

1 & 2 Thessalonians

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(1998 and 1981 Studies)

The following notes on 1 and 2 Thessalonians were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1998 with notes interspersed from a 1981 study. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1998—with notes interspersed from a 1981 study)

1 Thess. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This epistle has an unusual beginning in that Paul did not call himself an apostle or a servant of God. Instead he mentioned his name with the names of Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy as fellow workers in establishing the church at Thessalonica. Knit together in their concern for this church, the three were listed almost as cowriters, although Paul, of course, was responsible for the advice given. After the dispute over John Mark, Silas accompanied Paul in lieu of Barnabas.

Comment: A marginal note says that the word “apostle” is not included because Paul did not have to assert his authority. He had a close rapport with the brethren in Thessalonica.

Reply: The Lord used Paul to establish this class at Thessalonica, which was in Macedonia, and now he was writing his first epistle to the ecclesia members, who knew him very well and recognized him as an apostle.

This epistle was addressed “unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.” The greeting followed: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Clearly God and Jesus are two separate personalities.

Acts 17:1–10 provides some background information:

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

“Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

“And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

“But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

“And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

“Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

“And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

“And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea [the next ecclesia

Paul visited]: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.”

According to his usual custom, Paul went first to the synagogue, where, as a stranger, he was given the floor to speak. He preached the gospel in the synagogue for three weeks, telling that the Messiah had to first suffer and would then be raised—and that Jesus was this Messiah. As a result of his preaching, some Jews accepted Jesus, but the majority opposed Paul. Certain Jews who heard the message apparently recognized that this was the same Paul who had caused an uproar in other places. Trouble ensued in Thessalonica with persecution arising. Now we can understand why Paul addressed the Thessalonians with “Grace ... and peace.”

The Acts account sounds as if all this activity in Thessalonica took place in three weeks, but a longer time period was involved. During this time—and after he was rejected from the synagogue—Paul spoke to the Gentiles. A great number believed quickly, including women and pagans. Clues elsewhere show that Paul was in Thessalonica for either two months or six to seven months. Probably it was the latter because of the results of his ministry there.

Jason was hosting Paul, Silas, and Timothy. When the Jews plus rabble sought to apprehend Paul and Silas at Jason’s house but could not find them, they took Jason and other brethren to the authorities and accused them of treason because of the belief that Jesus was King. This indicates that the Jews had quite a lot of influence with the Roman rulership. Not only were the Jews intellectually superior to the pagans, but they had influence in the courts. Thinking Paul was undercutting the Law, the persecuting Jews felt they had to get rid of him. After Jason paid “security” (bail) and was released, he got Paul and Silas away from Thessalonica posthaste.

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father.” The use of “our Father” may have been primarily for the Gentile Christians with a pagan background, although it was equally good for the Jews, who regarded God with awe and great reverence but were not accustomed to viewing Him in this more tender way. When Jesus came at his First Advent, the faith of Jews who were rightly exercised became more personalized with the pronouns “my” and “our.” The Old Testament so reflected the majesty of God that it filled one with awe. However, when Jesus came with his human history, he was more understandable. It was easier to know him through his sermons and example, whereas it was difficult to know God personally through the Old Testament, unless one devoted very serious thinking to Him. And very few people, even true Christians, have done such thinking.

1 Thess. 1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

1 Thess. 1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

“Remembering without ceasing [1] your work of faith, and [2] labour of love, and [3] patience of hope.” Paul had an orderly, well-instructed mind that was beautifully balanced in thought. Because he was such a mature individual, we can read his writing over and over and extract a little more each time. His selection of words was very choice. In contradistinction, most people are careless with their words and sometimes too effusive. For example, using “God bless you” too prolifically makes the expression too common. In many instances an entire sermon could be built on just one verse Paul wrote. We often hear the nice expression “your labor of love.”

“Remembering ... [these things] in our Lord Jesus Christ, *in the sight* of God and our Father.” These words are also very meaningful, for God *knows* our work of faith, our labor of love, and our patience of hope. For an individual who receives the truth wholeheartedly and consecrates, Paul gave the assurance that God *knows* what suffering experiences the individual is going

through. In other words, we are *in God's sight*. How comforting! Fear, doubt, and distrust are based, at least in part, on our not being conscious of God's awareness of our circumstances. Much prayerful thought underlies the words Paul used.

Comment: In view of the persecution endured in the beginning by the Thessalonians, Paul's words were consoling, and yet in Acts 17:11, he said that the Christians in Berea "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." As much as the Thessalonians were to be commended, the Bereans were more highly commended.

Reply: Paul, who claimed to be an apostle, spoke in God's name from Old Testament Scriptures. He appreciated the Bereans for their readiness and humility of mind in being teachable but not putty-like. Paul spoke with certainty, positiveness, and conviction as well as with logic, and for many those qualities would be enough. The Bereans, however, went further and tested his words against Scripture. In fact, that is where the problem lies with the Pastor's teachings. He was so reasonable—he explained the Scriptures so well and truthfully—that his writings are almost considered as the gospel. "Thus saith Pastor Russell here" and "thus saith Pastor Russell there" become the attitude. Indeed he is the seventh messenger and his ministry is much appreciated, but we need to have the attitude of the Bereans. They searched the Scriptures *daily* to see if what Paul said (which sounded so good) was actually God's Word. And that is the bottom line—that is true nobility—to give God the credit first, His Word second, Jesus third, the apostles fourth, and the messengers to the Seven Churches fifth. We should not only rightly divide the Word of truth but have the right priorities.

The Thessalonians' "work of faith, and labour of love" will be clarified in Chapters 2 and 3. They had a reputation for *faith* and *obedience* that was commendable—but only on a certain, or lower, level. When Paul was persecuted at Thessalonica, so were the others, who were newcomers, or babes. Receiving persecution so quickly was unusual, for Christians generally had the truth for at least a year before such trials began.

Thessalonica was situated on the land route for Roman soldiers who went from Rome to Asia Minor. Hence the city was an important military garrison and like a midway point before taking a short ferry ride over to Asia Minor.

Corinth was the sin city of the apostles' day, although it is debatable whether Ephesus or Corinth was worse. Both cities had problems with paganism, rituals, and immoralities. However, with all the faults Paul found with the Corinthians, he always first repeated their good points, commending them where he could.

1 Thess. 1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

This thought is in harmony with what Paul had just said. Not only were the Thessalonians being persecuted, but God knew what they were experiencing. Not only was He aware of their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope, but the persecution was occurring in *His* sight. How comforting! Now we see that, in addition, God knew the Thessalonians *before* they knew Him. Or, to state the matter more personally, God knows *us* before we know Him. Next comes Jesus in the sense that God sends him to select us as individuals, to call us into the truth. If we obey and consecrate, how wonderful! We are then in God's family, even though we are babes. Paul was saying that *God Himself* has selected us. Not only does God know what is happening, but in a special sense, He ferrets out each one of us. For example, Jesus called Nathanael "an Israelite indeed" (John 1:47), and Nathanael indignantly responded with the question "How do you know me?" Then Jesus said, "I saw you praying under the fig tree." That experience struck deep into Nathanael's person.

Accordingly, Paul was saying here to the Thessalonians, “Be patient. Keep persevering. *God knows what you are going through.*” In the message to the first Church, the Ephesus period, Jesus said, “*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience*” (Rev. 2:2). As time went on, he had only one criticism: “*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love*” (Rev. 2:4). The leaving of the “first love” is what can happen as time passes. Time is a serious factor that can sort us out. We are supposed to *grow* in knowledge and grace. As time goes on, we are either making progress, stagnating, or backsliding. It is marvelous how God’s Holy Spirit flowed out of the Apostle Paul’s mind in giving this advice in just the opening remarks, let alone further on in the epistle.

1 Thess. 1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

In what way did the gospel come to the Thessalonians “in power”? The preaching of Paul, Silas, and Timothy was backed up by miracles and supernatural happenings. For example, Paul had just come from Philippi, where he and Silas were beaten and then imprisoned. In prison, bleeding and wounded, they sang hymns, rejoicing that they were suffering for Christ. After Paul prayed, an earthquake occurred that opened all the cell doors. The chief jailer was ready to commit suicide because he thought the prisoners had escaped. However, it was as if the prisoners were glued to their seats, for not one of them took advantage of the open doors. Then Paul reassured the jailer that the Lord’s hand was providentially over the matter because of Silas and him. The subsequent conversion of the jailer and his family was a manifestation of power, and certainly the event was noised abroad. (Incidentally, this may have been one of the occasions when Paul received 39 stripes.) Paul began this First Epistle to the Thessalonians with greetings from Silvanus (Silas) and Timotheus, so Silas was with him both in prison in Philippi and here in Thessalonica.

Comment: Since Paul was so recently in Philippi, his wounds would not have healed yet, and here he was in another situation of opposition. He maintained his zeal even in the face of *much persecution*.

We do not know how many people Paul addressed in various circumstances, but a normal voice does not carry far in the open air. And to shout the message would have resulted in a loss of some fluidity. Paul’s voice was weak in his normal dealings, but when he preached and explained God’s Word, a miraculous power came over him so that his voice carried and he spoke like a prophet. The same thing happened in Old Testament times. The prophets were mechanically moved by the Holy Spirit so that their voices thundered and projected to reach the multitudes. No one would have the excuse of not hearing because of a garbled message. Therefore, “power” was manifested not only in deeds but even in the delivery of the message.

Consider what we see today with regard to fallen spirits that operate through individuals. A supernatural power comes over the mediums so that they speak in a fashion different from their normal mode. The change is attributed to a miraculous power. However, based on the Scriptures, we know that that which is miraculous, spiritual, and supernatural is not necessarily from God but can be from the devil too—it can be an *unholy spirit*. The difference is that when the speaking with power is *according to the Word*, then the *Holy Spirit* is operating on the individual.

1 Thess. 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

When the Thessalonians accepted the truth, they “received the word *in much affliction*.” In other words, their consecration cost them something. When individuals outside of present truth pray to God for enlightenment and the prayer is answered miraculously by someone’s coming with an actual message, either many do not seem to realize the purpose of the experience, or they reject the message because of the cost involved. They know that a response will affect their employment, their family, their friends, and other areas of their life. Such thoughts can pop into the mind immediately and turn off all who are not humble and of an honest heart condition. Those individuals cannot say in the future that they never had an opportunity for further understanding.

The Thessalonians were commended because they received the message of truth in spite of the personal cost involved—whether the affliction was from Jewish compatriots or from Gentile pagans. As recorded in history, other religions had various tests to find out where one stood on certain issues.

Comment: The *Diaglott* has “imitators of us” instead of “followers of us.”

Reply: The Thessalonians were “followers” of Paul, Silas, and Timothy in the sense of having the same Master and goal.

The Thessalonians “received the word in much affliction, [but also] with joy” in the Holy Spirit. Thus they were rewarded with *joy*. While the consecrated lose certain natural benefits, they gain spiritually because they know about the future and have a hope beyond the grave. When viewed from the proper perspective, enlightenment brings a compensatory reward and joy that far exceed the cost of accepting the truth. Not only can the acceptance of truth cost a lot initially—something like Abraham’s leaving Ur of the Chaldees—but sooner or later, as we mature, we will come to the supreme test, a test of unquestioning obedience to God, which is comparable to Abraham’s offering his son Isaac. All who attain the Little Flock will have to sacrifice their “Isaac,” which can be any number of things. Even just the original step of consecration is wonderful in God’s sight because it puts the individual in His family and under His custody. God appreciates our acceptance of Christ so much that He will watch and closely inspect us through Jesus for the remainder of our days. However, the supreme test comes at some point subsequently—as one matures but not necessarily at the end of his life. To properly accept the test and obey it as God’s will costs something.

Comment: As read earlier, Acts 17:5 gives an example of the “affliction,” or persecution, that the Thessalonians suffered. “But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.”

Reply: For a Jew to step out of the pale of “orthodoxy” to accept a new faith that seemed to contradict Moses was a severe experience. And of course the Thessalonians also had a problem with the pagans.

Persecution is opposition. When disease, sickness, accidents, etc., are permitted of the Lord, we accept them, knowing there is a reason such as discipline, enlightenment, and experience, but they are not persecution. Persecution occurs when someone causes us problems because of our espousal of truth, and we are told that all who “live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). We are also told that a man should examine himself, and persecution is one area of examination (1 Cor. 11:28). We should ask, “Am I in some manner suffering for the truth’s sake?” Of course sometimes when we are younger and immature, we suffer because of our lack of tact, our imprudence, and our insensitivity to the feelings of others. Therefore, when we have problems from others, we should examine ourselves to see whether

we caused the trouble by doing something wrong, even though it was under the banner of truth. For those who suffer in the proper sense, there is a measure of joy and satisfaction. Most enjoy Christianity because of its fellowship, but that motivation can be deceptive. Are we looking primarily for excitement? Fellowship is a necessary part of our Christian development, for we all need sunshine and pleasant experiences, but we also need the rain and the frost. The chilling experiences pertain more to persecution. (From another standpoint, the sun is a symbol of persecution. Figuratively speaking, the seed that was sown in shallow soil withered and perished when the sun came out.)

Comment: The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians also treats the subject of persecution. After Paul had just commended them for enduring persecution and affliction, Phillips Modern English reads, “These qualities show how justly the judgment of God works out in your case. Without doubt he intends to use your suffering to make you worthy of his kingdom, yet his justice will one day repay trouble to those who have troubled you, and peace to all of us who, like you, have suffered” (2 Thess. 1:5,6).

Reply: The repayment is twofold: Those who do the persecuting will receive retribution at some point, and the ones who properly receive the persecution will be rewarded with the prize of the high calling, all other factors being equal.

Comment: It would make a difference if one did the persecuting out of ignorance. Such persecution will not receive retribution—or at least not to the same degree.

Comment: 2 Thessalonians 1:4 reads, “We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.” The Thessalonian brethren must have endured a lot of persecution.

1 Thess. 1:7 So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

The Thessalonians were examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia because of their zeal in preaching the Word, their evangelizing. Not only did they receive the Word in much affliction, but they *preached* it, yet the Bereans were *more noble* for *studying* the Word. Both witnessing (or preaching) and studying are important, but before preaching, we must be sure that we know the Word. Otherwise, we might (1) preach incorrectly or (2) be content with only simple, rudimentary knowledge. Thus there are two dangers in not having sufficient knowledge. Those who accept Jesus must be fed additionally and continually and be encouraged. The *whole* Word is needed: prophecy, moral instruction regarding conduct, doctrine, etc.

Thessalonica and Berea were in the Macedonia-Achaia area of Greece. Word spread from ecclesia to ecclesia about the experiences of the brethren.

Comment: In suffering persecution, the Thessalonians were examples to the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia. On the other hand, those in Macedonia gave abundantly of their substance to help with the temporal needs of other brethren and thus were an example in that category (2 Cor. 8:1–4).

Reply: Yes, out of their deep poverty, the Macedonians’ liberality abounded. In their zeal and concern, they gave of their own necessities, and Paul commended them for their freewill offerings and generosity. And the Philippians were even more generous.

Comment: In each case Paul commended the strength of a particular ecclesia. He pointed out the Bereans as being more noble than the Thessalonians as far as studying the Word. In

suffering persecution, the Thessalonians were outstanding, and the Macedonians were examples in another area.

Reply: Paul pointed out excelling qualities. He also said we are to regard others as better than ourselves—not in the overall picture but in individual strengths, talents, etc. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). We should note an individual’s strength as being possibly the reason God originally called that brother or sister. He called each one of us for some reason. Although the reasons vary, all who are called have one thing in common: *faith*. “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). Generally speaking, those who are called are rich in faith, for faith is what makes us respond and yield to truth. We have faith in God that His message is miraculous, and we gamble our future life on that basis. We deprive ourselves of something down here because of our faith that, if obedient, we will get something beyond the veil.

1 Thess. 1:8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

Paul needed “not to speak any thing” at this time, but we can be sure he originally taught the Thessalonians that if they suffered with Christ, they would reign with him. They responded so heartily that he did not now have to give them instructions and admonitions on the need for fellowship and witnessing. Instead he was commending them everywhere he could. However, he did rub salt into the tender spots in each of the ecclesias. Our problem today in Laodicea is that everything is nice. The talks are lovely and sweet. If a speaker criticized a class, would he be invited again? No, that would be the end of his ministry there, even if what he said was true and needed. Would the advice be accepted? Probably not. Elders must fight the temptation to go easy lest they jeopardize their service.

1 Thess. 1:9 For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

The Macedonian and Achaian brethren reported about the zeal of the Thessalonians in spite of their persecution. Also, the phrasing of this verse shows that Paul was not at Thessalonica when the brethren there were so zealously preaching the Word.

Paul and Silas were marvelous examples themselves, for they had gone to Thessalonica still injured and raw from their experiences at Philippi. They had not retreated to nurse their wounds or cower in fear after such persecution, but instead went *immediately* to Thessalonica and *continued to work boldly*. After the Jews stirred up trouble and Jason agreed with the authorities to have Paul depart, Paul was hamstrung and had to leave rather suddenly. However, the results of his preaching were very comforting to him when he got the report from not only the Thessalonians but also the Macedonians and the Achaians. Thus, although not as noble as the Berean brethren, the Thessalonians were very zealous. With *little* information, they had the courage to stand up for Christ and endure affliction, and Paul commended them. Nevertheless, the higher way would be to go on from there and get more knowledge and other graces of the Holy Spirit.

