessalonica in his absence, and bring a report. He later leaves Athens, and goes to Corinth, where he is joined by Timothy and Silas, who "came down from Macedonia." This illustrates one way that Paul employed his fellow-workers; to "establish" and "comfort" new converts.

(Verses 3-4) Timothy's mission to Thessalonica was to assure the brethren that the "afflictions" of Paul were a necessary part of his ministry, not as divine retribution for his persecution of the church before his conversion (**1 Timothy 1:13**), but as a result of Jewish opposition against his vigorous prosecution of the Gospel. This opposition by the Jews was motivated in part by their hatred of Paul as a traitor to the establishment loyal to the Law of Moses. Since the Thessalonians were young in the faith, they might let fear of suffering similar affliction cause them to waver in faith. Timothy could explain this matter to them, and exhort them to be steadfast, so that they would not be "moved," or disquieted when they heard of it. (It is a maxim of Paul, however, that "all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," **2 Timothy 3:12**.)

(Verses 5-10) Paul could not bear to go very long without news of the welfare of the brethren. He was concerned that the brevity of his interrupted stay in Thessalonica had hindered him from helping them to gain the maturity to resist the "tempter." In these verses we have evidence regarding when Paul wrote this letter. It was "when Timothy came even now." Paul was assured by Timothy's report, and decided to write to them immediately, speaking of his relief from "distress" through hearing of their faithfulness. His very vitality was supported by the knowledge of their steadfastness.

QUESTIONS:

1. Paul said he was "left behind at Athens," and "sent Timothy" to Thessalonica.

Does this mean that Timothy was the one who left Paul at Athens? _____

____ Explain: _____

2. What was Timothy sent to do in Thessalonica? _____

3. What sort of "afflictions" did Paul suffer, according to the references after verse

4 above? _____

4. For what reason did Paul seek to "know" their "faith," according to verse 5? ____

5. What things did Timothy report to Paul, according to verse 6? _____

6. How did this news effect Paul, according to verses 7 and 8? _____

7. For what things did Paul pray "exceedingly" in verse 10? _____

Chapter 3

11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you (*See Acts 20:1-3.*); 12 and the Lord make you to in-crease and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also *do* toward you (*See also 4:9-10, and 5:15.*); 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. (*See also 5:23; and 2 Thessalonians 1:10.*)

COMMENTS:

(Verses 11-13) Paul's fervent desire for God to "direct his way" to them was fulfilled, but only after a long round-trip to Antioch in Syria, and a lengthy stay in Ephesus. In his absence, he prays the Lord to build up their love toward all men to the level of his love toward them. He views this as the key to acquiring "unblamable holiness" fit to sustain them when the Lord returns. Paul has now mentioned the second coming of the Lord in **1:10**, **2:19**, and now in **3:13**. This repeated promise may have contributed to the fact that some of them were "troubled" about this matter in the second letter (**2 Thessalonians 2:1-2**).

QUESTIONS:

1. What things did Paul desire for God and Jesus to do, according to verses 11 and 12? _____

2. To what end did Paul wish these things, according to verse 13? _____

3. How many times before verse 13 has Paul mentioned the second coming of the Lord in this Letter? _____ Is it possible that frequent mention of this event provoked the need for Paul's exhortation in the first few verses of chapter 2 in the second letter? _____

Chapter 4

Finally then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, even as you do walk,---that you abound more and more (Compare **Colossians 2:6-7.**) 2 For you know what charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus (Compare **5:27, and 1 Corinthians 7:10.**) 3 For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication; (Compare **Acts 15:19-20; 1 Corinthians 6:12-13, 18; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; and Colossians 3:5.**) 4 that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor (Compare **1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 14; 1 John 5:18; and Ephesians 5:25.**) 5 not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God; 6 that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter (Compare **Deuteronomy 5:21.**): because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified (See **Hebrews 13:4.**) 7 For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification (See **Ephesians 5:5, Ro-mans 6:19.**) 8 Therefore he that rejects, rejects not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. (See **Matthew 10:40, and John 13:20.**)

COMMENTS:

This chapter begins the section of this letter which reminds and instructs the Thessalonian brethren regarding their lifestyle and hope.

(Verses 1-8) A common problem among Gentiles was the sin of fornication. The strict laws of Moses which governed the Jews were not known among them, so it was inevitable that conflicts of lifestyle would arise between Jew and Gentile converts. The God who gave the sexual prohibitions of the Law of Moses (**Exodus 20:14, 17; Leviticus 18:6-23; Deuteronomy 22:13-30**) also condemned fornication of all kinds in the New Covenant (See references with the text above). The Gentiles had few inhibitions regarding these things, and were encouraged in their unclean acts even by their religion. Paul had "forewarned" them regarding these things, so he only reminded them of that instruction. The Thessalonians seemed to be ready for a change to sanctification and purity.