The mention of idols shows that the Thessalonian brethren consisted not only of those with a Jewish background but also of those with a pagan background. For pagans to give up their idols cost them something. If one had been bringing up a family with complete indoctrination and obedience to an idol and then all of a sudden heard and responded to the gospel message,

his giving up the idols would be comparable to giving up smoking or drugs. And sometimes repercussions, discouragements, and flack come from those who see us giving up such things.

In Macedonia there was a god named Dionysus, who was supposed to suffer and die and then rise again. The center of an *immoral* religion, he was comparable to Osiris in Egypt and Bacchus. The fact that false religions arose around concepts of a suffering Messiah shows that some Gentiles knew more about certain Old Testament prophecies than the Jews did, for the latter were blinded. The fallen angels, not fully understanding the Old Testament prophecies, seized on these seed thoughts and developed false religions to sidetrack people from the worship of Jehovah. All down through history, whenever God made a move, Satan immediately capitalized on it with a countermove, thus diverting attention. Satan added distractions to the seed thoughts. Therefore, the people in Thessalonica already had the concept of a suffering god who died and was resurrected. Then Timothy came along and showed that the *true* seed of promise was Jesus, the Son of God—not Dionysus or any of the other false gods instituted by Satan. Jesus was the promised seed who was to suffer, die, and be raised again. Timothy took the heathen thought and showed that the Thessalonians were following it blindly and then told them about the true Messiah. The right-hearted were able to accept Jesus with enthusiasm because he was a *specific* personage instead of a vague mythological character about whom there was relatively little information. Thus the theme of a suffering, dying, and resurrected Messiah was profitably harped on in this locale.

Comment: A devout member of a local recognized denomination is regarded by the general community as an upstanding individual, whereas someone who comes into present truth is often regarded with suspicion or as being strange. Others cannot understand, for instance, why anyone would drive from Connecticut to New York to meet with 12 people in a garage for Bible study, as opposed to going down the street to a local church.

Comment: Verse 9 must have been said with emphasis. The word “dumb” is not in the text, but it is implied: “For they themselves show of us ... how ye turned to God from [*dumb*] idols to serve the *living and true* God.”

Reply: Yes, they forsook *dumb* statues honoring *other* gods in order to serve the *living* God.

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

Verse 10 is the theme, or keynote, of both epistles to the Thessalonians: WAIT FOR JESUS, who will deliver the Church from the wrath to come! Wait for his Second Coming!

Jesus will deliver us from the wrath to come from *God* at the end of the age. The *entire* Church is to be spared the great Time of Trouble that is coming on the whole world. Although this verse applies especially to the feet members, the whole Church escapes *this* trouble, for the Church will be entirely developed before the manifestation of God’s wrath and indignation. The correct tense is, “Wait for ... Jesus, who *is* to deliver us from the wrath to come.” The Church will not escape trouble and persecution, but all of the elect will escape the *great* Time of Trouble, the Day of God’s wrath, at the end of the age.

Comment: The interlinear word-for-word Greek says that Jesus was raised out of the dead ones. Therefore, in the actual Greek, the thought is that all of the others were dead (not alive somewhere else), and that out of the dead ones, Jesus was raised.

1 Thess. 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

The word “entrance” is translated “visit” in the Revised Standard Version. In other words, “You know our visit to you was not in vain because many of you have come into the truth.” Not only did the Thessalonians consecrate, but they zealously and joyously went out and tried to spread the truth to others regardless of the cost.

Paul had been with the Thessalonians for only a short visit. Although his missionary efforts were not extensive, he was pleased to have received such a favorable reception. The Thessalonians received the Word with *much* affliction—and *kept* it!

1 Thess. 2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

The Thessalonians had heard about the incident of Paul and Silvanus in prison in Philippi. After suffering much persecution, they were “*bold* in our God to speak ... the gospel of God with much contention.”

Let us stop and consider Paul’s experience in going to Thessalonica. He had just come from Philippi to his next stop, a place he had never visited before. He was introducing the gospel of Jesus to the Thessalonians. In bringing thoughts and teachings that were completely new and completely contrary, this little man received a lot of opposition, but God helped Paul speak a word against the opposers, that is, to speak “with much contention.” Not only was he to rightly divide the word of truth and be “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,” but he was to give a reason for the hope that is in the Christian (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15).

In the contention, God gave Paul the right words to rebut the opposition that was occurring. Meanwhile, others watched Paul’s behavior in the face of such opposition. They observed how he reacted and responded to various criticisms, and they saw the boldness and courage he manifested in touching on very sensitive subjects that would logically bring persecution and separation. Of the group he spoke to, some stayed behind and wanted more information. Liking what they heard, they invited him to come again. Everywhere Paul went, there was separation. As Jesus said, “I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). The sword cut each audience, and Jesus sought the ones who inquired afterwards. As he said to the apostles because they asked questions, “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. 13:11).

Comment: Jesus thanked his Father for hiding “these things from the wise and prudent” and revealing them “unto babes” (Matt. 11:25).

Reply: They were babes not only in understanding but also in attitude—they were supple, they listened, and they weighed matters.

The boldness of Paul, Timothy, and Silas was contagious so that the Thessalonians also spoke boldly in witnessing. Moreover, the boldness of the Thessalonians was transferred to brethren in other places. As a result, Paul was delighted, even though he had but an “entrance” at Thessalonica.

Imagine ourselves living back there. If word came that the proponent of a new religion had been punished *severely* in the next town, many would hesitate to accept that religion. But the Thessalonians were to be commended, for Paul’s previous imprisonment did not adversely affect them. By being courageous, he overcame their fears. If Paul had preached timidly, they would not have accepted Christ, but instead they caught his *boldness* and reacted well with *little* knowledge. In spite of knowing of Paul’s mistreatment, they were not frightened but zealously

and gladly accepted him and his message. The psychological advantage was that Paul did exactly what he should have done—he spoke *boldly!* And this was while he was still suffering from wounds received at Philippi.

1 Thess. 2:3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

The *Diaglott* reads, “For our exhortation was not from error, nor from impurity, nor in deceit.” Let us consider these one at a time. The exhortation of Paul, Silas, and Timothy “was not from error”; that is, it was *in truth*. Their exhortation was not a fabrication, or falsehood; it was not a mythological doctrine.

“For our exhortation was not ... from impurity”; that is, it was not associated with immoral practices. Many false religions, especially the Oriental ones, included immoral practices, which enabled the people to fulfill their desires according to the flesh and outside of marriage. Religion was mixed in with immorality, and one had to pay for gratification of the flesh. For example, Rome had vestal virgins, who were harlots in the temple, and money used for this purpose went into the temple coffers. Almost all of the ancient heathen religions incorporated such practices.

This philosophy is coming to the United States and gradually seeping in, so that it does not matter if one is a practicing homosexual or lesbian. Some of the most dreadful lectures are given in churches and in church conventions. Explicit sex is explained from the platform to a supposedly religious congregation, and this type of uninhibited behavior is exulted in as part of a God-given grant. The reasoning is, “The Lord does not want you to suffer but to do that which is pleasurable.” One who wants to gratify the desires of the flesh would rush into that type of religion, for conversion is not required. With the teaching “God is love,” one does not have to worry about conscience.

In the various cultures are some serious-thinking people who are greatly distressed by these practices and teachings, but they remain because they have no place to go. There are people in the world with noble desires who do not have the truth. Of course they are imperfect, but they do have this feeling for goodness, and they can see the depravity. The unfortunate thing is that they do not know where to go. We feel more empathy for those countries that never really had the gospel preached to them. Not until after the French Revolution was the Bible sent out in the various languages. Noble-minded unconsecrated individuals will make progress in the Kingdom Age because they have tried to do what is good without being called. We have been very blessed in that the Lord has enlightened each of us with His truth. Those who do not accept the truth and yet are familiar with it and believe it certainly will not be rewarded, for they rejected the opportunity. Also, those who “consecrate to righteousness” (supposedly) and thus do not accept the truth by making a full consecration will not be specially favored in the Kingdom. They have turned down the wonderful truth that God has given them ears to hear. True, there is some compensation such as not fearing death (hellfire), but there is no special reward. The ones who have not had these blessings previously and then respond heartily in the Kingdom will be more worthy.

Comment: Some have erroneously expressed the thought that those who hear the truth now but do not consecrate will be further along in the Kingdom than the rest of the world.

Q: How would we harmonize the Scripture that those of the unconsecrated who give a cup of cold water to the consecrated will be blessed?

A: That text refers more to a passing-through experience such as a neighbor who has not really heard the gospel and present truth. It takes a little time to get a feel of even what the truth is.

Many unconsecrated family members accept the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, that there is a God, that the doctrines of the Trinity and hellfire are erroneous, that the Kingdom is coming, etc., yet they do not consecrate. Such individuals will get an opportunity for life in the next age but, because of what they turned down, not a better opportunity.

Comment: There will be gradations, however, because some unconsecrated spouses are very supportive, whereas others create opposition.

Reply: Yes, that is true. For instance, those who feel they do not have the faith to consecrate are more creditable. The Apostle Paul said that not all men have faith (2 Thess. 3:2). But to turn down such a wonderful opportunity now will not bring a special reward in the Kingdom.

“For our exhortation was not ... in guile.” Paul, Silas, and Timothy did not have ulterior motives to fleece the Thessalonians. The gospel was not a message that subtly built up Paul or that misused the Thessalonians or degraded them.

Comment: Paul did not accept wages from the Corinthians and other ecclesias but worked with his hands to support himself.

Comment: Paul was not trying to promote himself but kept pointing to Christ and the Heavenly Father. Guile can be used in a good sense to the advantage of the hearer, but in the wrong sense, it is used to promote self.

Reply: Yes, some suggestions or examples are being offered for each of these categories, but there are additional examples, subdivisions, and facets of error, impurity, and deceit, or guile. Self-aggrandizement would be one form of guile. To the contrary, Paul deprived himself of many proper benefactions so that he might benefit the others more and more in godly and good things.

With the pagan religions consisting of long-standing myths about false gods handed down from generation to generation, anyone who wanted to search out truth from that source would only go back into a hazy, vague past. In contrast, the beautiful thing about the Bible is that the further back one goes, the more mathematical it is—exactly the opposite of the false religions. The Bible contains names, dates, geography, cities, and ages. Where else is there a religion like that? In order to know if a matter is true, we can turn to the original instructions of Jesus and the original words of the apostles and the prophets. What we find is precise and definite. As Bro. Krebs used to say, “It is a *miracle* to see the truth.” The truth is logical, but understanding it is miraculous because Satan has deceived the whole world and kept them in ignorance. Even very intellectual, intelligent people do not understand because God has not revealed truth to them.

From an opposite standpoint, guile can be good, that is, in the sense of meaning no hypocrisy or underhandedness. Also, it would mean using tact or discretion in order to benefit *someone else*. In the bad sense, guile is using craftiness or having ulterior motives in order to benefit self and to take advantage of the hearers.

Verse 3 is a throwback to verses 1 and 2. Because the message was true, pure, and sincere, the three (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) had the courage to preach boldly despite great opposition.

1 Thess. 2:4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

There is a responsibility attached to knowing the gospel—a “trust.” Therefore, the apostles felt

compelled to speak so as to please *God* and not just to say what men would want to hear or to say what would build themselves up personally. They were “allowed” of *God* to preach the gospel; i.e., Paul considered it a *privilege* to be permitted to suffer for *God*, *Jesus*, and the truth. Because their exhortation was *true*, they would speak it regardless of persecution.

1 Thess. 2:5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness:

A “cloak of covetousness” is more or less a form of self-aggrandizement (guile) in one form or another: popularity, power, influence, benefits. Another translation has, “We did not come with flattering talk, nor did we use words to cover our greed.” If Paul had wanted to please and influence *men*, he would have used flattery (“honey,” spiritually speaking). Flattery is unbecoming in connection with speaking the gospel.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy were not covetous (greedy) for money either. *God* was their witness that they had no ulterior motive or desire for personal gain in preaching the gospel. They did not color the Word to teach what *they* wanted (as some do to suit their own needs and desires) but taught the gospel in its purity. They did not handle the Word deceitfully; that is, they did not use the Word to teach what it does not teach. As an apostle, Paul could have sought financial remuneration to a certain extent, but he did not.

1 Thess. 2:6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

They did not seek personal honor or glory. Nor were they burdensome as apostles, for they did not expect or demand provision for their temporal needs—room, board, financial support, or special favors. An example of a special favor would be to expect to be conveyed on a journey. Some have a nice way of suggesting a favor and getting it done at someone else’s expense. Under certain circumstances that might be proper, but under other circumstances it would be thoroughly improper and embarrassing. Paul made a suggestion about contributions for the needy brethren at Jerusalem, which was proper, but a lot of improper suggestions are made.

Comment: The Diaglott has, “Nor did we seek honor from men, neither from you nor from others, (though, as Apostles of Christ, we are empowered to have influence).”

Reply: The fact they were apostles, the fact they had that very office, means their words were to be given more credit than those of other Christians. And there were dispensational messengers who were not apostles: Arius, Waldo, Wycliffe, Luther, and Russell. *God* used these individuals in a special way because He saw that they were well suited for the work then due, that their service would cover a large region, and that they would have a timely message to give. But the basic message is different from dispensational messages in that basic truths have been the same all down the Gospel Age. For example, a Christian has obligations. These seemingly simple truths are very searching because they test whether or not we are a Christian. They help us to know what we can and cannot do.

In times past—for instance, in the Dark Ages—Christians often had only fragments of the New Testament epistles, but they might have had one of the Gospels. Any one of the Gospels (especially Matthew, Mark, or Luke) tells the duties of a Christian. The Sermon on the Mount and *Jesus’* various instructions are basic truths that all Christians will receive because they have to know how to live—they need food. This simple message is not dispensational. A dispensational servant speaks for the particular time slot in which he is living and brings forth the type of truths that pertain to that point on the stream of time and what the responsibilities

of that time slot are. Dispensational truths are needed in addition to the basic truths.

It is difficult to see how one can make his calling and election sure in this Laodicean period and not be familiar with the teachings of Pastor Russell. One can be a Christian and be Spirit-begotten without present truth, but to make the high calling is another matter. Even baby Christians, if faithful, will get a resurrection, but they will not attain the Little Flock. One must have the basic truth, the milk, to survive as a babe. To grow and develop into teenagers requires some meat. Then, to reach the highest reward, one must mature as a Christian and be enlightened with dispensational truth. Therefore, those who were living in the days of the apostles had as much truth quantum-wise as we have. For example, when Paul preached to the Thessalonians, he said a great deal—far more than the information recorded for us in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Much light was furnished to the early Church, an exception being the dispensational light as to when Jesus would return. Early Christians thought his return was near at hand. Various pictures show that more light would be available to the first and last periods of the Church, but how that light would be used is another matter.

With the instruction given to the various churches, Paul did not keep repeating, “I am an apostle. Listen to me. What I am saying is true.” His method was to use *reason*; he used *Scriptural logic* as well as, sometimes, rational or natural logic in order to help others understand Christ more and more. He could have been cold, precise, mathematical, and demanding, but instead he tried to reason like a father with children. He told them their good points, but he also touched on their tender points. No message to an ecclesia was flattering all the way through. The nearest epistle to a wholly commendatory message is Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians.

1 Thess. 2:7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

1 Thess. 2:8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

Paul’s concern for and care of them was like that of a nursing mother taking care of her children. How *very tender* this picture is! Not only did Paul feel responsible for giving the Thessalonians the truth (sustenance) even at the cost of persecution to himself, but also his feelings entered in. He was *emotionally* involved (it was not just duty love) and *enjoyed* the privilege of bringing the truth to them. His own sympathetic nature entered into the situation—this was true love to a high degree. Similarly, Martin Luther, the sixth messenger, spoke like thunder but was also gentle and very much interested in teaching children.

Comment: We are reminded of Jesus’ statement “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matt. 23:37).

Reply: A mother hen not only covers her chicks but keeps them warm.

The breast, related to breast feeding, shows tenderness and is like a person’s own soul in that respect. Just as a nursing mother gives her own “soul” and her *innermost* affections to her baby, so Paul gave these to the Thessalonians.

1 Thess. 2:9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

Paul pursued this same policy with the Corinthians. Sometimes he had to work at night, making tents to support himself so that he would not sponge on others. Moreover, he supported not only himself but those with him. Acts 20:34 reads, “Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.” Hence he must have been very adept at tent making. And while he worked at night, he preached the gospel wholeheartedly during the day, performing both functions faithfully. Normally one activity would suffer at the expense of the other. If we devote too much time to employment, we suffer spiritually, and conversely, as we use more and more time in spiritual pursuits, we usually earn less money and have less influence and popularity with the world.

Comment: Jesus told Peter to feed his lambs and his sheep, and the natural responsibilities of a shepherd were similar in the Old Testament. For example, if a wolf seized one of the sheep, the shepherd was expected to try to rescue it. If he could not save the life of the sheep, at least he had to bring back a piece of the animal (such as an ear) to prove he had made the effort. Here Paul was telling the Thessalonians that he *dearly* loved them.

Reply: In other words, a literal shepherd was not to be indifferent about losing one of the flock. Therefore, he had to give some evidence, or proof, of his efforts to rescue the sheep or at least to have a believable explanation.

Comment: These comments fit in with verse 4, where Paul felt the responsibility of being entrusted with the gospel. Since his privilege came from God, he felt the necessity of successfully discharging his responsibility.

In addition to tent making, Paul had some money, evidently as the result of the death of a family member. Tents were used in many ways back there: for travel, by laborers in the fields, etc. Tent-making utensils—needles, for example—were large so that they could penetrate canvas. Therefore, even with his poor eyesight, Paul could see sufficiently to do the work. Incidentally, it was a common practice in his day for all of the wealthy, such as Paul’s family, to have an alternate trade or skill. Then, if ill fortune were met or an emergency occurred, they could earn a living.

Paul labored night and day. Being busy attending to the spiritual needs of the Thessalonians, he did not have enough employment during the remainder of the day to supply his necessities, so he often labored at night too. As was characteristic of Paul, he labored manually so that he would not be chargeable to any of the brethren (2 Thess. 3:8). In studying his epistles verse by verse, we get an insight into his thinking, which helps us to know how to act under certain situations that may arise in our daily Christian living. (We need to study doctrinally too, so *both* types of study are needed.)

What was Paul’s motivation in giving such advice to the Thessalonians? (With the Corinthians, it was a chastisement but not here.) The Thessalonians had been living in ignorance and superstition under a heathen religion when along came Paul from another country preaching a new religion. Upon hearing him, they enthusiastically accepted his message. But what would happen when Paul left? Some might accuse them of following a *man* and of being easily swayed. Through this method—by suggesting they had reacted inordinately—the Adversary might be able to undermine Paul’s good advice. Similarly, some in the Truth movement are accused of being Russellites, which *may* or *may not* be true. The responsibility lies with the individual to make sure he is responding to *God’s* call and not to the personal magnetism or capability of the one who first presented the truth to him.

Paul was laying the groundwork so that in the future when various brethren and teachers would come to Thessalonica, they would not be able to take advantage of the Thessalonian

brethren. False teachers might talk very smoothly and have great oratory, but their lives might not be consistent with their teaching. Paul was telling the Thessalonians in so many words to *examine* any teachers who would come to them. Thus he was giving helpful advice to these babes in Christ regarding future teachers. So that they would recognize the effects of his ministry as well as the Word, he pointed out his own holiness, the boldness with which he taught, his working to support himself, the persecutions that he endured, and his justness and fairness.

Since Paul was at Thessalonica for only two to three months (or six to seven months at the most), he was not criticizing the brethren for not aiding him along temporal lines. However, later on, the Thessalonians did send money to Paul, and in addition, they were bold in sounding forth the truth to Achaia and Macedonia. At this time the Philippians were sending Paul contributions.

1 Thess. 2:10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

Generally speaking, visiting is different today than it was in the apostles' day. When a pilgrim or a minister goes on a tour from town to town, the stay in each place is usually very brief. And that is true of the Bible Student movement as well. When brethren visit various ecclesias, how long do they usually stay? They arrive the night before, receive a night's lodging, give a sermon the following day, enjoy a little fellowship, and then depart either for home or for the next town. Modern modes of transportation—cars and planes—hasten both travel and visiting, whereas travel in the days of the early Church was usually on foot. Therefore, when Paul visited a certain locale, he customarily remained there for a considerable length of time. Later we will see that Paul did many things during his stay in Thessalonica.

Paul was so anxious that his ministry not be deterred or marred in any way that he supported both himself and those with him by working "night and day." He worked into the evening hours making tents so that he would not be chargeable to any of the brethren. No one could accuse him of being a sponger. In fact, in the early Church, he warned against encouraging spongers, for unfortunately, some took advantage of the hospitality of the brethren (2 Thess. 3:6–15). Identifying themselves as Christians, pretenders went on extensive tours, visiting various cities and living with brethren for long periods of time, receiving free food and lodging, until the host put them out.

In regard to spongers, many brethren felt their conscience was involved. They reasoned, "He is a minister of God. Therefore, I must keep quiet and not tell others that his staying here is a burden, even though it is consuming my time." Such brethren suffered the situation until it became unbearable. In the *Reprints* the Pastor advised that when the members of a class issue an invitation to a speaker, they should make clear what they will provide and also furnish a timetable. That way the length of the stay will be known in advance, and the party will not remain interminably and be a burden.

With Lydia of Thyatira, Paul would have continued on his journey if she had not urged him to stay. Such an invitation assures the visiting brother that he is not a burden. When Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee in the fierce storm and the apostles were in the boat, he was ostensibly walking right by them until they called out. That is the ideal situation.

Comment: Since Paul had multiple visions of conditions down through the Gospel Age and into the Kingdom arrangement, he knew that a clerical element would arise usurping authority and expecting special privileges and financial support. This foreknowledge, which he could not utter, nevertheless made him especially alert to certain conditions, and it influenced not only

the advice he gave to the various ecclesias but also his own conduct. Therefore, he was particularly careful to support himself financially, working night and day when necessary, so that he “would not be chargeable” (verse 9).

Reply: Paul’s moral conduct was holy, just, and unblamable.

Comment: There were two witnesses to Paul’s unblamable moral conduct: God Himself and the Thessalonian brethren. In Acts 24:16 he said, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.”

Reply: Yes, Paul strove to have such a conscience, and if anyone could accomplish this in the flesh, it would be the Apostle Paul. However, he was still striving. It is a *lifetime* job for us to strive to have a conscience void of offense, for we do slip here and there and must ask for forgiveness and the Lord’s mercy.

1 Thess. 2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

1 Thess. 2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Paul exhorted and comforted the Thessalonians as a father would his children. These “children” were adults, but Paul’s concern for them was as deep and genuine as if they were his own family. To the Jews the culture of the Gentiles was pagan, and for a thousand years or so, this was the case. God told Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). After a while some began to feel that the nation would always be highly favored, but God gave special favor during the instructional period prior to the Gospel Age.

What is the “call” unto God’s Kingdom and glory? It is to become future kings and priests in heaven. The reward will be given only to those whose hearts, wills, and determination are to serve and obey Him and who do so *to the best of their ability*. Imperfect as we are, God reads the heart and knows when we really love and are trying to serve Him and be faithful, even though we need the covering of Christ’s robe of righteousness for forgiveness. Yes, our desire is to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men, that is, to obey man’s law except where it contradicts the divine law.

Comment: A supporting Scripture for the Christian goal of being kings and priests is Revelation 20:6, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be *priests* of God and of Christ, and shall *reign* with him a thousand years.” The kingly aspect is in the “reign.”

Paul “exhorted and comforted and charged every one” of the Thessalonians “as a father doth his children ... [to] walk worthy of God.” Paul *personally* and individually dealt with each of the Thessalonians alone or else in their family unit. He acted like a “father” to them. More Greeks than Jews responded to the gospel in Thessalonica.

Paul compared his attitude toward the Thessalonians to a “mother” (verse 7) and a “father” (verse 11). A natural mother provides *affection*, and a natural father gives *instruction*. Paul was both mother and father to them.

1 Thess. 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Paul thanked God “without ceasing” because the Thessalonians “received the word of God ... not as the word of men.” They could see that he believed in the things he declared to them and that he felt responsible to both God and Jesus. They could see his conviction and his mode of life, and they did not receive “the word” just because they liked Paul’s personality. Many are swayed by such factors as charisma, fellowship, and entertainment, but the Thessalonians accepted Paul’s message as being *from God*. That is a world of difference from accepting someone’s message just because of liking to hear him talk. The Thessalonians received the word not as being of men but as it was—TRUTH!

When the Thessalonians got the truth, it was theirs. Even in Paul’s absence, they lived with the truth, and that is the way it should be. If everyone forsook us, whom would we have left? Just God and Jesus. “When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay” are the words of a hymn. Sometimes the Lord puts us in positions where we have to lean very heavily on Him because of lack of fellowship with others of like precious faith.

The “word of God ... *effectually* worketh” in those who believe. In physics the term “chain reaction” is used. When Paul’s message was received, it produced a chain reaction in the Thessalonians. From them it went to another and another and another, and they were willing to suffer for the truth in their joy of telling others of the marvelous plan of God. At the present time, God is choosing a people for His name. He is not trying to convert the world but is looking for “children,” for disciples, for those who are responsive and spontaneous and do not have to be coerced to love Him.

1 Thess. 2:14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

“For ye, brethren, became followers [imitators] of the churches of God ... in Judaea ... : for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen.” In other words, Christian Jews in Israel, who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, suffered *severe* persecution from their own countrymen. Among other things, employment was adversely affected. The time setting of this epistle was about AD 51.

Similarly, in the Dark Ages those who were not Roman Catholic were regarded as heretics and were severely persecuted. For example, non-Catholics could not be buried in a cemetery or have their children baptized. Paul was saying to the Thessalonians, “Even though you are not in Israel, you are suffering just like the Christian Jews there. Your experiences are the same.” Thessalonica, which was on the main route for the Roman army, was a populous city at that time with many Jews. Any Jews who accepted Christ suffered drastically for their belief and were, to all effects, excommunicated. And it was Jews from the outside who stirred up the Jews there in Thessalonica and wanted to take Paul to the authorities. The brethren hid Paul and ended up being taken themselves to the magistrates.

In preaching to the Thessalonian brethren as an apostle, Paul was thinking about what they could hang onto when he had to leave them forever. This motivation will be seen as we continue through the two epistles.

1 Thess. 2:15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

Usually we do not hear Jews admit that they “killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets.” Instead they feel they are being persecuted unjustly through anti-Semitism. For hundreds of

years, they received retribution for rejecting Jesus and for opposing and persecuting Christians. Subsequently, during the Diaspora, the Jews were persecuted mightily. As a result, the only jobs they could get were selling on street corners, for they could not even rent space for a business. The Jews do not recognize the retribution aspect but feel they have been unjustly treated.

The Greeks, who were very intelligent, were known for their oratory and logic, but they became slaves to the Romans. Very refined and educated Greeks had to serve the cold, cruel Roman military. Thus the oppression of one race by another has been practiced down through history and is not peculiar to our day. But in the Christian family, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, ... bond nor free, ... male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13). There is no discrimination with regard to ethnic or racial background because we are all one in Christ Jesus. Outside of the Christian family, however, problems exist in society.

When we are in the Christian relationship, extraneous problems such as racial discrimination do not occupy our minds all the time. Otherwise, our thinking would get poisoned with feelings of “anti” this and “anti” that. Many in the world are obsessed with thoughts of *hate*. To be a follower of Jesus, we must study what he taught and what he did and try to do likewise. We are not to be concerned with how the press or other leaders try to influence the people to believe and think.

Based on training, the Jews were “contrary to all men.” Remember, Paul came to Thessalonica from Philippi with his back still cut and raw from the stripes he had received. He did not take time to convalesce but began to preach right away, driving himself to feed the flock there in spite of his wounds. Now he was comforting the Thessalonian brethren by reminding them that they were not suffering alone, for the Judean brethren were likewise suffering. Moreover, the prophets and Jesus suffered too, as well as the apostles. In other words, the Thessalonians were to think the persecution not strange, for the calling of the Church is to have persecution (1 Pet. 4:12). However, the unusual thing about the persecution of the Thessalonians was how *soon* it occurred after they had received the gospel. The first storm began only three weeks after Paul’s arrival. The seed of truth fell into *good* soil there, for persecution did not make them forsake the truth.

Paul did not get back to Thessalonica for several years, although he wanted to, for the Lord had other work for him to do, especially at Corinth. Also, Satan “hindered” Paul by getting Jason to agree with the authorities to expel him from Thessalonica (verse 18).

1 Thess. 2:16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

The Jews in Thessalonica opposed Paul by forbidding him “to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved.” More specifically, it was the *Judean* Jews who forbid Paul to speak to the Gentiles. They made trouble in the synagogue there and also in almost every other place he visited. In some places, such as Corinth, they even wanted to harm him physically.

Even some of the *believing* Jews had trouble accepting Gentiles as equals. For that very reason, Paul had to rebuke Peter openly, for in trying to be considerate of the feelings of one individual, Peter was doing untold damage to others (Gal. 2:11–21). He had an impetuous disposition, but he meekly received the correction and instruction from Paul.

As time went on, some of the Christian Jews began to teach that Gentiles had to obey the Law. Jewish converts who returned to the Law and then considered Paul to be an enemy agent were false brethren. Only *nominally* Christian, they undercut Paul because he taught justification by

faith.

“For the wrath is come upon them [the Judean Jews] to the uttermost.” They “fill up their sins always.” The Jewish persecutors were of two kinds. The great majority were just Jews who did not believe in Christ, and they regarded anyone of their own nationality as a traitor for accepting Christ. Because they persecuted in ignorance, as Saul did prior to his conversion, they would not be liable to Second Death. In fact, many of the persecutors actually thought they were doing God a service (John 16:2). Nevertheless, there will be a penalty for willful actions. However, for Jewish *converts* who later became *false* brethren by persecuting true Christians and opposing Paul in many places, Second Death is a possibility. Some sealed their doom by first accepting the truth and then becoming enemies of it. They persecuted Paul and claimed to be apostles. Although they had ample opportunity for change and repentance, they did not use it, and they left the truth *permanently*.

“To the uttermost” means “to an end” (Greek *telos*). In other words, to all practical benefits, the Jewish Age ended in AD 69–70. Very few Jews accepted Christ after that date because the people were dispersed and millions died. Jews who were not killed by the Romans were separated from their families and taken into captivity as slaves. As a result, they lost their cohesion.

Comment: Matthew 23:31,32,35 reads, “Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.... That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”

Reply: Many of the Jews who crucified Jesus were themselves crucified in the trouble of AD 69 under Vespasian and later Titus. (When the emperor died, Vespasian returned to Rome to become Caesar.) Those Israelites who tried to flee when the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem were captured and crucified on the outer city wall. The city of Jerusalem had two walls: an outer wall and an inner wall. Relatively early the Romans captured the outer wall, and on that wall they crucified Jews all the way around so that the crucifixions could be seen by the inhabitants inside the city. In the Matthew citation, Jesus was indicating that this retribution would come.

Time was required for Vespasian to do the bidding of the Caesar to level Jerusalem. As early as AD 66, preparations were made to give the Jews the lesson. In other words, preparations began about the time of Paul’s death. The first epistle was written to the Thessalonians just a little while after he was there, and the second letter followed shortly thereafter. These epistles were written relatively late in Paul’s ministry. (His death occurred in AD 66 at the latest.) Thus he was aware of the preparations being made to visit upon the Jews the wrath predicted by both Jesus and John the Baptist. With Thessalonica and Philippi being on the land route of the Roman army, certain preparations could be seen.

1 Thess. 2:17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

The statement “But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart” shows that this first epistle was written shortly after Paul left Thessalonica, perhaps just three to six months later. Paul “endeavoured the more abundantly” to see the Thessalonian brethren again “with great desire.”

1 Thess. 2:18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but

Satan hindered us.

More than once—repeatedly—Paul wanted to return to the Thessalonians, but the Adversary hindered him from so doing.

1 Thess. 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

1 Thess. 2:20 For ye are our glory and joy.

“For ye are our glory and joy.” Paul knew that he was faithful in speaking the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Now he was thrilled to see that the Thessalonian brethren had gotten the message from God and that fear was not the motivating factor, as with those who preach hellfire, for instance. Love and appreciation for God and His plan should motivate us, not fear. Paul felt it was “mission accomplished,” for the Thessalonian brethren had gotten the truth, and it was theirs.

“Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming [presence, Greek *parousia*]?” Paul was hopeful that with their understanding of truth and the suffering they had endured, many of the Thessalonian brethren would make their calling and election sure. He was convinced that several in this church would be with Jesus during his Second Presence and reign with him in his Kingdom.

Over the years, as we observe certain brothers and sisters in the truth, we can see exceptional zeal in laying down their all for God and Jesus. For such we are very hopeful that they will be more than overcomers, but of course one must first be faithful unto death before receiving the crown of life. Paul was overjoyed not only because the Thessalonians were good hearers and listeners but also because they had come solidly into the truth and had withstood persecution. Paul admitted he was apprehensive lest he had gotten them interested and then would lose them when he had to leave so soon. Conditions were so bad that the Thessalonians had constrained Paul to leave because they did not want him to be put to death. After Paul left, he had second thoughts, reasoning, “Perhaps I should have stayed.” However, when Timothy came back later, Paul was convinced that the Thessalonians were solid in the truth and in their consecrations. Paul’s feelings of anxiety, as a father for his children, were laid to rest. He had feared lest something would happen in his absence to divert them out of the truth.

The hope, joy, and crown of the Christian is to develop to become part of the Little Flock. Paul used the picture of a mother and a father and entreated each of the Thessalonians personally because he wanted them to grow to maturity, that is, to make their calling and election sure. To Paul the “crown” would be not merely his *own* reward but to see as many of them as possible also get a crown at Jesus’ Second Presence. Stated another way, *their* getting a crown would be like added jewels in Paul’s crown. He had introduced the truth to them, and now he wanted to see them develop and mature. Therefore, he nourished and instructed the Thessalonian Christians (Jews, Greeks, and women) as a father and a mother and hoped they would *fully* mature and get the prize.

Toward the end of Paul’s life, he knew he would get a crown, but he hoped they would too. Paul had *mixed* experiences—times of discouragement and then joyful confidence again. He said in effect, “I *run* that I may obtain. I *press down* for the mark with the expectation I will get it! I do not shadow box and beat the air. There is *substance* to my punching” (1 Cor. 9:24,26; Phil. 3:14). Our usual attitude should be the same, although we will have periods of discouragement, for even Jesus had them at Gethsemane and on the Cross. Philippians 4:1 is a good parallel text: “Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown,

so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.”