When Paul commands that "each one...know how to possess himself of his own vessel," he implied that they would have to learn a new behavior. The "vessel" he mentions could have two meanings, and it is difficult to determine which meaning prevails in this context. Albert Barnes suggests that the word could be interpreted as the "body...because it is that which contains the soul." However, he also says that Jewish literature sometimes referred to "a wife, as the vessel of her husband." It is true that Peter refers to the wife as a "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7), but this term implies the existence of a "stronger vessel," which must mean the husband. Our text here is compatible to 1 Corinthians 7:1-3, which puts the obligation of marital faithfulness on both the husband and the wife.

Another interesting factor to consider here is the close connection which Paul makes between fornication and uncleanness, which helps us to define what uncleanness can involve. This is shown to be an extremely important matter, because Paul says that if any man rejects his instruction, he has actually rejected God as an instructor (See 1 Corinthians 14:37.).

QUESTIONS:

1. Is verse 1 an admonition or an exhortation? _____
2. What was the particular "will of God" which Paul had in mind for the Thessalonians? _____
3. In what other letters did Paul warn Gentiles about the sin of fornication? _____

4. What is the meaning, do you think, of the word "vessel" in vs. 4? (See comments) _____
5. Identify those who are offended, when one commits fornication with another's spouse? (Use Genesis 39:7-9; Exodus 20:17; Ezekiel 33:26; 1 Corinthians 6:18)

6. "God called us not for _____ but in _____."
7. What chain of rejection do we initiate, when we reject the teaching of an Apostle? _____

Chapter 4

9 But concerning love of the brethren you have no need that one write to you: for you

yourselves are taught of God to love one another (*Compare 1 Peter 1:22-23.*); 10 for indeed you do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia (*See 1:8.*). But we exhort you, brethren, that you abound more and more (*Compare 2 Peter 1:5-9.*); 11 and that you study to be quiet, and to do you own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; 12 that you may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing. (*See 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; and Ephesians 4:28.*)

COMMENTS:

(Verses 9-12) From love on the erotic level, Paul turns to a more important type of love-- filial love of the brethren. He first uses the Greek word ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΙΑ, PHILADELPHIA, but then changes to ΑΓΑΠΗ, AGAPO, the kind of gracious love which God has for sinners (**Romans 5:8**). Peter shows us that brotherly love is one of the objects of "purifying" our souls by "obedience to the truth" (**1 Peter 1:22**). In this way, all Christians are "taught of God."

Paul couples this admonition with others: to live quietly, to mind one's own business, and to support oneself by work. Voluntary indigence does not show "love of the brethren." The Christian who is lazy and shiftless often lays an unnecessary burden on the Christian who works for his living (he will deal with this again in the second letter). However, the Christian always needs to be ready to help the indigent person who is willing to work, if his work does not yield sufficient reward. These are the truly poor. Paul shows, also, that quiet, diligent work will be a good example of the effect of Christianity on men toward "them that are without."

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Thessalonians have no need for anyone to write to them about "love of the brethren?" _____

2. What three things did Paul "charge" them to do, after exhorting them to abound in love? _____

3. What two things should result from these actions? _____

Chapter 4

13 But we would not want you (to be) ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that you do not sorrow, even as the rest, who have no hope (*Compare*

Ephesians 2:11-12; and 1 Corinthians 15:16-23.) 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. (*Compare John 11:21-26.*) 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no way precede them that are fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 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 (*Compare Acts 1:9-11; and John 14:1-3.*): and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (*Compare 1 Corinthians 15:50-54.*)

COMMENTS:

(Verses 13-18) When Paul raised the hope of resurrection to the heathen Thessalonians, they must have immediately pondered the sequence and the mechanics of it. Here again, a new way of thinking had to be instilled in them. Their concern over those who might die before the return of the Lord is answered by Paul, who shows that the Dead are honored by being resurrected "first" (see **Revelation 14:13**). No mention is made in this description of a sojourn by Christ on earth. Instead, both the dead and the living who are righteous will be "caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," never to return to earth. This explanation was designed by Paul to be used as a "comfort" to the puzzled Thessalonians, but it also answers some of the false doctrines in the field of eschatology (the study of the last things).

QUESTIONS:

1. Why should the Thessalonians not be as sad as "the rest," when their brethren died? _____

2. What should we believe just as surely as the fact that "Jesus died and rose again?" _____

3. What part does Jesus play in the resurrection, according to John 11:21-26? _____

4. What will be the manner of Christ's "descent" on the last day? _____

5. Who will "rise first?" _____

6. Does this passage teach that Christ will set foot on earth? _____ What statements show this? _____

7. How are we to use these facts? _____

Chapter 5

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that anything be written to you (*Compare 4:9*). 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night (*See Revelation 3:3, 16:15; and 2 Peter 3:10*). 3 When they are saying, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no way escape (*Compare Matthew 24:36-44*). 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: 5 for you are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober (*Compare Ephesians 5:3-14*). 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night (*Compare Romans 13:11-14*); 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. (*Compare Ephesians 6:10-20*.) 9 For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (*Compare 2 Peter 3:9*), 10 who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him (*See 4:13-17; and compare Romans 14:7-9*). 11 Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up, even as you do. (*Compare Ephesians 4:11-16*.)

COMMENTS:

(Vs. 1-11) These verses are a continuation of **4:13-18**, with a slightly divergent emphasis. Paul wants the saints at Thessalonica to know how to prepare for the second coming of Christ, in which they showed a deep interest. Though he says there is no need to write to them on this subject, he feels compelled by the Spirit to either repeat what he has already taught them, or at least to augment that teaching with other facts and admonitions.

He first tells them that the coming of the Lord is to be unexpected, as Jesus taught in **Matthew 24:36-44**. Those who are ignorant of, or indifferent to, this approaching event will be thinking they are in "peace and safety," and will experience inescapable "sudden destruction." The saints, however, will not be in the "darkness" of ignorance about Jesus' coming. As "sons of the day," they must be awake, and soberly watchful, which means

that they participate in none of the evils related to the "night," such as indifference (suggested by the word "sleep"), and carelessness (suggested by the word "drunkenness"). We should note that Paul uses the concept of "sleep" in vs. 7 in a way different from that of 4:13, or 5:10.

The Christian is armored against being surprised by the Lord's coming with "faith, love, and hope" (compare **1 Corinthians 13:13**). He knows his destiny, and the purpose of God for him. As the death of Christ was overcome by His resurrection, we may be confident that "whether we wake or sleep, we will live together with him" (see **4:16-17**). Again, Paul commands them to "exhort" and "edify" one another, just as he told them to "comfort" one another, after similar instruction in **4:18**.

QUESTIONS:

1. In what manner will the "day of the Lord come?" _____
_____ Does the Lord use similar words to describe his coming? _____ Give a reference: _____

2. When men are saying "peace and safety," what will happen? _____
_____ Do Christians need to fear this? _____ Why? _____

3. In what sense does Paul use the word "sleep" in vs. 6-7? _____
_____ What is the sense of this word in verse 10? _____

4. What should we do, since we are "of the day," according to vs. 8? _____

_____ Why? _____

Chapter 5

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 exceeding highly in love for their work's sake (*Compare Hebrews 13:7, 17; and Philippians 2:25-30.*). Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly (*See 2*

Thessalonians 3:6-12.), encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all (*Compare Romans 14:19.*). 15 See that none render to any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all (*Compare Romans 12:17-21.*). 16 Rejoice always (*See Philippians 4:4.*); 17 pray without ceasing (*See Luke 18:1; and Colossians 4:2.*); 18 in everything give thanks (*See Ephesians 5:20.*): for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus toward you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit; 20 do not despise prophesying (*See 1 Corinthians 14:39-40.*); 21 prove all things; hold fast that which is good (*Compare 1 John 4:1.*); 22 abstain from every form of evil. (*Compare 1 Corinthians 10:31-33.*)

COMMENTS:

(Vs. 12-22) This section is like the closing of other letters of Paul, in which he gives some general instructions. He commands respect for the spiritual leaders in the church, peaceful associations, judicious dealings with the disorderly and the weak, the suppression of a spirit of vengeance, the practice of good works, and finishes with admonitions to rejoice, pray, give thanks, permit the workings of the Spirit and prophecy. They are to "prove all things, hold fast that which is good," and "abstain from every form of evil." Each church of the Lord should examine these admonitions and take care to keep them in their practice.

QUESTIONS:

1. What group of men were the Thessalonian Christians to "know" and "esteem.... ..exceeding highly in love for their work's sake?" _____

2. According to verse 14, who are they to "admonish?" _____
_____ "encourage?" _____ "support?" _____
_____ "be longsuffering toward?" _____
3. Instead of returning "evil for evil," what are they to do, according to vs. 15?

4. What three things does Paul command in verses 16-18? _____

5. Is Paul saying the same thing in different ways in verses 19 and 20? _____

_____ Explain: _____

6. What is the reason for "proving all things," according to vs. 21? _____

7. What is the meaning of the word "abstain" in vs. 22? _____

Chapter 5

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. (Compare **Romans 8:10-11**, and **1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44, 50-53**.) 24 Faithful is he that calls you, who will also do it.

25 Brethren, pray for us. (See **Colossians 4:2-4**.)

26 Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss (See **Romans 16:16**). 27 I command you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren. (See **Colossians 4:16**.)