1 Thess. 3:1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

1 Thess. 3:2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

Paul was writing to the Thessalonians from Athens. When he was hunted down in Macedonia and Achaia far to the north, the brethren persuaded him to leave for the sake of safety. Jesus gave that advice to his disciples; namely, if they were persecuted in a particular city and even in a particular household, they were to wipe the dust off their feet and move on. Of course, as an apostle, Paul was unusually zealous.

Timothy accompanied Paul to Athens. Then Paul had second thoughts about having left Thessalonica. Even though the brethren had received the gospel wholeheartedly, he was very concerned about their spiritual welfare, fearing that the Adversary would undercut his short ministry there. He was nervous that something might go amiss because such severe persecution had occurred so shortly after their consecration, when they were but newborn babes. When Paul could refrain no longer, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to establish and comfort the brethren concerning their faith. Paul thus manifested much confidence in young Timothy. Also, by calling him “fellowlabourer,” Paul was highly recommending him.

1 Thess. 3:3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

“For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.” How did the Thessalonians *know* they were “appointed” unto afflictions?

Comment: Paul had preached to them that the Christian is to take up his cross and follow Jesus, knowing that persecuting experiences will come. In fact, we are told that if we do not receive persecution, we are illegitimate children (Heb. 12:8).

Reply: Stated succinctly, “no cross, no crown.” If we do not suffer with Jesus, we will not reign with him (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12). Paul undoubtedly called attention to what Jesus said plus certain Scriptures. He said we are to expect persecution and not become faint-hearted because of it. “Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb. 12:3). Most of the persecution in Thessalonica came from Jews who resided there as well as in Philippi and Berea.

Q: What did Paul mean when he said in verse 1, “We could no longer forbear”?

A: He was nervous about the welfare of the Thessalonians. Perhaps Timothy was hesitant to leave Athens and go to Thessalonica because he was concerned about Paul and did not want to leave him alone, but Paul urged Timothy to go. Paul was in Athens for only a relatively short time, and his wonderful testimony on Mars’ hill took place there (Acts 17:22–31). “I perceive, O Athenians, that you are too religious. You have many gods, of whom I will not speak. Instead I will speak of the *one unknown God*, the God who created us. We are all here because of Him.”

Comment: The Phillips translation reads, “And so at length, when the separation became intolerable, we thought the best plan was for me to stay at Athens alone, while Timothy, our brother and fellow-worker in the gospel of Christ, was sent to strengthen and encourage you in your faith. We did not want any of you to lose heart at the troubles you were going

through, but to realize that we Christians must expect such things.”

Reply: Yes, that translation clarifies the true meaning in this case. With Phillips, as with the other new liberal translations, we must exercise caution to make sure they present the right point so that, in turn, we get the correct thought.

1 Thess. 3:4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

1 Thess. 3:5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

Paul expressed a similar thought in verse 1 of this chapter. Indeed Satan tempted the Thessalonians—he persecuted them through the Jews under his influence. As Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, “Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). The Jewish religious element of Jesus’ day persecuted him, making snide remarks and trying to belittle or confuse him.

Paul had previously told the Thessalonian brethren that Christians should expect to suffer for Christ and experience persecution, but usually there was some time for growth and development before the persecutions came. With the Thessalonian babes in Christ, the persecution came almost immediately.

The Jewish religious element in Thessalonica were probably beside themselves when some of their members left the synagogue. Similarly, when some depart from our membership, a big hole is left, and we, too, are concerned. Therefore, it is a natural reaction to be alarmed. However, back there *all* of the Jews should have left and followed Paul because of the quality of his message.

Comment: How touching that Paul was almost sick over yearning to know how the Thessalonians were faring!

Reply: Yes, he had both a motherly and a fatherly attitude toward them.

1 Thess. 3:6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

When Timothy arrived with information, he reported that the Thessalonians were loyal to Paul and appreciated him. This attitude was in sharp contrast to the false apostles and teachers at Corinth, who tried to undercut Paul. It was good news that the Thessalonians missed Paul and wanted to have him return. His message had a strong impact on them—not only was the truth an attraction, but they were steadfast in it.

In addition to the verbal good tidings of faith and love, the Thessalonians probably also sent along a contribution to Paul. Generosity and financial support are only one aspect of love. Other examples are prayer and moral and doctrinal support. Doctrinal agreement is very encouraging.

1 Thess. 3:7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

1 Thess. 3:8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Paul was very generous in saying, “Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by *your faith: for now we live.*” Considering what Paul went through in suffering with Christ—being stoned, left for dead, etc.—did he mean that he would give up the faith if the Thessalonians departed? No, but his generous comments indicate that because he was so filled with empathy for them, their steadfastness boosted his morale. If he went out and preached again the next day, he would be a little extra bold because of the good news. People like to hear that they are appreciated for what they do or have done, and the expression of such appreciation is in order as long as it is sincere and genuine and does not go too far. We are to avoid the type of false commercial front and flattery that were promoted by the book *How To Win Friends and Influence People*.

Q: Would the word “since” be preferable to “if”? “For now we live, *since* ye stand fast in the Lord.”

A: Either is correct. “If” carries the thought that the Thessalonians were to *continue* to stand fast in their faith.

1 Thess. 3:9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

In other words, “How can we thank God enough for all the joy we feel for your sake?” In the epistles to the Thessalonians, Paul subconsciously brought in God and Jesus in a very personal way, trying to get them to feel God’s pulse, as it were. Paul wanted the brethren to realize that God was for them, that Jesus was with them, and that whatever they suffered, better news awaited them upon Jesus’ return. In fact, the word *parousia* is used a number of times in this epistle because Paul kept holding forth the future hope. We do the same thing in principle by sacrificing what we might otherwise do inordinately in our personal lives because we are thinking of the future. As God’s people, we have faith and trust in Him and His promises, and that is why we laid our all on the altar. We are laying up treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt. The world does the opposite—in their pursuit of happiness, they lay up bank accounts, stocks, bonds, etc., which will corrupt when economic collapse occurs someday.

Some deride the future life as pie in the sky and say that the here and now is what matters. However, the only here and now that matters is whether we are doing God’s will. The Scriptures tell us that if we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him.

1 Thess. 3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Paul prayed exceedingly, night and day, to be permitted to return to the Thessalonians. He prayed without ceasing, as it were. By reading the Book of Acts and the other epistles, we know that he prayed for other ecclesias as well. No doubt he had a long prayer list. However, his prayers in regard to the Thessalonians were especially admirable because he himself had suffered persecution there and most certainly would suffer again if he returned. What a great motive and example of self-sacrifice! He wanted to “perfect,” or bring to maturity, what was lacking in their faith.

Comment: Since the Thessalonians did not have the written Word—just oral recitations and fragments of the New Testament—the whole arrangement of Paul’s sustaining them and their interest in his activities would have been the subject of earnest, emotional prayer. They wanted to keep one another healthy spiritually. They did not have concordances, *Volumes*, and study helps to fill the gap.

1 Thess. 3:11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

Here the word “and” (Greek *kai*) would be better translated “even”: “Now God himself, *even* our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.” Almost invariably *kai* means “and,” but where context indicates otherwise, the meaning is “even” or, more rarely, “also.” Paul was praying that God would honor or favor his inmost desire to return again to minister to the Thessalonians.

Paul was trying to say, “I am not just a wishful thinker. I *really* want to come back and see you again.” Moreover, he said earlier, “Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us” (1 Thess. 2:18). Satan uses many means to consume our time, and some of them seem ordinary and common, for example, a duty to perform or an illness. The Adversary does not necessarily directly attack an individual, for his minions, the fallen angels, do his bidding. They think of all kinds of methods and distractions, especially when it comes to consecration. In the Parable of the Sower, birds (the fallen angels) came and devoured seed that fell by the wayside (Matt. 13:3–9, 18–23). Others received the word “anon with joy,” but when the sun came up with its heat, they forgot and went their way. Still other seed fell among thorns. However, seed that falls on good ground prospers 30-, 60-, and 100-fold, based on one’s own personal talents and zeal. Thus there are four gradations: wayside, stony ground, thorns, and good ground.

1 Thess. 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

Paul was suggesting that we should make allowances for one another when we have differences of opinion not based on principle. Many people are overly sensitive, and some even to the point that if they are criticized, we will never see them again. When someone steps on their foot—on a spiritual corn, as it were—they do not forget the incident for the rest of their life. We are supposed to be sensitive and yet not too sensitive. Otherwise, we will not endure, and a soldier must endure many hardships, spiritually speaking: going without meals, being deprived of sleep or sleeping on hard ground, not being able to bathe, etc.

Comment: The word “men,” supplied by the translators, should be omitted. Our *special* love is for our brethren, not for the world. Paul told us to do good unto all men as we have opportunity “but *especially* unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Therefore, verse 12 should read, “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, even as we do toward you.”

Reply: Yes, “men” should be omitted, for the “all” would be the brotherhood, the ones who have received the truth and taken a stand. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to increase and overflow in their love for each other in their local circumstance and also for those beyond, for all brethren everywhere, for the Church as a whole.

Berea and Philippi were nearby, and Paul was suggesting that the Thessalonians were not alone in their experiences. For instance, the Thessalonian brethren knew about the earthquake that had occurred when Paul and Silas were in prison and the subsequent conversion of the jailer and his household (Acts 16:23–34). While the two were in prison, bleeding from the many stripes they had received (probably 40 stripes save one, that is, almost to the point of death), they sang hymns and the other prisoners listened. When the earthquake opened all the doors, the other prisoners were so shocked that they remained there, frozen, as it were. As they considered the singing and the earthquake, they felt that the invisible God was for them. Then

Paul said to the jailer, “Do not worry. Do not kill yourself, for we are all here.” To hear Paul speak that way, the others would have thought, “We better pay attention and stay in our cells.” Of course the jailer then made sure that the prisoners were locked up again, for if even one prisoner had escaped, the Roman authorities would have taken his life.

Conventions have their place, that is, as long as we are not “convention-goers.” We need home-ecclesia stability, for excessive convention attendance adversely affects our studies.

1 Thess. 3:13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

“Coming” is the Greek *parousia*, and the preposition “at” should be “in” or “during.” “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, *during* the *presence* of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” Having been caught up to the third heaven, Paul knew that the presence of Christ was a period of time, and not just one moment (2 Cor. 12:2). While Paul could not utter the things that he saw in vision, they affected his vocabulary. Even though he kept the secrets, his understanding popped out in little fragments. The object of “love” is to establish our hearts blameless in holiness before God during the *parousia* of Jesus.

Comment: It is interesting how the Lord permitted the seemingly simple word *parousia* to be mistranslated and misunderstood as an instantaneous coming.

Reply: Yes, the general concept is a *moment in time* instead of a *period of presence*.

Comment: Scriptural love is far deeper than brethren greeting each other at conventions with hugs and kisses.

Reply: Courtesy and recognition are one thing, but gushy excessiveness is not the love spoken of in the Scriptures, which comes from a knowledge of God and Jesus and their instructions, as well as the instructions of the apostles and the prophets.

“Holiness” was a problem in Thessalonica (and in Greece) because of the heathen worship of Dionysus and Bacchus, which incorporated unclean and lewd practices. Not being schooled in the Law and in righteousness, the people did not see that evil was connected with their immoral religious practices.

Jesus has not yet come “with *all his saints*.” There are different comings. In 1874 Jesus came *alone*. In 1878 the sleeping saints were raised, but the feet members still tarry today. In the *apokalupsis* after the marriage, Jesus will come with all of his saints and manifest his presence to the world.

1 Thess. 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

1 Thess. 4:2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

Paul stressed *growth*—he wanted the Thessalonians to “abound [increase] more and more.” They (and we, too) were not to be satisfied with the attainment of just a certain level of development.

Other translations properly begin this chapter with the word “Finally,” meaning to sum up

what has been said in the first three chapters. These chapters were introductory about the Thessalonian church, the Apostle Paul's desire to know of their spiritual welfare, the news he received through Timothy of their activities, etc. Now, after commending the Thessalonians for their zeal and work in the face of persecution, Paul began to warn them of certain dangers they were facing and of attainments and growth that were still needed.

In the short time that Paul was with them, he had given considerable instruction and "commandments," telling how they "ought to walk and to please God." The epistles to the Thessalonians were written only about a year after Paul had been there—a much shorter interim than with other epistles.

1 Thess. 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

God's will for us is our *sanctification*. Usually we quote just this portion of the verse, but notice the context. Sanctification for the Thessalonians was not just separation to do God's will, but separation in *abstaining from fornication*. The bottom line is that without holiness shall no man see the Lord. Being imperfect, we must fight and subordinate wrong desires with the goal of getting control, as far as possible, so that we will hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21).

"Fornication" is passionate lust, inordinate desires of the flesh. The pursuit of happiness down through history, as well as today, has been the pursuit of inordinate desires. Even with all of our light, understanding, and education—Bibles, concordances, etc.—the flesh is one of our three greatest enemies, the world and the devil being the other two. The world and the flesh are often related, for example, pride, pomp, and wealth. It is true that history repeats itself in regard to the trials of the Christian, but what is apparent today is that education is meaningless for sanctification. The determining factor in sanctification is *our will*—whether we want to pursue sanctification wholeheartedly. Do we *truly will* to do God's will? How sincere is our commitment?

"Fornication" is broader than just adultery. The United States is supposed to be a Christian nation, but 100 and 200 years ago society was more moral and people lived on a higher level. Morals are going downhill today.

Comment: In ancient cities such as Ephesus and Pompeii, the way to the brothel was publicly and openly made manifest. Then, with the advent of Christianity and certainly during the period when Bible societies proliferated, sins were kept more private and secret, but now, in our day, sins are again flaunted openly.

Reply: Some are even bold enough to have Scripture studies on television and give perverted, distorted explanations, showing they are looking for ways to justify immorality. The Bible predicted that such conditions would prevail at the end of the age. What makes our day different is that *in spite of the increase of knowledge*, conditions are worse.

Comment: Sanctification means to be set apart for holy service, and the idea of servitude is that we have tied ourselves with Christ to be a servant of God. "Fornication" is an illicit union, whether along physical lines or in yielding to the world and its pleasures. Our union is with Christ, not with the world, the flesh, or the devil.

Reply: The history or derivation of "sanctification" is "two handfuls of incense." Having our hands full of holy incense means we are wholly committed to serve the Lord to the best of our ability. When the high priest went into the Holy with a censer hanging from one wrist, a vessel

containing blood suspended from the other wrist, and his hands full of incense, he had to be very careful not to spill the incense. His circumspectness pictures what we are trying to do, spiritually speaking, in the present life. Both the censer and the blood were set down on the Incense Altar in the Holy as the high priest withdrew his hands and then crumbled the incense over the censer with the live coals.

The Apostle Paul was addressing this epistle to a mostly Gentile Church in a city that was accustomed to pagan living and pagan worship. In connection with the worship of Roman gods and many Grecian ones too, fornication was an approved part of the religious services. Revenue from the vestal virgins, a paid harlotry, went into the church coffers dedicated to a particular god and hence was a means of support. Neither this type of fornication nor other immoral practices done under the name of religion were considered sin. In fact, the daughters of many of the nobility took a year or more of service with these rituals and then returned to a normal life. Therefore, because the Thessalonians had a background of mixing religion and immorality, they needed special instruction to truly separate themselves from their former practices.

1 Thess. 4:4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

1 Thess. 4:5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

Each Christian should learn how to possess (master, control) his own body (“vessel”). “Concupiscence” is passionate lust. This verse helps us to realize the focus of Paul’s advice to the Thessalonians. Of the many kinds of lust (for power, influence, gain, money, etc.), he was discussing immorality, which was a problem for them because of their background and training. They had no standard. When Paul arrived with the gospel message, they happily accepted Christ, but now they had to battle their background and training, which was a hard thing to do. In other words, their past practices made it difficult for them to live a Christian life, so Paul wanted them to see a clear-cut separation between the two and to keep that separation continually in mind.

Comment: Thessalonica and Ephesus were contemporary cities. Having been to Ephesus, we know public immorality was practiced there. Therefore, we can assume that such immorality was common throughout the empire with every major city having sexual pleasures available.

The Thessalonian church was composed of mostly Greeks, many women, and some Jews (Acts 17:1–4). Paul wanted the Jews to understand that they, too, were included in this admonition. Because they had a better background under the Mosaic Law, if they began to deflect, it would be harder for them to return to moral practices. The instruction was not to live in lustful passion.

Comment: For verses 4 and 5, the Phillips translation reads, “God’s plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean cut with sexual immorality. Every one of you should learn to control his body, keeping it pure and treating it with respect, and never regarding it as an instrument for self-gratification, as do pagans with no knowledge of God.”

Reply: Inordinate appetite can occur in other areas as well—for example, food, clothing, and pride—but “concupiscence” gives the slant of the apostle’s advice here. He was speaking about passionate lust, passionate inordinate desire.

Comment: Paul was saying, “Pagan worship in temples with pagan gods and goddesses is the common practice, but now that you are Christians, your life should be different.”

1 Thess. 4:6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

The thrust of this verse is not about money but about immoral sexual practices, which are Satan's chief weapon. All down the age, lust has been a problem, in poor times as well as in more affluent times. No amount of education in itself will deliver one from such practices. We must pray for more of God's Holy Spirit to combat this foe, for we are all born in sin and "shapen in iniquity" (Psa. 51:5).

"That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter." For example, adultery, the switching of partners, was practiced back there. Not only with a married couple but also with those who are engaged or "keeping company," it is wrong for another party to flirt and cause temptation. All of these examples are included in the term "fornication."

"Because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified." When Paul's sermons are seen and heard on tape in the Kingdom, how interesting they will be! Here he was reminding the Thessalonians to increase and abound in the advice previously given.

The *Diaglott* reads, "That none overstep the bounds and cheat his brother by the practice [of sexual immorality]." Phillips says, "You cannot break this rule without in some way cheating your fellow-men [consecrated or otherwise]. And you must remember that God will punish all who do offend in this matter, and we have warned you...."

The context of these verses pertains to *physical* lust, and not to a general warning against any kind of illicit union. "Concupiscence" limits the meaning.

1 Thess. 4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

This verse harmonizes with verse 3 and again shows that the apostle was talking about morals: "This is the will of God [for you], even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication."

In Indonesia, Malaysia, and countries east of Vietnam, these unclean practices were done until very recently in connection with religious services. Similarly, when the Israelites left Egypt in the Exodus and subsequently made a golden calf and accompanied it with music and revelry, they did not see the incongruity of mixing this behavior with religion, for such practices had been commonly done in Egypt. Paul was saying that God calls us to *holiness* (sanctification), not to the uncleanness and fornication that is practiced by heathen religions.

1 Thess. 4:8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Comment: This verse is strong. One who commits gross sin is really manifesting *hatred* for God. The same principle can be stated the opposite way: "For this is the love of God, that we *keep* his commandments" (1 John 5:3). If we keep God's commandments, we are manifesting love for Him.

Reply: There is a responsibility attached to despising God's instruction.

Fornication should not be benevolently overlooked—unless, of course, repentance is manifested (see 1 Corinthians 5). Christians who commit fornication show by the very act that

they *despise* God. One who despises God and His instruction in this manner should not be lovingly forgiven without evidence of repentance; otherwise, there will be a leavening effect all around.

In the final analysis, the epistles provide a history of the Church and its struggle. Fornication has been a part of the Church's development, and it is a problem. While some in Thessalonica definitely benefited from Paul's advice, many ignored his counsel. The same thing happened when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He did all he could to get them to see his place in God's arrangement as an apostle, but some rejected his reasoning. The humble ones, however, were helped to properly reason on the matter.

Part of verse 8 in Phillips reads, "It is not for nothing that the Spirit God gives us is called the *Holy Spirit*." The underlying principle as to why God's Spirit is called *holy* is that it is not given in vain. We are to avoid uncleanness, and if we reject this advice, we are rejecting (despising) God Himself!

1 Thess. 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

1 Thess. 4:10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

Phillips reads, "Next, as regards brotherly love, you don't need any written instructions. God himself is teaching you to love each other, and you are already extending your love to all the Macedonians."

Notice how the Apostle Paul mixed the positive with the negative. After warning the Thessalonians about the dangers and the problems, he then gave a commendation. He said in effect, "I do not have to write to you about loving one another, for you know what to do. However, there is always room for improvement." Not only were the Thessalonians showing brotherly love in their local ecclesia, but their influence was extending to Macedonia, a larger area of which Thessalonica and Philippi were a part.

Verses 9 and 10 refer back to 1 Thessalonians 1:8. The zeal of the Thessalonian brethren was an example to others. Even though they suffered persecution, they were very active in preaching the gospel. However, in spite of their zeal and its beneficial influence on brethren elsewhere, Paul had to warn them about possible dangers in going into other territories, as verses 11 and 12 bring out.

The remarkable thing about conversion is that if one who is known for debauchery becomes a convert, the change is startling. Others can see what God has done with His Holy Spirit, and of course the individual is aware of the power received, for the reformation could not have occurred in his (or her) own strength. Paul stated the principle: "God's grace is sufficient for us, for *His* strength is made perfect in *our* weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9 paraphrase).

"But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." Those who want to be members of the Little Flock, to live and reign with Christ, must be more than overcomers. Thus there is always room for improvement. The Lord, who can read the heart, sees the daily efforts of those who are always trying to better their characters and diligently follow Scriptural advice and instruction. For such individuals, the chances of making their calling and election sure are greatly increased for becoming members of the rulership element. Proverbs 16:32 says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Conquering a city as a general requires much thought, reasoning, and

effort, but the one who rules his spirit is greater than the most famous generals of history.

1 Thess. 4:11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

1 Thess. 4:12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

We are to be quiet and moderate in spirit, to mind our *own* business, and to work with our own hands. This counsel was given because some of the Thessalonians walked in a disorderly way, not supporting themselves and being busybodies; that is, they sponged on the brotherhood and minded *other* people's business (2 Thess. 3:6–11). The Scriptures tell us, as a general rule, to owe no man anything (Rom. 13:8). Of course Paul was not referring to those who were infirm or incapable of working.

“Walk honestly toward them that are without, ... that ye may have lack of nothing.” Employees owe their employers an honest day's work. For example, employees should not take advantage of lunch hours or coffee breaks by extending them beyond the authorized time. We should try to be industrious and put a little money aside—not an inordinate amount—for such things as sickness, emergencies, and helping someone else.

In the short time Paul was at Thessalonica, he could foresee three major dangers and/or temptations that were facing the brethren:

1. Fornication
2. Busybodying
3. Sponging (not working and expecting other brethren to support them indefinitely)

In spite of Paul's sound advice, many fell along these lines.

Those who did not work went around to brethren who would shelter them, thereby getting all the latest gossip. Those who practiced this way of life lost sight of the gospel and what they should be doing. Therefore, not only the spongers but also the host who permitted the sponging needed correction. In other words, when the brethren went to other places, there was a temptation to overreach themselves. At first the visiting was pleasant, but then things could get too familiar and turn into a busybodying and/or sponging situation.

In doing the Lord's work, we should not neglect to support ourselves and hope, instead, that the brethren will indefinitely provide food and shelter. This danger could even occur with colporteurism. Therefore, a *time limitation* should be set or an *understanding* reached *in advance* so that the visitor will not take advantage of the host.

In regard to being quiet and minding our own business, the caution was against the attitude that since we are all brothers and sisters and *love each other so much* and are all stewards of the Lord's work, we should know each other's business. The following clichés are used: “What is yours is the Lord's, and what is mine is the Lord's.” “We are all working together, so *your home should be my home*.” Such attitudes sound generous and benevolent, but they are really infringing on the rights of others. Generosity and hospitality should be *spontaneous*, not forced, for forced hospitality robs a person of the virtue of sacrifice. The *principle* of hospitality should be taught, but its application should be *voluntary*, that is, left up to the individual as far as possible. However, if we see that someone is going to do wrong or get into trouble, we should warn the individual—that is another matter.

Sometimes a sponging situation is very cleverly achieved. It is fine to help a brother in need,

but the help should not become obligatory. Otherwise, sponging can become a way of life. For instance, a host may be agreeable to taking in a brother or a sister, and the individual is agreeable because of not having to work. Satan is busy pressing all the levers of the old man.

Comment: Some time ago a television news program showed a limousine pulling up and a person getting out to go down into the subway to beg. That mind-set is unbelievable.

Reply: Another method is to have a donation basket filled with bills so that a person feels like a heel putting in a quarter or a 50-cent piece.

We should work with our own hands so that we will not be dependent on others. This way we will not bring reproach on the truth either among the brethren or, especially, among the unconsecrated. In regard to activities in other areas (and the Thessalonians were zealously active elsewhere), brethren might be in a home where only one partner is consecrated. The unconsecrated member observes the actions of the consecrated very critically. It would cast an aspersion on the truth if a consecrated person sponged on a “mixed” home. Therefore, the consecrated should be very careful of their conduct when an unconsecrated person, near to the truth because of a consecrated husband or wife, is present. The lesson is not to sponge.

1 Thess. 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

Presumably this subject was introduced because some of the consecrated had died—and not through natural causes but through persecution because of standing up for their faith. Now Paul was comforting the brethren by saying, “Do not worry about them, for they fell asleep in Christ.”

In the past this text was sometimes misunderstood to mean that when we attend a funeral, we should not cry. But that is not what Paul was saying. His words were to “sorrow not, even as others which have *no hope*.” The *reason* we cry is the distinction. We cry because we will miss the deceased party, not because of hopelessness. Today the atmosphere in a funeral parlor for the brotherhood, as well as for the world, is usually one of fellowship and visiting rather than sorrow. Neither extreme is proper. Being too serious gives the impression that there is no hope, but too much gaiety is also out of order. In other words, verse 13 is saying that we do not sorrow to the extent that those in the world sorrow, who feel they will never see the deceased loved one again.

Comment: Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus, and he is our perfect pattern.

1 Thess. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Notice that God and Jesus are both mentioned in this verse. “Them also which sleep in *Jesus* will *God* bring with him.” Paul’s many visions gave him advance information and knowledge of things to come—things he could not utter. Nevertheless, what he saw influenced his choice of words and phrases. In verse 14, as well as elsewhere in his epistles, certain nuances seem to indicate that *God Himself* makes the decision with regard to anyone who goes into Second Death. Jesus is our Advocate, and no man can come unto God except through him (1 John 2:1). Jesus is also our Counselor—he is made unto us wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30). However, we were begotten by *God* and through *His Word*. When the Father wishes to draw an individual, Jesus makes sure he is on hand as the instrument (as Instructor, High Priest, Captain, etc.) to bring about salvation in a gradual manner. 1 Corinthians 6:14 reads, “And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.” This verse indicates that *God* determines

whether a person gets life or death. Of course there are different levels of life, but God makes the decision. *God* has not called us unto uncleanness, and “this is the will of *God*, even ... [our] sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3,7).

What a marvelous favor God extends to us when He makes the call available! The principle of “unto you, and to your children” is sometimes the basis of the call. “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). For example, Paul mentioned Timothy’s mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). Thus God follows a certain pattern or line of faith in making the call available before He goes to those who are in complete darkness.

Comment: Jesus’ prayer in John 17:9 shows that the Father does the calling: “I pray not for the world, but for them which *thou hast given me*; for they are thine.”

“Them also which sleep in Jesus” refers to the consecrated, not to all mankind. While the Little Flock are raised first, the Great Company are included in this expression. Thus the Thessalonian brethren were not to be concerned about the dead from the standpoint of whether they were Little Flock or Great Company. On the other hand, verses 15–17 do not include the Great Company but are talking about only the Little Flock.

1 Thess. 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

The two words “coming” and “prevent” need clarifying as follows: “We which are alive and remain unto the *presence* [Greek *parousia*] of the Lord shall not *precede* them which are asleep.” The Second Presence is a period of time during which Jesus sits down in the Harvest as a Refiner of silver and gold and is on the shore drawing in the net, using angels to sort and separate the fish (Mal. 3:3; Matt. 13:47–50).

Paul was saying that there would come a time in history—a specific date in the future—when the dead in Christ, those who were sleeping in Jesus, would be changed to spirit life, but what about the newly consecrated who would need time to make their calling and election sure? That future date would not interfere with Christians who were still in the flesh. All of the sleeping saints would be raised as a group, but those down here, on this side of the veil, would be given time. In other words, verse 15 is talking about those who would die *after 1878* but *before* the feet members go off the earthly scene as a group.

Notice that Paul used the pronoun “we.” He included himself as being among those who would be “alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,” but of course he was one of the sleeping saints when the date 1878 came. Paul’s terminology was a result, among other things, of his being caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2–4). Through visions and statements from the Lord, he was given a tremendous knowledge of events future from his day. Although he could not “utter” these things, his understanding influenced his choice of words.

Comment: Paul used the word “sleep” or “asleep” three times in this chapter to emphasize that death is a sleep until the time of the resurrection.

Paul introduced the subject matter of verses 13–15 not only because some of the consecrated had died but because the thought had become prevalent that the consecrated would live right into the Kingdom. Paul was trying to straighten out the misconception of the Thessalonians and also to set the order straight in regard to the consecrated being with Jesus. The sleeping saints would be with Christ *ahead* of those who were alive at his presence. Paul was assuring the Thessalonians that not only would those who died before Jesus’ return not miss out but

they would be with Jesus *first*—they would receive their change *prior to* the ones who were alive and remaining. When some of the dedicated Christians died, the Thessalonians who had the wrong viewpoint wondered why they themselves were still alive, and they began to question their own relationship with the Lord.

1 Thess. 4:16 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:

1 Thess. 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The nominal systems interpret the “shout” as literal, as being an audible sound that coincides with Jesus’ sudden, literal, visible return to whisk away all Christians from the trouble to follow. Some view the shout with foreboding and some as good news, but the good news occurred in 1878 to the sleeping saints, not to Christians who were still on this side of the veil in the present life. For those alive down here in 1878, the words “first” and “remain” were very important. In other words, the living saints were not caught up together with the dead saints. The nominal view is that when that date comes, the dead in Christ will be raised and those who are Christians down here will be caught up together with them at the same time, but verse 16 says that the dead in Christ will be raised *first* and the others *remain* for a period of time for development. We should notice the Apostle Paul’s use of the word “first,” for he used it very astutely in several places.

Comment: Down through the Gospel Age, the popular view has been that when Christians die, they instantly go to heaven, but that thought is immediately dispelled by verses 16 and 17. If every individual Christian went to heaven immediately upon death, these verses would be a discrepancy, for they are talking about a point in time when the Lord himself would descend and *then* the sleeping saints would arise.

Reply: Hence we see the importance of Bible study, not of the preacher.

Comment: Paul said to the church in Corinth, “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” showing that Christians down through the age *slept in death*, but that at the end of the age, circumstances would be different (1 Cor. 15:51).

Jesus descended from heaven (1) with a shout, (2) with the voice of the archangel, and (3) with the trump of God—three different terms used to signify *messages*. We will consider them one at a time.

The “shout” (Greek *keleusma*) is one of *encouragement*. (The same word is used when a coxswain at the stern of a boat in a race calls out numbers to determine the stroke and the rhythm of the rowers so that they will pull in unison.) The shout provided instruction, encouragement, and enlightenment when the dead in Christ were miraculously raised to spirit life. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he called with an authoritative voice. Therefore, we can say that the shout is an enthusiastic voice of command.

The Book of Revelation mentions the blowing of seven trumpets, or messages, and “the trump of God” would be the last one, the seventh trumpet, which was blown, spiritually speaking, in 1878. Verse 16 has become understandable chiefly through the ministry of the Pastor, the seventh messenger. Why is the seventh trumpet said to be “of God”? Of course God was responsible for the preceding six trumpets as well, but the seventh is especially identified with Him in that, eventually, it will be triumphant.

The “voice of the archangel” pertains to Jesus’ being Lord of the Harvest, the Chief Reaper. He is the “voice” in God’s stead. Even though the Pastor was “that servant,” Jesus is *Lord* of the Harvest—Jesus himself personally directs the work, the message. Just as Jesus was an archangel as the Logos, a *mouthpiece* of God, so he comes in his *parousia* as the representative of God, having the divine nature. Actually *God* is behind all three messages—the shout, the voice, and the trump. It is *His* message at the hands of His representative, Jesus. The Book of Revelation pictures Jesus as a *servant*, even though he has the divine nature.

The term “the Lord himself” means that *Jesus himself* is here in *earth’s atmosphere* during his Second Presence. He is not far off in God’s heaven operating by remote control. Moreover, the risen saints are with him in earth’s atmosphere, where he is instructing them. For the risen saints to go to heaven itself prior to the marriage would vitiate the spontaneity of the wedding and their being introduced into the presence of the Father. All of the Little Flock will have that *initial privilege together* at the time of their glorification.

“Then” in verse 17 has the thought of “*afterwards*.” Notice that the verse *does not* say, “Then we which are alive shall be caught up”—that would be a physical, visible rapture—but “Then we which are alive *and remain* shall be caught up.” The nominal Church teaches that when the dead are raised, the living Christians will be caught up almost *simultaneously* to meet the Lord in the air. No, verse 16 says that the dead in Christ (those of the Little Flock who died prior to 1878) shall rise *first*.

Note: Verses 16 and 17 do not treat those saints who die *between* 1878 and the end of the age when the feet members go as a group. This in-between period is covered by Revelation 14:13, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow [with] them.”

Additional Thoughts on 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17

Verses 16 and 17 are such important Scriptures that we will examine them again, reviewing and expanding the explanation already given.

When we first read these two verses, the natural reaction is to say that the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God are literal because they are so dramatic. And that would be a correct conclusion if the Scriptures did not teach otherwise. Therefore, we must find a way to harmonize all Scriptures on this topic. The New Testament contains perhaps ten texts showing that the initial part of Jesus’ Second Advent is a *secret* presence.

Let us consider some other dramatic Scriptures that pertain to the Lord’s Second Coming. He is pictured as coming *seated* in multiple ways: on a white cloud, on a white horse, on the right hand of the power of God, and as a refiner of silver and gold (Mal. 3:3; Matt. 26:64; Rev. 14:14; 19:11). The question immediately arises: How can Jesus come *once*, as an arrival, in a *multitude* of ways? To do so would be impossible. Therefore, we know right away that the very variety of dramatic descriptions—whether literal or spiritual—indicates a *period* of time, for the activities cannot all occur at the same time. To state the matter another way, for Jesus to come in various ways would mean *various* comings.

To harmonize all of the Scriptures pertaining to the Second Advent, we must start with the premise that God knows what He is doing and what He is saying and that He does not contradict Himself. Therefore, we must view the subject in a cautious manner and not allow ourselves to be so impressionable that we just blabber words which do not make sense. The dramatic texts indicate that a *period of time* is involved with *various activities*. To be seated on a

horse indicates that Jesus comes as a General, overcoming something—he will judge Babylon and tear down the system. To come seated on a white cloud with a sharp sickle in his hand means he is doing a Harvest work as the Chief Reaper (Rev. 14:14). To be seated on the right hand of the power of God means that he comes with dictatorial power and authority—with an iron rod (Rev. 2:27). He will brook no interference. His word will be law, and every knee will have to bow to him (Rom. 14:11).