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

COMMENTS:

(Vs. 23-24) Paul expresses here the desire that God will "sanctify" them "wholly," that is, to "preserve spirit, soul, and body entire" at the coming of Jesus. The Jehovah's Witnesses, in their blasphemous denials of the full deity of Jesus, take a view of the soul that denies its spiritual value. They say the "soul" can be annihilated; that it does not survive physical death. In **Matthew 10:28**, Jesus commands men to "fear Him who is able to *destroy* both soul and body in hell (Gehenna)." Yet, the word "destroy" (in the Greek, ΔΠΟΛΛΥΜΙ, APOLLUMI), according to W. E. Vine, does not mean "extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being." The same word is used in **Luke 15:4**, and **15:8**, and is translated "lost." However, in those contexts, the "lost" is later "found." Also, It was written of Jesus that His soul was not "left unto Hades," the resting place of the dead (**Acts 2:27**). Therefore, the Christian possesses a "soul" that can enjoy an eternal existence in the sense of continuing "life," whether he is "awake" or "asleep" at the coming of the Lord. A "faithful" God can do this.

(Vs. 25-28) These verses contain final appeals, and a final blessing, closing the first letter to Thessalonica.

QUESTIONS:

1. What three things possessed by each Christian did Paul want to be "preserved entire without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?" _____

2. Paul asked his readers to pray for him, but gave no specifics. What specific thing did he ask the Colossians to pray in his behalf, in Colossians 4:3-4?

3. What did Paul "command" the Thessalonians to do, in vs. 27? _____

PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

Chapter 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. (*Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1.*)

3 We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is fit, in that your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another abounds (*Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 4:9-10.*); 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 you endure (*Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 2:14.*); 5 *which is a* manifest token of the righteous judgment of God (*Compare Philippians 1:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5; Acts 14:21-22; and John 16:33.*); to the end that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer (*Compare James 1:2-4, 12.*); 6 if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you (*See Revelation 16:4-7.*), 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 (*Compare Matthew 25:31.*) in flaming fire (*See John 5:28-29; and Romans 2:4-11.*), 8 rendering vengeance to them that do not know God, and to them that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (*Compare 1 Peter 4:17-19.*); 9 who shall suffer punishment, *even* eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might (*Compare Matthew 25:41.*), 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (*Compare Jude 24-25.*) (because our testimony to you was believed) in that day. 11 To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire of goodness and *every* work of faith, with power; 12 that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Compare Ephesians 3:20-21.*)

COMMENTS:

This second shorter letter of Paul to the church at Thessalonica should be treated as an adjunct to the first, since it was written from the same place as the first, and probably followed it by only a space of a few months.

(Verses 3-7a) It is evident that the persecutions which had been visited on the newborn saints at Thessalonica from the beginning of their commitment had continued, and had perhaps increased in intensity. Paul commends them for their growth of faith and patience during this period, and tries to comfort them with the knowledge that their sufferings are a "*manifest token of the righteous judgment of God.*" The persecution was not a "judgment" visited on the Christians, but Christ will "afflict" and judge the

persecutors, just as Jesus told His generation that the ill-treatment of the prophets *"from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah"* would be visited on them, leaving their house "desolate" (**Matthew 23:34-38**). Paul's use of the phrase "if so be" in vs. 6 might suggest doubt that God would consider it "righteous" to afflict the afflicters of Christians. There was no doubt in his mind that adversaries of the faithful would be condemned (See **Philippians 1:27-28**). The divine goal of the God who allows the affliction of Christians is to make them *"worthy of the kingdom of God."* The end of their suffering, and of Paul's, however, will be "rest" (Compare **Romans 15:30-32**). (Verses 7b-10) The destruction of the wicked, *"that do not know God, and...do not obey the gospel,"* is pictured for us in a very graphic way in these verses. Surrounded by angels that extend "His power," Christ will come rendering fiery vengeance, separating unbelievers by an *"eternal destruction from the face...and from the glory"* of God. The word "destruction" in this passage is from a Greek word that indicates "slaying." However, this is actually a living death (see **Mark 9:47-48**), or a "second death" (see **Revelation 21:8**). Verse 10 shows that the other event of the second coming of the Lord will be His glorification by the saints, who marvel at Him (compare **Revelation 5:11-14**). (Verses 11-12) Paul prayed that God would assist the Thessalonians to fulfill *"every desire of goodness* (see **Ephesians 5:9**) *and work of faith* (see **1 Thessalonians 1:3**), *with power."* This would help them *"glorify the name of the Lord Jesus,"* that they might also be glorified "in Him" (compare **Romans 8:20-21, 29-30; 9:22-23**).