On the other hand, some Scriptures show that Jesus comes secretly as a thief (1 Thess. 5:2; Rev. 3:3). Does a thief blow a trumpet to announce his coming? No! A thief comes stealthily, quietly, unobtrusively. He gets into the house unawares. In other words, Jesus' initial coming and period of presence are not with outward observation or show. He said no one would be able to point him out geographically and say, "Lo, he is here" or "Lo, he is there" (Matt. 24:23,26). In fact, if any should say he is in the desert or in the secret chambers (in a seance, for example), we are to "*believe it not.*" In John 14:19 he said, "Yet a little while, and the world *seeth me no more.*"

In Galatians 1:8 the Apostle Paul said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven [come down and], preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached ... let him be accursed." He was warning that if an angel came down from heaven and appeared as Christ, the appearance would be a deception. Jesus would not be literally seen or geographically located. And yet Revelation 1:7 says that "every eye shall see him." On the surface these statements are contradictory, so they must be harmonized.

On the one hand, multiple Scriptures say Jesus comes at his Second Advent secretly, as a thief, quietly, unobtrusively. On the other hand, a number of texts are dramatic. To harmonize the two, one set has to be spiritual or symbolic, and the other more along the line of literal or figurative statements. The point is that Jesus' presence is not known except by a few. He is a spirit being, and humans cannot see spirit beings unless the Lord wants them to. Satan is the god of this world, but where is he? We see his fruitage, his power, his character in the depravity of earth's society and mankind, but we do not see him personally.

Comment: Several Scriptures about Jesus' Second Coming are found in the Book of Revelation, which is a book of *symbols*. Also, the Apostle Paul wrote the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians to straighten out a misunderstanding on this subject.

Reply: Yes, we will come to that point. The subject of the manner of the Second Advent can be approached three different ways. Two require too much time. The approach alluded to in Second Thessalonians is the simplest and shortest approach, and the one we will pursue. The Thessalonian brethren understood that Paul's words were not literal when he said, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." Proof that their understanding was correct is in the next chapter: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:1,2). This text was not to be understood in a visual sense but with the spiritual perception that Christ would manifest his presence at the Second Advent in various ways in a symbolic fashion. His presence would be known by the events that take place as signs. If Jesus' presence were visible, signs would not be needed. Moreover, if the Lord tells us to watch and pray lest that day come upon us unawares and then he comes visually, what would be the point? Would we see him a second earlier than the world?—for if we saw him literally, so would the world. Then the instruction would lack validity because it would merely mean that Christians perceive Jesus' Second Advent a few seconds earlier than when every eye sees him. Such reasoning does not make sense. Therefore, each Scripture and symbol on this subject must be considered separately and in its place. That way all of the texts can be beautifully and completely harmonized.

The text already alluded to in the second epistle is as follows: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:1–3). Paul took many verses to explain not only the mysterious “man of sin” but also events that must precede the Second *Presence* of Christ, not his second *arrival*. The nominal systems try to take all of these Scriptures and give them a fulfillment at the moment of Jesus’ arrival, whereas it is a *period* of presence.

The meaning of the phrase “at hand” in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 becomes very critical. The Greek word *enistemi* is used seven times in the New Testament. In five of the seven times, the word is correctly and incontrovertibly translated “present.” Of the two times the word is not so translated, one of them is here (“at hand”), and the other is in 2 Timothy 3:1 (“come”): “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall *come* [i.e., be present].” In other words, *enistemi* means “to be present, to be here.” The five instances the word is translated “present” are as follows:

1. “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things *present*, or things to come” (1 Cor. 3:22).
2. “I suppose therefore that this is good for the *present* distress” (1 Cor. 7:26).
3. “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things *present*, nor things to come” (Rom. 8:38).
4. “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this *present* evil world” (Gal. 1:4).
5. “Which was a figure for the time then *present*” (Heb. 9:9).

Believing in *literal* signs and a *literal* coming put such a cap on the minds of the translators of the King James that they used “at hand” (2 Thess. 2:2)—even though they had to know the Greek word means “present.” The translators were thinking of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 about the Lord’s coming with a shout, a voice, and a trump. Paul was saying, “I do not want you to be shaken in mind or troubled in spirit to think that the day of Christ is present.” In other words, the Day of Christ was *not present*. If the signs were literal, Paul would not have to tell us to wait for a man of sin. If Jesus were to come literally, in a *visual* sense, that would end all arguments. To the question “If he is present, where is he?” the reply would be, “Just look up in the sky.” But Paul did not use that line of reasoning. Instead he went into a long explanation in 2 Thessalonians 2 that the man of sin would come first but that the coming would not be in their day because of an obstruction. Therefore, the coming of the man of sin was down the corridor of time, and when it did occur, certain things would happen. And after that, the secret presence of Christ would come.

What “shout” did the Lord descend with in 1874? The Pastor took Matthew 24:45–47, Daniel 12:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, and at least one other text and gave them all a past application, whereas actually each text is referring to the *same period of time* but to a *different event within that period*. For instance, Daniel 12:1 says, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people,” but Michael’s standing up is an event yet future. However, Matthew 24:45–47 tells us that at the Second Advent, the Lord would use a servant to administer food to the household of faith, and that event has already happened down here at the end of the age. “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.” The point is that an end-time *period* is being discussed, and different events take place in that period of time. The Pastor taught that all of these events occurred in 1874 or 1878, but such an interpretation does not fit.

Back to the question about the “shout” (Greek *keleusma*) of encouragement: What happened in 1874 and 1878?

Comment: To help determine what the “shout” is, we should realize that the word “with” is an improper translation. The word should be “during.” Otherwise, the King James sounds as if Jesus is the one who shouts. Jesus comes *during* a “shout.”

Reply: Yes, he comes *during* a shout but *with* the voice of an archangel, so we have to address each point separately.

Daniel 12:12 says, “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.” The 1,335 days (years) began with 539 and ended in 1874, at which time a lot of remarkable things happened. Consider all of the inventions and laborsaving devices. While the Bible societies started to publish the Word of God and make it accessible to the public after the French Revolution (in 1801, 1802, etc., depending on which country), they did not get their circulation going until around 1874. And of course the blessings of present truth became available shortly after 1874, an example being the truth about hell. The list goes on and on of things that helped mankind from the burden and drudgery of history. The automobile, too, began about that time. The inventions and technology that will be used in the Kingdom Age are being developed now. The Internet is an example. At present the Internet is overwhelming because of the volume of information, but in the Kingdom, the truth will be available through that means. For instance, when someone speaks in Jerusalem, the whole world will be able to tune in on the Internet.

The Thessalonians knew that Jesus’ return and presence would be invisible. The blessing is that when he came in 1874, things began to change in the earth with many, many improvements, which are collectively referred to as “a shout.”

Now let us consider the seventh trump. Of the seven trumpets, the last was called, in a special sense, “the trump of God” because during that trump many events take place. The seventh trumpet actually blows for a thousand years. At first only the Lord’s people are aware of the connection between the events and the Lord’s presence, but it will soon be manifested to all.

Comment: 1 Corinthians 15:52 ties in the last (or seventh) trump with the end time. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Reply: Yes, that verse is related, but the critical part is that the dead in Christ shall be raised *first*, and then follows a period of time. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:16,17). The churches erroneously teach that both events happen simultaneously—that the dead in Christ in the grave are raised first and a second or two later the living are caught up. Revelation 14:13 shows that after the initial raising of the dead in Christ, *individual* faithful Christians who die in the interim will receive an instantaneous change. “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Then, at the very end of the age, when the time comes for the Church to be complete, a group will go in the invisible spiritual rapture. A time period is involved. The order is (1) the saints in the grave were raised in 1878, the beginning of the Harvest; (2) down through the Harvest, individual saints have been receiving their change as they die; and (3) a group of feet members will go at the end of the age, as shown by the John the Baptist and Elijah pictures.

Comment: In verse 17, the word “together” means “at the same time” and “to the same place” in regard to the feet members at the end of the age.

Reply: Even though, technically speaking, the last members do go in an instant, as Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:52, the main point in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is that the dead in Christ will be raised invisibly to earth’s atmosphere where our present returned Lord is.

Comment: That reasoning fits so beautifully with Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 15:38 that the Lord gives the soul a body as it pleases Him. “God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” Then Paul talked about spirit bodies and earthly bodies. For those who are faithful to their covenant of sacrifice, a spirit body is given.

The “shout” of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is a shout of *encouragement*. Newspapers of the past contained such words in their titles as “clarion,” “herald,” “trumpet.” A “herald” implies horns, or trumpets. In other words, a newspaper is a shout, a declaration; the news is likened to a trumpet, a clarion. Therefore, present truth was part of the news of that day. The good news was that the gospel message was clarified at the beginning of the Harvest, but even in the world, there were blessings: inventions, laborsaving devices, unions (initially they served a purpose), etc.

When the feet members are caught up to meet Jesus in the air, the entire Church will go with their Lord, as a group, to meet the Father. When the dead in Christ are raised, they see Jesus first, and he says to them, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21). When the feet members are raised from death as a group in the near future, there will be some kind of ceremony during which they will all be told, “Well done, good and faithful servants [plural].” Then each of the feet members will be taken aside personally for a private conversation with Jesus. And who will introduce the entire Church to the Father? Jesus. He will be proud to do this. It will be his joy and his privilege to introduce the Church to his Father. Jesus will also introduce the Church to the angels. After that will come the marriage of the Lamb. The marriage supper follows, and then comes the reign.

1 Thess. 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The Thessalonians were not supposed to understand verses 16 and 17 in depth. When Paul said, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words,” he was telling them that the dead in Christ would not lose out, for they *would have a resurrection*.

For verse 18 to make sense and to truly be of comfort, verses 16 and 17 would have to be encouragement and good news. In other words, the “shout” is not one of destruction (it is not the fall of Babylon, etc.). Rather, the setting is good news that covers a period of time, starting with Christ’s presence and the dead in Christ who were raised in 1878, continuing with the living in Christ who die in the interim, and including, finally, the last group picture of the feet members.

Comment: Verses 1 and 2 of the next chapter confirm the fact that the Thessalonians understood Jesus’ initial presence to be thief-like and secret.

Reply: The Apostle Paul must have given many discourses in the short time he was with the Thessalonians in order for them to know “*perfectly* that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2).

In summary, this fourth chapter is using *figurative* expressions about the manner of our Lord’s Second Advent. However, as we will see in the next chapter, the Thessalonians misunderstood

and thought Paul was hinting that the Lord had already returned as a thief. They did not misunderstand verses 16 and 17 of this chapter, but they misunderstood what Paul was saying in 1 Thessalonians 5:4, “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”

Comment: Romans 8:17 reads, “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together [as a group].” In *Strong’s Concordance*, the word “together” means “to exalt to dignity in company.”

Reply: Yes, the glory phase will occur with the introduction to the Father.

1 Thess. 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

We will find subsequently that verses 1–4 were misconstrued by some of the brethren in Thessalonica. They thought Paul was hinting that the brethren were not in darkness because the day had already come. In studying the previous chapter, we used verses 1 and 2 of this chapter to prove that the Lord’s descent from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, as well as the dead in Christ rising first, are all figurative language. The brethren were not in darkness concerning the significance of those terms, but now, in this chapter, when Paul said the Day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night, they mistakenly thought he was hinting that Jesus was mysteriously present at that time.

Verse 1 is a startling statement, for it shows the Thessalonian brethren were quite advanced in understanding the times and seasons of the plan of God. Earlier chapters referred repeatedly to the *parousia*, and the brethren were enthused with the hope of the Second Advent of Christ and the reward for the suffering they were enduring for his sake.

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

They also knew “perfectly that the day of the Lord [the Second Advent] so cometh as a thief in the night.” They were correct in their understanding of that subject, but they had to be taught that it would occur at a later date.

1 Thess. 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

This verse has been misunderstood. First, who are the “they” and the “them”? The pronouns refer to the nominal system. Daniel 2:43, pertaining to the smiting of the image, also uses “they” for the nominal system. “And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, *they* shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but *they* shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” The clay portion of the image pictures the nominal system. Very often the pronouns “we” and “they” are used in connection with chronological applications, the “we” referring to true Christians. Here the two pronouns are “ye” and “they” to show the contrast between the truly consecrated and the nominal system, respectively.

When will the nominal system say, “Peace and safety”? That will be their message when they are united in the hour of power. The type of Belshazzar’s Feast portrays this setting. The Babylonians knew they were being besieged, but they had a false sense of security. Being well stocked with food and having broad protective walls, they were confident they could hold out. They never dreamed that Cyrus would enter the city under the walls by diverting the river Euphrates.

“Peace and safety” is a theme that is sometimes used in emergencies. It is felt that a united front produces security, as indicated by two common sayings: “United we stand; divided we fall” and “There is safety in numbers.”

The very fact the nominal systems will say “Peace and safety” suggests there will be a threat—they will be under siege, as it were—but they will feel confident. Isaiah 8:11–13 admonishes, “For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” When the froglike spirit comes out of the mouth of the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet systems, the message will be, “Cooperate with us.”

The nation of Israel will also experience a false peace and sense of security when they are dwelling with unwallled villages with increased cattle and goods (Ezek. 38:11,12). In other words, the nominal people of fleshly Israel will be in a relatively defenseless mode and yet be confident because of a previous experience.

“Then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” The term “*sudden* destruction” pertains to the fall of Babylon. “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her” (Rev. 18:8). (Note: These three plagues are not the same as the seven plagues of Revelation 16.) Notice that “death” occurs first and that “mourning” and “famine” are aftereffects of the death. Another sudden picture is the smiting of the image in Daniel 2. The Hebrew has the thought of “in an *instant*.” The *entire* image—not only the clay and iron feet but all of the other component parts as well—will be destroyed suddenly, at once, as a result of the impact of the stone. In addition, the Flood came suddenly in Noah’s day, and the Flood is a picture of the Time of Trouble at the end of the age.

The Scriptures seem to indicate that the period of trouble will last for about 3 1/2 years, which is “sudden,” occurring in an instant, when compared with the thousands of years in the pages of history. A time factor is denoted by the stone’s smiting the image on its *feet*, i.e., at the end of the age. The feet were composed of iron and clay—materials that do not adhere well to each other, especially if the miry clay becomes dried, as was the implication in the picture. In other words, there will be an inherent weakness in the coming Church-State union. While Daniel 2 shows the whole image being destroyed, starting with the feet, other pictures provide more details to show that the destruction will not occur in a 24-hour day. The Book of Revelation, which pertains to religious instruction, shows that when the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone, the dragon will still exist. Other pictures as well show a sequence of time, even though the entire destruction will be “sudden.” The Jehu picture furnishes great detail, starting with the killing of the kings of Israel and Judah, who represent the political aspect of Catholicism and Protestantism, respectively (2 Kings 9 and 10). Who did the killing? Jehu. And who was Jehu? Although anointed earlier, he became the king of Israel (Europe in antitype) by murdering Jehoram and Ahaziah. After the kings were killed, Jehu caused Jezebel to be thrown out the window. Then Jehu went down the line with the killing: from antitypical cardinals, priests, etc., down to the worshippers themselves. Thus a time period, though short, was involved.

The Book of Revelation continues where the Jehu picture ends. The ten kings who rule for one hour will at first support the whore and then turn against her. “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.... And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and

shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire” (Rev. 17:12,13,16). In other words, Jehu represents the ten horns who *do not support* the whore and are instrumental in pulling down the system. Therefore, the Jehu account is a picture of the destruction of the nominal system, the fall of Babylon the great, and events related to that destruction.

Jehu will come into power and be instrumental in destroying the nominal system. Then, after a little time interval, the civil component will be dealt with, and the fall of statehood will mean a condition of anarchy. Jehu, a nonreligious system, will act with strength to demolish the religious system. Then will come the fall of civil governments. The climax of the destruction of the civil aspect is Jacob’s Trouble. While the nations are experiencing dire trouble, the last system that seems to be in order will be the nation of Israel: “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee [natural Israel], and his glory shall be seen upon thee” (Isa. 60:2). While the nations are in anarchy, Israel will feel secure in its own “peace and safety.” However, the confidence in the “cattle and goods” and “unwalled villages” will be a *false* confidence. Israel’s prosperity will be momentarily darkened, as it were, to give opportunity for the Lord’s glory to shine forth. The momentary darkness will occur when the hordes of Gog and Magog come down and threaten to wipe out Israel, but then God will deliver natural Israel through His own instrumentality: saviors (plural) who come from Mount Zion (Obadiah 21). The time period when Jerusalem is taken, the houses are rifled, the women are ravished, and half the city is taken into captivity will be very short, perhaps only a month (Zech. 14:2).

Remember, Satan is behind the dragon power, and he will attack this last vestige of authority in a final attempt to derail the establishment of God’s Kingdom down here. The Adversary wants his own kingdom on earth, but God will frustrate his purpose and deliver Jacob out of trouble. At that time there will be no head of gold, etc.—the image will have fallen—even though some of the nations will still exist by name. For instance, the change of the name Persia to Iran was relatively recent under the Shah. Babylon is represented today by Iraq, and Saddam Hussein likes to think of himself as Nebuchadnezzar the Second. He was trying to rebuild the city of Babylon, but first the war with Iran and then the embargo placed on the country have halted the rebuilding effort. Therefore, Iraq, Iran, Greece, and Rome will all fall. In the interim period starting with the fall of Babylon and extending to the deliverance of the Holy Remnant from Jacob’s Trouble, the entire image will be smashed, and the stone will replace it and grow and grow until it fills the whole earth.