QUESTIONS:

1. Is there any essential difference in the "address" of this letter from that of the first letter? _____
2. For what two things did Paul feel "bound to give thanks to God?" (vs. 3) _____

3. In what things did Paul "Glory...in the churches of God?" _____

4. In what way were the "persecutions and afflictions" of the Thessalonians "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God?" _____

5. What "end" did these afflictions serve, according to vs. 5? _____

6. To whom will God "recompense affliction?" _____

_____ To whom will he give "rest?" _____

7. What mental picture of the "revelation of the Lord Jesus" does Paul give us in

vs. 7? _____

8. To whom will Jesus "render vengeance?" _____

9. Describe the extent of the things they will "suffer?" _____

10. What is the other purpose of His coming, according to vs. 10? _____

11. To what "end" did Paul always pray, according to vs. 11? _____

12. What will be "glorified" in the Thessalonians? _____

_____ Will they also be glorified? _____

Chapter 2

Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him (*See 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.*); 2 to the end that you be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; 3 let no man deceive you in any way (*Compare Ephesians 5:6; and Colossians 2:4.*): for it will not be, except the falling away come first (*See 1 Timothy 4:1-5; and 2 Timothy 3:1-8.*), and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, 4 he that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sits in the temple of God, showing himself as God. (*Compare Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:1-2; and Daniel 11:36-37.*) 5 Don't you remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things? 6 And now you know that which restrains, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. 7 For the

mystery of lawlessness does already work (*Compare 1 John 4:2-3.*): only *there is* one that restrains now, until he be taken out of the way (*Compare Matthew 24:3-14.*). 8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth (*Compare Isaiah 11:4; Hosea 6:5; and Revelation 2:16.*), and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his coming; 9 *even he*, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders (*Compare Deuteronomy 12:32-13:4.*), 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved (*Compare 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; and 2 Timothy 3:13-17.*). 11 And for this cause God sends them a working of error, that they should believe the lie: 12 that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (*Compare 1 Kings 22:1-38.*)

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (See **1 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 8:29-30; and Ephesians 1:3-14.**). 15 So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by our letter. (See **3:6; and 1 Corinthians 11:2.**) 16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. (*Compare Romans 15:5-6.*)

COMMENTS:

Paul, having mentioned the prospect of the second coming of Christ in every chapter of 1 Thessalonians, and also in the first chapter of this letter, must now deal with a problem that was rising in the "church of the Thessalonians." The enthusiastic reception of the Gospel by these people had apparently carried over to an anticipation of the Lord's immediate return. But Paul, like Peter, having a "*more sure word of prophecy,*" must divert their attention from this, so that they would not be "*quickly shaken*" from their new-found faith by disappointment. He says that the coming of the Lord is not "*just at hand*" (this phrase means "present," and is used in this way in **Romans 8:38, 1 Corinthians 3:22**, and elsewhere). They must not be led into a *specific* expectation of the return of the Lord based on *general* promises, either by "spirit" (that is, what prophets may reveal), or "word" (that is, what preachers may proclaim), or by "letter" (that is, what Apostles and other teachers might write to them).

There must first be a "*falling away,*" which precedes the appearance of the "*man of sin.*" For nineteen centuries, men have speculated about these statements, and have tried to develop scenarios which will fit the details of this prediction in verses 3 and 4. The only thing on which commentators today seem to agree is that the "falling away" has already occurred, but many still look for the appearance of the "man of sin," whom Paul says Christ will "*bring to nothing*" by the "*manifestation of his coming*" (**vs. 8**).

There is no sure way to identify these events, or connect them with any particular historical period or set of persons, because Paul is simply reminding the Thessalonians of things which he had previously taught them (**vs. 5**), and we do not have the full text of that teaching. We can only work with what is revealed in this passage. We should proceed, however, on the well-founded assumption that the "falling away," the first event, is now in the past, since great and widespread apostasies have multiplied in the many centuries since Paul made his prediction.

Albert Barnes, in his commentary, reviews the speculations of men up until his time, and mentions various opinions about the "apostasy" to which Paul refers. Some think it refers to the defections in the church caused by persecution before and after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Others think of it as the general ascendancy of Gnosticism and other heresies which perverted Christianity in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries. Then, of course, there are those who identify the "falling away" as the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, while Catholics in their own turn define it as the rise of Protestantism, with its rejection of the authority of the Roman Church. None of these speculations fit the case, perfectly and exclusively, and our present suppositions may not, either. However, among all the apostasies that prevailed in the few centuries following the Age of the Apostles, surely one of them must represent the one to which Paul refers. Speculation on the exact event becomes theoretical, therefore, and perhaps unproductive.

Regarding the identity of the "man of sin," there has also been a great diversity of opinion. Barnes says that some connect him with the mad Roman Emperor Caligula (31-41 AD), who claimed to be a god, but he appears too early in history to be included in Paul's prophecy. He was not the last Roman Emperor to allow himself to be proclaimed as a God, however. Some refer back to **Daniel 11:36**, and similar passages in Old Testament prophecy, but do not agree on identifying anyone contemporary with the post-apostolic period. Some say it was Mohammed (570-632 AD), the founder of Islam, because of his wars against Apostate Christianity. Protestants and Reformers identify the Pope, or the papacy, as the "man of sin," citing the corruptions of many popes, who, in spite of their gross immorality, claimed to be workers of "wonders," and true successors of the Apostles of Christ. (NOTE: Barnes rebukes "*Protestants that deem it of essential importance to be able to show that they have derived the true 'succession' through such men.*") Finally, some have confused the "antichrist" mentioned by the Apostle John (**1 John 2:22**) with this "man of sin," and have tried to connect him with every civil tyrant from the beginning of this age, including Henry VIII of England, Napoleon Bonaparte of France, Kaiser William and Adolph Hitler of Germany. All of these, and others, have had their careers briefly connected with this passage. We can take comfort, however, in knowing that whoever he might be, he will be "brought to nothing" at the return of the Lord.

To get a relatively clear picture of the "man of sin," we need first to examine Paul's marks of identity, and try to fit them into our view. He says that the "man of sin" will (1) "oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped," that (2)

he will "sit in the temple of God, showing himself as God." He also says that (3) his coming is "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," to deceive those who do not "have a love of the truth." These concepts make it clear that the "man of Sin" has attitudes like those false teachers described by Peter and Jude (**2 Peter 2:1-19; Jude 4-16**), who reveal that such men were already arising in the Church. (Even Paul says, "*The mystery of lawlessness does already work.*" See **vs. 7**.) These corrupters were of the type who could precipitate the "falling away." But, while John identifies "many antichrists" in **1 John 2:18**, Paul identifies the "man of sin" in the singular, prompting us to look for one identifiable man who would fit the pattern. He would oppose the authority of God. He could do this by simply undermining God's authority and transferring it to himself. If he sits in the "Temple of God," this could easily refer to his presence within the church, since it is described figuratively as the "Temple" (see **Ephesians 2:19-22**). However, "temple of God" could also refer to the human body, described by Paul in **1 Corinthians 6:19** as the "temple of the Holy Spirit." So, whether the "Temple" in this passage is the human body, or the church, the Pope does not exclusively satisfy the image of the "man of sin." The form of the Papacy we know today did not begin to arise until after the removal of the seat of Roman power to Constantinople in the 4th Century by Constantine The First. The church in existence at that time had very little similarity to the New Testament church, and could hardly be described as the "Temple of God." Nor, could the Pope of that time be accurately described as having a legitimate, scriptural "body-temple," in which the Holy Spirit could dwell.

It seems credible, then, that Paul was speaking of a composite "man," rather than a certain man, and represented by any man who, in the years immediately after the Apostles left the scene, was still in the true church, but who opposed divine authority, and elevated himself to a prestige equivalent with the divine, for the sake of deluding those who "received not a love of the truth." In the 2nd Century of this age, the movement which corrupted the church most rapidly was the elevation of one of the "presbyters" in local churches to the position of presiding "bishop," a distinction that was contrary to the teaching of Paul in **Acts 20:17, 28**, where he shows the equality of these titles by using them to designate the same group of men. An early self-proclaimed "bishop" of Antioch, named Ignatius (105-115 AD), says, in a self-serving way, "*Do nothing without the bishop. And be ye subject also to the presbytery---the bishop is the representative of the Father in all things, and the presbyters are the Sanhedrin of God*" (Ante-nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, pp. 66-67). He also said, "*We ought to regard the Bishop as the Lord himself*" (Apostolic Fathers, p. 139). These statements show how much he regarded his own presumed authority, even though he was sometimes capable of humble utterances in connection with it. However, our point is that early "bishops" assumed apostolic authority, attempted to control the early disciples with strong claims of divine guidance, including what might be called "lying wonders," and corrupted the truth with their errors. The church at that time was relatively pure, but there were plenty of souls unable to discern truth from error, just as there are today, and this permitted the apostasy to

develop within the first fifty years after the death of the last Apostle, John, about 96 AD. By the end of the 2nd Century, many of the errors that are now found in Catholicism were firmly believed, and the many reforms attempted since have not been able to excise their cancerous growth.

In verses 6 and 7, Paul mentions "*THAT which restrains,*" then makes it more personal with the words "*ONE that restrains now, until HE be taken out of the way.*" In His answer to the Apostles about the "end of the world," Jesus talks about events that must happen before, and which therefore "restrain" any premature revelation of the "end" (see **Matthew 24:3-14**). He probably had in mind the plans of God. The "end" would not come, until God's will had been fulfilled in detail. This may also be what Paul has in mind. God's Will, as revealed by the Holy Spirit in segments through the Apostles, would surely have had such a strong impact during that early period that apostasy could not achieve dominance over the minds of men. God certainly would not permit the sending of the Lord Jesus the second time, until His goals for the confirmation of New Testament doctrines and forms were fulfilled, including Paul's prophecy of the "falling away," and the testing of the church by the "man of sin."