Verse 3, then, is referring to the first phase of the sudden destruction, the destruction of the nominal system: “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” But notice that the sudden destruction will come “as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” For many years, talks were given that this “travail” was a *period* of labor. While it is true that “travail” does refer to a woman’s labor in childbirth and it consists of a *series of pains* that get *increasingly severe* until the actual birth takes place, the Greek word is in the *singular*. The *Diaglott* interlinear correctly has “*the birth pang*” (singular). Therefore, the word refers to the *last pain* that immediately precedes the birth. Verse 3 should read, “Then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as *the birth pang* comes upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” This corrected translation harmonizes with the thought of sudden destruction, namely, a single pain and only a very short period of time. Others have taught that this period is 40 years long, 50 years, 60 years, etc. Since we are living in 1998, to believe that the image was smitten in 1914—and thus to believe that the period of travail began there—would mean the destruction covers, at the very least, a period of 84 years, which is not a short or sudden destruction. On the contrary, we see the smiting of the image as a future event that covers a very short period of time of three years or so. Verse 3 is packed with information, and all of the terms need to be identified.

1 Thess. 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

The Apostle Paul imparted a lot of knowledge to the Thessalonian brethren, but nothing compares to what is available here at the end of the age. They knew nothing about the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, for example. The Book of Revelation had not even been written at the time Paul penned these epistles, and John was not banished to the Isle of Patmos until years later. Surely Paul did not discuss Hazael, Jehu, and other end-of-the-age pictures with the Thessalonians. He was telling them that with the persecutions they were receiving, they should just hold on, for God was not unfaithful to recognize their suffering. Moreover, when the Second Advent would come, they would then be honored for their steadfastness. That was the gist of his message of comfort and exhortation. They misconstrued that message to mean that the Second Advent was then occurring.

1 Thess. 5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

The pronouns in the next several verses are interesting and significant: *ye*, *we*, and *us* are contrasted with *they*. All profess faith, but the “we” class are of the true Christian faith and the “they” class are not. “Ye are all the children of light, and ... of the day: ... not of the night, nor of darkness.”

1 Thess. 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

The Thessalonians erroneously thought Paul was hinting that they should be awake because the Day of the Lord had already come. Because they understood that Jesus would come silently as a thief, that he would not be perceived with the natural senses, and that perception would come through the doctrinal understanding of events, it is easy to see how they would apply this added warning about being children of light to themselves in regard to the Second Advent. Despite the utmost care in stating matters, Paul was misunderstood (and this can happen to us too).

Some Bibles insert dates that the two epistles to the Thessalonians were written, and the date for *both* epistles is the year AD 54. The fact that Paul wrote both letters in the same year shows the urgency with which he had to correct their misunderstanding. When he realized that they had misconstrued his message, he responded *quickly* to straighten out the misconception.

1 Thess. 5:7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

The “sleep” reminds us of the Wise and Foolish Virgins Parable, which follows Matthew 24, the narration of what was to occur down through the Gospel Age and during the Second Advent with signs to watch for. Then comes the Parable of the Ten Virgins, in which all of the virgins slumbered and slept.

Paul emphasized the word “sleep.” In 1 Thessalonians 4:13,14 he talked about the sleep of death, which the Thessalonians also misunderstood. There are two distinct thoughts. (1) One pertains to the sleep of *death*—the dead saints were resurrected prior to the living ones at the end of the age. (2) Here in Chapter 5, the “they” class sleep in regard to the “day of the Lord.” This is a *spiritual* slumber of not hearkening to *prophetic* truths. But in misunderstanding, the Thessalonians wondered whether Paul was hinting that they were sleeping. “Is Paul exhorting us to wake up?” they wondered.

Being “drunken” ties in with Belshazzar’s Feast. The Babylonians were asleep regarding what was happening. They thought their strong walls were a cause for celebration.

Paul used striking logic and contrasts: night versus *day*, darkness versus *light*, sleep versus *watchfulness*, and drunkenness versus *soberness*.

1 Thess. 5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

Why is a “breastplate of faith and love” part of the Christian armor? A breastplate is close to the heart. Confidence in God and enlightenment based upon His Word are precious to the Lord’s people, *protecting* them. If the heart goes astray, the Christian cannot do battle. This verse is a reminder of Ephesians 6:11–17, which tells us to put on the *whole* armor of God so that (1) we may be able to withstand the wiles of Satan (2) in the evil day. The devil is *loose*, not bound, in the *evil day*. Special armor is being supplied in the Harvest period. God’s Word is the real armor, but the *Studies in the Scriptures* are an aid to understanding the significance of God’s Word. Having the armor is one thing, but putting it on and applying it to stand in the very end of the age is another thing. Paul gave a *dispensational* fulfillment, a fulfillment not just for the individual Christian down through the age but particularly as a *group* at the end of the age, for there will be an attack by the Adversary.

The “whole armour,” as stated in Ephesians, is as follows: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:13–17).

Both the Ephesians text and verse 8 mention the helmet and the breastplate. Here Paul said the helmet instills the “*hope of salvation*,” which is more than just an intellectual understanding of truth. It is a *real hope!* Both accounts bring in *faith, hope, and love*. Love is the culmination. Before one can have hope, he must have faith; then comes hope—and finally love.

The “breastplate of faith and love” in verse 8 is called the “breastplate of righteousness” in Ephesians 6:14. More than just the imputed robe of Christ’s righteousness, the Ephesians breastplate is the *application of the understanding of righteousness* in the Christian walk, which creates *strength of character*. Being close to the heart, the breastplate pertains to moral conduct and thinking, to *heartfelt desires to please God*. *Feeling and emotion* are involved. The ribs of the chest literally protect the heart and help to deflect blows, for the heart is very sensitive and can be easily pierced. The ribs are also protective armor for the lungs, which are very fragile. Thus the rib cage, which is built into the human anatomy, is like a breastplate.

Faith here (as opposed to natural faith) is an *exercised faith*, a *developed fruit of the spirit*, a *strong and living faith*. Faith, love, and righteousness should all be applied and developed by the Christian. We are told to *add to our faith virtue* (*developed righteousness, the application of righteous principles in daily living*), leading ultimately to Godlikeness, or love.

The opposite of faith is doubt, which Paul was trying to combat. God calls individuals not to destruction but to reward them with life, honor, and glory. Those of the Gospel Age who are *more than overcomers* will become kings and priests. Those who are overcomers will get life, security, and a spirit life. Paul wanted to encourage the brethren.

What does a helmet protect? The head, the brain. And what does the brain do? It thinks. Therefore, the helmet (or head) pertains to doctrinal *instruction*, theory, and knowledge, whereas the breastplate (or heart) pertains to the application of righteousness, making righteousness a part of our anatomy.

1 Thess. 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

We should always keep in mind that we have been uniquely blessed in that God called us. The blind world is in darkness, but we are in the light. Like the Thessalonians, we know about the times and the seasons. With present truth through the ministry of the Pastor, we have been blessed with information. Paul was saying in effect, “Knowing these things, you have remained in the truth and are faithful to it; you have not gone back into the nominal systems or the world; you are still soldiers of Christ.” His encouragement to the Thessalonians should be an encouragement to us.

We have been appointed to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. All others, by implication, are appointed to wrath, to the Time of Trouble. In the period of wrath and destruction that is coming, the world will be in trouble but not Second Death trouble. However, some of the consecrated, some professing Christians, will be in Second Death trouble, and the Great Company will experience trouble to awaken them to wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb. The latter will not feel the assurance that they have been faithful, but they will be assured that God still loves them when they are given the message of consolation: “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9). The Great Company will realize they have lived into the trouble not because of their faithfulness but because of their negligence. Thus there will be a sensation of displeasure in the Time of Trouble to a greater or lesser degree depending on the class. Paul urges the consecrated to be faithful so that they can live together with Jesus.

1 Thess. 5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

This verse can be understood two ways. From a pragmatic standpoint, whether we are alive and awake or whether we die, we should be comforted with the thought that God and Jesus are for us. However, the fact that Paul put the “wake or sleep” together signifies something else. By reading the epistles in one sitting rather than going verse by verse, we would get the tie-in immediately. Paul was referring to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, “Then we which are *alive and remain* [we who are alive and awake at the Second Advent, we who are living during the *parousia*] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” Paul was saying that whether one is of those who are alive and awake at the time of the *parousia* (not at the time Paul wrote the epistle) or whether one was of those who would die and sleep in Christ to be awakened from death in 1878, “we should live together with him.” In other words, these words of comfort were meant to be a blessing to the *whole* Church—not just to the Thessalonians but to us now as well.

Jesus died so that whether brethren slept in death in him or remained until his presence, the hope is to be “together” (in *place*) with him. The Greek word *hama* can mean place and/or time depending on context. In 1 Thessalonians 4:17, it means both.

We should have a *personalized* love for Jesus. We wait for the “Son from heaven” so that we may “live together with *him*” (compare 1 Thess. 1:10). The Thessalonians had a great desire to be with the Master, who had died just a few years before. Now, 2,000 years later, we should

have that same burning desire.

1 Thess. 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

This verse sounds like the last verse of Chapter 4: “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” Paul was saying, “Be *faithful* so that whether you sleep in death or remain alive to the return of Christ, you will live with him.” Actually Paul knew that all of the Thessalonians would sleep, but he used words in such a way that he was not committed, for there were things not lawful for him to utter. The value of his carefulness in choosing words makes these epistles pertinent to us too, for some of us will be alive when Jesus comes to take the feet members to the marriage.

Not only were the Thessalonians to comfort one another, but they were to *continue* to edify each other as family. They were very zealous and courageous despite the persecutions they received, and their reputation spread *quickly* throughout other areas. Paul was thrilled with their condition up to this point.

When Paul criticized the Thessalonians, he always added a constructive aspect. Within the ecclesia some were contentious. Others had problems living with one another in the truth. The Thessalonians were fighting these tendencies and trying to live in harmony, so Paul was urging them to keep up the good work. Otherwise, in time they would give up and allow the ecclesia to fall apart. The wrong attitude would be, “I will live in isolation if I have to.” However, if isolation happens through no fault of our own, that is another matter. We should not try to be separatists and isolate ourselves, but occasionally circumstances force some to do so. The general rule is to bear with one another and to try to continually grow in grace, truth, and knowledge. We must not let the Adversary distract us.

1 Thess. 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

1 Thess. 5:13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

Verses 12 and 13 pertain to elders in both office and experience and to veterans in the truth, who have stayed in the narrow way for many years. They should be recognized in proportion to their faithfulness. The Thessalonians were also being instructed to recognize Timothy and Silas as Paul’s helpers. These two were superior to the Thessalonian elders, for they had been longer in the way. Timothy and Silas labored among them, helping and admonishing. Hence they were to be esteemed “very highly in love for their work’s sake.”

We are reminded of when Jesus said, “If you do not believe in me, at least believe in my works.” This was practical advice. Those who found fault with his teaching because it was different from the Mosaic Law should have observed his character. Jesus was wholly dedicated to doing God’s will. He left his profession as a carpenter; traveled from place to place; frequently slept on the ground; healed the blind, the lame, and the sick; was considerate; etc. All of these things should have made the people listen before they judged. A person should at least be given a hearing. A fool “answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Prov. 18:13). Therefore, brethren should respect one another in regard to service in the truth.

Paul instructed them to “be at peace” among themselves for the following reason. When doctrinal differences arise, brethren who have certain understanding and are very zealous tend

to be less calm and less reconciled to those differences than brethren who are not as exuberant and positive. If brethren are not disciplined, the same zeal and spirit that led to their faithfulness and boldness in declaring the gospel to the public could tear apart the ecclesia. Therefore, special counsel was needed to the effect that Christ died for *all* of them.

The theme of being at peace among themselves was mentioned often. Paul did not want the Thessalonians to destroy each other. However, to be at peace does not mean to compromise principle. In most cases, we can maintain personal integrity and still be patient, forbearing one another. Only when something that is contrary to the Scriptures is condoned by a group do we have to take a stand. For example, being permissive in regard to adultery and fornication must not be tolerated, for the Scriptures say, "Let it not be once named among you" (Eph. 5:3). Other matters may be important to us as individuals, but we have to weigh that importance before we go at one another.

Q: With those who feel very strongly about their understanding of Scripture and cannot see it our way, and vice versa, it is better to have separate ecclesias. We recognize that they are striving to be faithful, but to meet regularly in an atmosphere of continual difference of opinion is not conducive to spirituality. Wouldn't it be advisable to speak our piece and then try to find another ecclesia?

A: Yes, we should meet where we do not feel spiritually inhibited or where our conscience is not constantly impinged upon by a strong leader with whom we do not agree. However, in many cases we can just express, "I have difficulty seeing it that way," but if the difference is made an issue and our relationship with the Lord is held in question, then we should look elsewhere for brethren to meet with. We have often said that if we found a better place, we would go there, even though we are usually leading the meeting here. We should go where we spiritually prosper.

Comment: If we leave an ecclesia for spiritual reasons, it is important to leave with a proper attitude, for we are all brethren. Such experiences are for our growth. The fact that the Pastor wrote two different ways on certain issues is for our character development.

Reply: Yes, we cannot feed on garbage and discontent but must think positive as new creatures. If we are always thinking on criticism instead of trying to understand truth more, if we are in the critical mode all the time, then we are feeding on thorns and thistles instead of vegetables, lilies, and the good things that are necessary for building up one another. Taking a stand has its place, but we do not do that every day. Our objective is to come to the full stature of a man (or woman) in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:13). There is always room for improvement, and that is what we should be looking for in ourselves.

1 Thess. 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

In verse 13 Paul said to "be at peace among yourselves," but now he told us to "warn them that are unruly [disorderly]," which would be taking a strong attitude. In some classes, an individual is disorderly or boisterously out of order right in the meeting, especially if the study is conducted by a brother who is very weak. For instance, a brother may have certain ideas or a gripe that he wants to introduce into the study or thinking at every meeting. Such attitudes and actions are disruptive. Grievances should be considered, but we cannot grow if we feed on them continually and have a continual diet of thorns and thistles.

Here, then, in verse 14 are two different, or opposite, types of behavior: warning those who are unruly and yet, on the other hand, comforting those who are feeble. Paul was saying, in

effect, that to the strong we must be strong, and to the weak we should be weak (that is, lenient and considerate). We are to meet strength with strength, and weakness with weakness. We cannot deal gently with those who are continually aggressive, with those who are aggressive by nature, or we will get nowhere. In fact, the unruly take advantage of gentleness. Therefore, Paul said, “Unto the Jews I became as a Jew” (1 Cor. 9:20). In other words, he confronted the Jews as much as possible.

“Support the weak, be patient toward all.” We are instructed to be patient toward all, toward the strong as well as the weak. But how are we patient with the strong? Although we should meet strength with strength and warn the unruly, we should not throw them out right away but must have forbearance. However, if the situation becomes intolerable, one of two things should happen: either the unruly party must leave, or we must leave. Otherwise, we cannot grow, so a change becomes necessary. Patience should be exercised toward the strong until we see over a period of time that unruliness is their character. Some individuals are very aggressive and think they are defending truth, but if they act this way time after time, something must be done, i.e., separation.

Sisters have an additional problem or disadvantage when they are in the right because they cannot be elders. As Paul said, “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:12). The Pastor suggested that sisters use the question method, which is a gentle method, but if they get nowhere with that approach, they should meet elsewhere for their spiritual growth and development.

Other examples of unruliness would be sponging or being too blunt or coarse in dealings with the brethren. The unruly elements should be cautioned, in love, to exercise moderation.

This exhortation on the responsibility to warn, comfort, support, and be patient is for *all* of the brethren, not just the elders. It is a communal responsibility of one toward another. If a wrong tendency is nipped in the bud (*early*), the wound will be less severe to heal.

“Comfort the feebleminded” is a very consoling text regarding those who do not have the capacity for intellectual development that others have. Brethren should be recognized *up to the level of their capacity*. Faithfulness to God and our consecration vows, faithfully following the teachings of Christ, and being humble are requirements for all, but sometimes an individual is not required to attain a certain *degree* of development. Paul’s admonition implies that some in the body of Christ will not be as advanced in doctrinal understanding as others. On the other hand, some very advanced in doctrinal understanding may not be in the body because of not properly exercising themselves. God does not call morons, however, so there must be *some* capacity for reasoning. Despondency is an example of feebleness. There are different degrees of responsibility.

“Support the weak.” We are to support those who are weak in faith, those who are spiritually weak. An example of “weakness” is thinking one cannot eat certain foods for *conscience*’ sake. Conscience and faith are closely allied. It takes time to put on the helmet of the hope of salvation and the breastplate of faith and love. Some can do this more quickly than others.

“Be patient toward all.” Paul was a marvelous character. Earlier in this epistle, he likened himself to a nursing mother and to a father. His tender disposition can be seen. Those who are bold and zealous may find fault with others less developed and seemingly less courageous, but the deficiency should be analyzed. If it has to do with feeble-mindedness or being spiritually weak, those brethren should be comforted and supported. If their desire is to do the Lord’s will, that should be recognized and nurtured as much as possible. They should not just be brushed aside. Also, allowances must be made for babes in Christ—and even for differences in

babes. Some progress more slowly than others, and we should exercise patience with these and not put a certain level of expected development on them. There are differences in temperament and background.