However, some commentators see the "restraint" in the hands of civil powers. Barnes says, "*The restraining power of anything controlled by an individual, or of any government, or the restraining power of God, would meet all that the phrase implies. The most natural interpretation is that which refers it to civil power, meaning that there was something in the form of the existing administration which would prevent this development until that restraint should be removed. The supposition that there was even then a tendency to concentrate all ecclesiastical power at Rome, and that while the civil authority remained there it would not suffer ecclesiastical power to grow to the exorbitant height which it ultimately reached, will meet all that is implied in the language.*"

There is much to commend this view, in that the Roman Empire demanded allegiance to its civil religion, causing the church to exist in an "underground" mode. While this "restraint" was in place, the church could not expand into the despotic monstrosity it later became through the rise of territorial bishops. As the church became more and more popular, however, achieving recognition as the "state church" in the 4th Century, its modern tyrannical form emerged, and the concept of the papacy was nurtured into a full-grown spiritual despotism. Barnes also says that the vacuum of authority created by the weakening and decline of the Roman Empire contributed greatly to the growth of papal power.

In verses 13 through 15, Paul comforts his readers with the assurance that they will not be subverted by this "falling away," since they are among the "*chosen,*" or the "*elect,*" through "*sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*" They will be among those who obtain "*the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (compare **Romans 8:30**). Nevertheless, they must maintain their security by standing fast in the "traditions" taught by the Apostles. This admonition is similar to those given by Paul to Christians in other places (see **Romans 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:58; and Colossians 1:23**).

Verses 16 and 17 sound as if he is about to close his letter to them, but the sentiments he

expresses there are simply to close this chapter of assurance.

QUESTIONS:

1. What concept did the Thessalonians have of the "coming of the Lord, and our gathering together unto Him?" _____

2. What two things did Paul say had to happen before the Lord came? _____

3. What characteristics would the "man of sin" have? _____

4. In verses 6 and 7, what reason does Paul give for the delay of the appearance of the "man of sin?" _____

5. Who will defeat the "man of sin?" _____ How? _____

6. How will the "man of sin" work his will? _____

7. What kind of persons will be victimized by him? _____

8. What Old Testament passage shows God sending a "working of error" to entice a persistent sinner? _____

9. Even though the Thessalonian Christians were "chosen from the beginning unto salvation," what did they need to do, in order to maintain this status? _____

10. What did Christ and God give us, according to verse 16? _____

11. What did Paul hope that God and Christ would do for them, according to verse 17? _____

_____ Will they do this for us, today? _____ How? _____

Chapter 3

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also *it is* with you (*See 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14.*); 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men; for all have not faith (*Compare Romans 15:31.*). 3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil *one* (*See 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.*). 4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command (*Compare Philippians 2:12-13.*). 5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God (*Compare Romans 5:5, and 1 John 2:5, 5:3.*), and into the patience of Christ. (*Compare Romans 15:5, and Revelation 1:9.*)

COMMENTS:

(Verses 1-3) In the same way that he encourages the Thessalonians in the first chapter, before admonishing them in the second, Paul fills these first verses of the third chapter with encouraging commendations and comfort, before "*admonishing the disorderly*" (vs. 6-15). This church had been so positive in its response to the gospel that Paul probably found it difficult to correct some of its members. His language is certainly not as sharp as that used toward the Galatians, but the faults of the Thessalonians may not be considered as serious. They were only guilty of anticipating the second coming of Christ too soon (**chapter 2**), and perhaps, as a result of that misconception, a few of them were failing to follow the work ethic Paul had espoused. To their credit, however, Paul could say that the word of the Lord had "run" and had been "glorified" in them (vs. 1), and Paul asked that they pray for that same response in others. A local congregation has the obligation to receive and promote the word with enthusiasm and devotion. "Evil men" may hinder the process, but faithful brethren should pray to be delivered from them (vs. 2). A "faithful" God will help them, and "Guard them from evil" (vs. 3).

(Verses 4-5) As commendable as this church was, Paul still thought it necessary to exhort them to "*do the things which we command,*" so that they would be "*directed*" forward "*into the love of God, and the patience of Christ.*" Much is said about the love of God in the Word, but we also need to develop the patience of Christ in our thinking. Paul identifies God as a "God of patience" in **Romans 15:5** (to help us to see this quality in all manifestations of deity), but to see how we can be in the "patience of Christ," we

should go to the Revelation of John. John says that he was "partaker" with his hearers in the "tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus" (**Revelation 1:9**). To the church in Philadelphia, Christ wrote, "Because you kept the word of my patience, I will keep you from the hour of trial" (**Revelation 3:10**). From the beginning, the Thessalonians had also been partakers in trials and persecution (see **1:3-4**), so they needed a full measure of patience. To know how we are to be patient in trial, we need to see how Jesus patiently "endured the cross, despising shame," in order to sit at the "right hand of God" (**Hebrews 12:1-3**). There-fore, we should prepare for trials by developing the "patience of Christ."

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think it means, when Paul asks that the "word of the Lord may RUN and BE GLORIFIED? _____

2. What two benefits would the Thessalonians receive, because "the Lord is faithful?" _____

3. What "confidence" did Paul express in vs. 4? _____

4. From the references following verse 5, define the "love of God:" _____

_____ And the "patience of Christ:" _____

Chapter 3

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Compare Colossians 3:17.*), that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly (*Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:14.*), and not after the tradition which they received of us (*Compare 2 Thessalonians. 2:15.*). 7 For yourselves know how you ought to imitate us: for we did not behave ourselves disorderly among you; 8 neither did we eat bread given by anyone, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you (*Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:9-10.*): 9 not because we did not have the right (*Compare 1 Corinthians 9:3-15.*), but to make ourselves an example for you, that you should imitate us (*See also 1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1.*). 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." 11 For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are

busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they work with quietness, and eat their own bread (*See 1 Thessalonians 4:11, and Ephesians 4:28.*) 13 But you, brethren, do not be weary in well-doing (*Compare Galatians 6:9; 1 Timothy 6:18; and Titus 3:1.*) 14 And if any man does not obey our word by this letter, note that man, that you have no company with him (*Compare 1 Corinthians 5:11.*), to the end that he may be ashamed. 15 And *yet* do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (*Compare Matthew 18:15-17.*)

COMMENTS:

(Verses 6-15) We have the temptation to broaden our definition of the "disorderly" person, but Paul is being specific in his definition. He has in mind those who "*work not at all*" (vs. 11). To set a good example, Paul earned his own bread by labor. He followed his custom of preaching the gospel without compensation from his hearers, even though he had a "right" to do so. He also claimed this "right," when writing to Corinth, but as a matter of personal honor he would not exercise that right (1 Corinthians 9:3-15). Under criticism from some Corinthian detractors regarding this habit, and to disarm them, he promised to seek no support upon his return there (2 Corinthians 12:13-18). He would accept gifts from the Philippians to serve the Thessalonians (Philippians 4:15-16), but his example to the Thessalonians served to show the brethren there that honest labor, in order to "*eat their own bread,*" was a part of living the Christian life. If any did not follow this apostolic "tradition," the faithful should "withdraw" from them (vs. 6), and not allow them to eat, that is, to beg bread of others who worked. This rule does not exclude the truly destitute person from being an object of benevolence, even if he is an enemy (see Romans 12:20). It only excludes the person unwilling to work. The justification for our withdrawal is found in the fact that he does not "*obey*" Paul's "*word by this letter*" (vs. 14). Yet, just as the withdrawal from the fornicator in 1 Corinthians 5 was to the end that his "*spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,*" so we are to exercise our withdrawal from the lazy man "*to the end that he may be ashamed.*" Shame is seldom found in the slacker, today, but it is still a vital motivator to repentance. During this process of discipline, however, the loafer is still to be admonished as a brother, not an enemy.

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of "disorderly" person is Paul speaking of in verses 6-15? _____

2. What "tradition" did the Thessalonians receive from Paul? _____

3. Did Paul have a "right" to be a "burden" to his hearers? _____

_____ Explain, using the teaching of 1 Corinthians 9:3-15: _____

4. In what specific ways were they to withdraw from the "disorderly?" _____

5. What is to be the goal of the "withdrawal?" _____

6. What does Paul "command" the disorderly to do, in verse 12? _____

7. Is the disorderly person to be treated as an enemy? _____

Chapter 3

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all. (*Compare Hebrews 13:20-21.*)

17 The salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand, which is the token in every letter: so I write (*Compare 1 Corinthians 16:21.*). 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

COMMENTS:

(Verses 16-18) As Paul closes his letter, we can see again his deep love and appreciation of these faithful brethren. We also have a generous taste of the way a local church should respond to the teaching of the Apostle. We should not only obey Christ's word through Paul, but also imitate the Thessalonian imitation of Paul. If we do, Paul's praise of them will apply to us, also.

QUESTIONS:

1. In Paul's blessing of verse 16, what does he want the "Lord of peace" to do for the Thessalonians? _____

2. What was the "token" in every letter of Paul? _____