Having patience applies to both the strong and the weak. Patience has to be exercised both ways, but aggressiveness should not get out of hand. The feeble-minded have to be comforted, and the too aggressive have to be curbed. That is the responsibility of the class, one to another.

1 Thess. 5:15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

This is a problem with the flesh. If we get in an argument and the other party speaks evil, the tendency is to speak evil in return. Especially in this contentious mode, one must be extremely cautious not to get caught up in the contention himself. The Adversary would love to sidetrack energy by having brethren render evil for evil against each other. On rare occasions a strong expression, such as a curse or a derogatory statement, has been uttered right in the meeting. There was even an occasion where one brother slapped another—the flesh took over as in the world. Paul was not talking about a “mosquito bite” that we scratch, but if someone hits us with a blow, we should not turn around and retaliate in the flesh but should turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39). On the other hand, we should not let another brother walk all over us. The point is to try to exercise restraint and patience, but patience does have its limits, or bounds. We should be cautious and patient and not too impulsive. We should think before we act.

“Ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.” In verse 14, the supplied word “men” is probably not the correct thought, but here in verse 15, it seems to be proper.

Verses 16–22 give important advice in capsule form.

1 Thess. 5:16 Rejoice evermore.

There are many good things to feed and grow on in the truth. Rejoicing should be our normal attitude. “God is love”; that is, His disposition or character, generally speaking, is very loving, patient, and benevolent (1 John 4:8). Of course He can get angry, but anger is not His normal attitude. The Christian, too, should be gentle, kind, and patient but not have a puttylike disposition without backbone. The apostle was giving advice for the normal behavior of a Christian. Circumstances in which we do not exercise “normal” behavior should be thought out and not impulsively acted upon.

1 Thess. 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

The thought is to *continue* to rejoice and to *keep on* praying. We should not cease either one. To “pray without ceasing” is an attitude or bent of mind, for we do not literally pray every instant.

1 Thess. 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

“In every thing give thanks.” The thought is to be amenable to providence, for not all experiences are pleasant. The Morning Resolve contains the thought “I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord’s providence may permit, because ‘faith can firmly trust Him, come what may.’” For example, without this admonition Christians might not give thanks for their persecutions, especially over a long period of time.

“For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” We are reminded of the text “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). In verse 18 Paul was referring to the fact that the persecuting experiences were permitted by God for the ultimate good of the Thessalonian brethren. Therefore, they were to receive them thankfully, for “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). There is an added blessing if we receive the experiences thankfully and are exercised properly.

1 Thess. 5:19 Quench not the Spirit.

We are not to quench the *Holy Spirit*, God’s Spirit, Jesus’ Spirit, but we must quench, moderate, and control an *unholy spirit*, or attitude (malice, for example). In a number of ways, we could extinguish or throw cold water on the Holy Spirit.

Comment: We could quench the Spirit through wrong moral conduct, through improper thought processes, or in any way that we allow the flesh to take over.

Let us consider some ways in which the Holy Spirit can be quenched either in ourselves or in others. We should be careful that neither happens.

1. In the midst of a spiritual discussion or when a noble thought is being expressed, to tell a joke or do something distracting that breaks the trend of thought or causes others to miss good advice is dangerous. In fact, one can lose his calling and election in one act on one occasion if that act is very offensive to God.
2. We should not allow ourselves to get into an evil environment but must make straight paths for our feet (Heb. 12:13). If we go into a smoke-filled room, the smoke will cling to our garments. Spiritually speaking, if we get into a bad environment, whether in the world or in the truth, it leaves an effect. The longer we stay in that environment, the longer the Holy Spirit is being quenched. The old man (or woman) in the mind is fighting the new creature. When we have to make a decision that is helpful to the Holy Spirit and our growth as a Christian, the flesh might say, “But you will have to give up something very pleasurable.” We should want to go wherever there is an environment that is constructive to the new creature, but the old mind fights us. For example, one might rationalize, “If I do such and such, I will lose my eldership.” Or a truth may be too strong for an occasion. The Book of Proverbs informs us that a fool tells all he knows. “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards” (Prov. 29:11). Just because we know a certain truth does not mean we should tell it. No, we must be judicious. Some truths are so powerful that uttering them under the wrong circumstance would lead others to consider us dangerous. We do not have to disclose everything we know, but at the same time, we want everyone to know. Therefore, a teacher’s motive and desire should be to want his students to know the truth as well as he does, but the teaching should be done judiciously. Similarly, the motive and desire of a true doctor is not money or fame but to make another person as healthy and whole as he is. Our motives and attitudes are very important.
3. Conscience should not be violated.
4. Excessive worldliness is harmful to the new creature, although there are times when we have to consider the rights of others.
5. Presumptive sinning quenches the Spirit.
6. Failing to live up to our covenant of sacrifice quenches the Spirit.

7. We should not quench a spontaneity of feeling moved to do something, such as giving a testimony or writing a letter to a brother or sister who is going through a trial. Suppression or procrastination of expressing a good thought or doing a good deed to help another can quench the Spirit and make our later effort less effective. If our mind is made up to do something, we should *do it*. Another example is getting a sudden thought in regard to helping a brother or sister. If we fail to follow through, we may be failing to help one who is going through a trial we are unaware of.

8. Failure to pay our vows is another area. If we say, “If I had such and such, I would do so-and-so to help another,” and then subsequently do get the such and such but fail to extend the help, we may be quenching the Spirit.

Some brethren have more energy and directness of thought than others. For example, some can sit and talk for hours and hours, but if doing so taxes the energy of another, the weaker one should be considered. In regard to lengthy discussions into the wee hours of the morning, it is good to reflect on just how much can be absorbed. Sometimes it is better to limit a discussion.

1 Thess. 5:20 Despise not prophesyings.

It is profitable to think of this verse in two ways: despise not *prophecy* and despise not *teachings*. Especially here in this epistle, which contains a lot about prophecy, that thought should be included in the admonition. “Despise not instruction” is another way of expressing this verse, and the instruction includes heeding times and things in season for the end time. We should be particularly interested in prophecy about the end of the age because of the day in which we are living.

We should not neglect study or hearing the thoughts of elders. Since those who are given to works might neglect study, there is a danger in putting too much emphasis on works. Enlightenment is needed too. We must be sure we are expending energy the way the *Lord* wants us to. We need to be *balanced*. Our feelings and activities have to be properly channeled.

1 Thess. 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

When a new thought is expressed and we see the circumstance and that the thought is worth considering, we should ask, “Is the thought in harmony with the Scriptures? Is it proper?” No teacher is perfect, so we must be discerning when a thought is not supported by Scripture. On the other hand, we should not dwell on one error (perhaps a garbled statement) made by a teacher. Some will damage another’s reputation because of just one statement that is uttered, and the speaker may not even be aware he made the statement. When a person speaks extemporaneously, unintentional words are bound to be expressed from time to time. Thus circumstances have to be considered.

Holding fast to that which is good gives us a more benevolent attitude toward our experiences in that we will not expect everything to be ideal and perfect. Where we see progress and get some instruction and benefit, we should be thankful. We can hold fast to the good and just not accept the other. In other words, we should hold fast *only to that which we can prove to be good*. Moreover, our proving and holding fast should be progressive throughout our Christian walk. We are not to blindly accept everything we hear. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [prove] the spirits [doctrines, teachings] whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

1 Thess. 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

The literal thought in the Greek may be to abstain from all *forms* of evil, but the word “appearance” covers both cases. If we abstain from the *appearance* of evil, then we are also abstaining from evil. We should avoid the appearance of evil *as far as is reasonably possible*, for sometimes it is not possible. For instance, a state auditor may be required to go into a saloon to check the books. If someone sees him exiting, that would appear to be evil, but he is just doing his job. A *general* rule is to stay away from any circumstance that could be misconstrued as evil, but there are exceptions. In other words, what about a circumstance that will appear evil, but you know it is not? In such a case, we should not refrain from the appearance of evil but go ahead and do what is right, even though it would wrongly be considered evil by others.

1 Thess. 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our attitude at the present time—that is, until death extinguishes our life—should be to try to preserve that life blameless as far as it is in our power to do so. To love the Lord our God with all our mind, soul, body, and strength is the proper attitude. If faithful, we will be given a different body in the resurrection. In the present life, we are to wash any spots we get on our imputed robe of righteousness. God does not look on us as human beings but as new creatures in Christ with our blemishes being covered. As Paul said, “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16). However, just as an open wound can bleed through material to the outside of a garment, so sin or evil can permeate and go through the robe of Christ’s righteousness to the outside where it is seen as a spot on the robe that covers the body of filth. The spot has to be washed and cleansed. Moreover, taking care of the spot means taking care of the body that produced the spot.

From another standpoint, this verse is a reference to the *whole* Church. The *spirit and body and soul* of the Church should be “preserved blameless unto the coming [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul was considering the Church as *one* body under their Head, and his hope and desire was for *all* of them to be faithful unto death. He hoped that the *spiritual* body and relationship would be preserved and transferred into the Kingdom. He was saying in effect, “O that *all* of us might be of the Bride! I hope to see *all* of you there at the presence of the Lord.” Although Paul was writing to the Thessalonian church, the same principle has applied all down the age, namely, that Jesus will have a mystical body and that the body will be preserved unto his presence and the transference of the members of the body to be with him.

1 Thess. 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

As was stated in verse 9, God’s motive is that we will “obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” God is faithful to us, so it remains for us to be faithful to Him.

1 Thess. 5:25 Brethren, pray for us.

1 Thess. 5:26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

A “holy kiss” is with those of the same sex: brother to brother and sister to sister. “Kiss” can mean “touch,” so especially with brothers, it would be cheek to cheek.

1 Thess. 5:27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

What did Paul mean by charging them to read the epistle to all of the *holy brethren*? If there were, say, 20 brethren in the class, the epistle could not be passed around to all of them, for

some could not read, some would keep it too long, and it might become damaged. Therefore, Paul meant that the elder (or elders) had a responsibility to read the epistle to all of the *consecrated*. The contents of the letter were not meant for just the brother to whom it was addressed but were to be made known to all of the brethren.

1 Thess. 5:28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1998—with notes interspersed from a 1981 study)

2 Thess. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Thess. 1:2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first epistle started with the same introduction, and it was from the same three disciples listed in the same order. In both epistles Paul gave thanks for the Thessalonian brethren (see verse 3).

Generally speaking, Paul's epistles are sequential in the Bible, but 1 and 2 Thessalonians are out of place, for they were written earlier, about AD 54. Moreover, the two epistles were received close together, with only about six months elapsing between them, because Paul wanted to correct a misunderstanding and misreading of the first epistle.

Comment: The short time between the two epistles makes the growth of the Thessalonians even more remarkable. In just six months, their growth was very pronounced.

2 Thess. 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

Despite their continuing persecutions, the Thessalonian brethren kept growing in faith and love toward one another. In fact, their faith grew "*exceedingly*." Probably their "love" grew in a practical or monetary way for each other's needs, as well as in their concern and brotherly love for one another. When persecutions occurred, as in the Dark Ages, houses and property were confiscated and jobs were lost, among other problems. Down through the Gospel Age, those in more fortunate circumstances helped those in less fortunate circumstances.

2 Thess. 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

Other ecclesias were aware of the severe persecutions that were taking place in Thessalonica at that time. The patience and the faith of the Thessalonian brethren were apparent in their persecutions.

Comment: Patience and faith go hand in glove. One does not exist without the other.

Reply: Yes, to endure the persecutions, they had to have both faith and patience. The Thessalonians were solidly committed to serve God; they were not wavering. However, that does not mean "once in the truth, always in the truth." In spite of their *present* situation, Paul was concerned.

2 Thess. 1:5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

2 Thess. 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

Persecutions are “a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God.” If a person is being severely persecuted and there is no just cause for that experience—if he is an innocent victim because of his loyalty to God’s Word—then if God punishes and inflicts judgment on the persecutors, He is a righteous God. But that raises another question, which we will have to address as we go along.

Comment: The Amplified reads, “This is positive proof of the just *and* right judgment of God to the end that you may be deemed deserving of His kingdom—a plain token of His fair verdict, [which designs] that you should be made *and* counted worthy of the kingdom of God—for the sake of which you are also suffering.”

Reply: The Amplified brings up an additional standpoint; namely, “if we suffer [with Christ], we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). That principle is similarly stated in Romans 8:17, “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” Therefore, if God rewards those who faithfully suffer, He is a just God. However, the battle must be fought to the *end* of one’s course. Paul was saying, “You are giving evidence that you are on the right path. I thank God that I can see the truth means something to you. If you *continue* on that path, you will inherit the Kingdom. You will be accounted worthy of Kingdom honors and will reign with Christ.”

God is righteous and just *both* ways: (1) in rewarding Christians for their faithfulness and (2) in recompensing judgment upon the persecutors. God manifests righteous judgment.

The persecution came primarily from Jews. “For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews” (1 Thess. 2:14).

2 Thess. 1:7 **And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,**

Comment: The Thessalonians were told to “rest” in faith, for God’s judgment would come in due time.

Reply: Probably there was some judgment back there too, but generally speaking, judgment will come at the end of the Gospel Age. Certain statements in this chapter indicate that some of the persecutors will not be alive for a future judgment because they were judged worthy of Second Death in the present life.

Two types of Jews caused problems: (1) Some who came into the meetings as fellow Jews were not really consecrated and, in fact, proved to be enemies. (2) Others who came into the meetings were true Jews who did make a full consecration but subsequently turned against the truth. Paul addressed this second class as deserving a Second Death judgment. The first element will be judged in the Kingdom. The very fact they will have a resurrection shows they did not sin unto Second Death. In succeeding verses, Paul was also speaking prophetically, indicating that something along this line would happen in our day; that is, he used the experience of the Thessalonian brethren to ominously imply that a somewhat similar development would occur in the Truth movement at the end of the age.

Comment: Acts 17:5,6 provides background information for conditions in Thessalonica. “But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world

upside down are come hither also.”

Some will not have a resurrection because they deflected from the truth, but others—“lewd fellows of the baser sort”—will come forth in the Kingdom, for they “believed not.” In many of the epistles, we see two kinds of Jews who infiltrated the movement. Many Christian Jews were sincere, real believers, but because of their past training, other Jews tried to manipulate them and get them to obey the Law of Moses, as well as the law of Christ. The claim was that the Law had to be obeyed because faith was not sufficient. Some succumbed to this line of reasoning; others did not. The Thessalonians were a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles.

The Jews, being mercantilists by nature, were good sellers, so they tended to live in the cities. As a result, there were synagogues in most of the important cities of Asia Minor and also in Greece.

When will “the Lord Jesus ... be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels”? That will occur when the Church is complete and after the marriage. This text refers to the *epiphania* and the *apokalupsis*, which are the future aspect of the *parousia*, the time when the world is apprised of the fact that a radical change has taken place in earth’s affairs. The world will then realize that a new government has taken control. Instead of Satan being the “god of this world,” Jesus Christ will be the ruler (2 Cor. 4:4; Isa. 9:6,7). Certain events will make manifest that a new power has come.

The *parousia*, which began in 1874, is a 1,000-year presence that will continue throughout the Kingdom—it is the base—but the initial period of the *parousia* is a secret. During that phase the world is unaware of Jesus’ Second Presence. The second and third phases of the *parousia*, which are the *epiphania* and the *apokalupsis*, are a *manifestation* of that presence.

Comment: Regarding Jesus’ being revealed from heaven “with his mighty angels,” the *Diaglott* interlinear has “with messengers of power of himself,” that is, with the glorified Church, who will have divine power. Therefore, the time for this revealment is after the Church is complete.

2 Thess. 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

We can easily see how many have taken this verse literally, but when harmonized with other Scriptures, it is clearly recognized as figurative. A number of other texts also use “fire” in a figurative sense. However, although figurative, the fire will be realistic in a sense—it is just not physical.

2 Thess. 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

This verse is obviously referring to Second Death, even though the Greek word *aionian* is used. “Age-lasting” means a predetermined period of time, but that time period varies according to context. For example, it can mean a thousand years or an eternity. Sometimes, but not always, the word is repeated (*aionian aionian*) in order to emphasize the eternal aspect.

In regard to those who went into Second Death back there, when will their fate be known? It will be apparent when they are not raised from death in the Kingdom. But what about reputable individuals and leaders who *appeared* to be right but were not right from God’s standpoint? Will the reason for their judgment be revealed? Yes, there will be some revelation in the Kingdom as to *why* certain individuals do not get a resurrection. And with regard to other well-known persons who are raised from death in the Kingdom Age but are given

judgments, the world will be apprised as to why they are not recognized with honors at that time.

Let us consider the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. Both classes in the parable are true spiritual virgins, yet Jesus said of the foolish, “I know you not” (Matt. 25:12). It will be revealed in the future as to *why* the foolish virgins were not recognized as part of the Bride of Christ. The same is true of the Second Death class. The *reason* will be made apparent in cases where people might question God’s judgment. In other words, those who were influential in the present life became historic figures in the time in which they lived, and it will be made manifest in the Kingdom whether they were right or wrong according to *God’s* principles. Evidently, God is sensitive on these matters, and thus He wants to show His intelligent creation His love, His justice, His power, and His wisdom. While He has the right and the prerogative to do as He pleases and is not required to give explanations, He condescends and will be pleased to show why He approves certain individuals and disapproves others.

2 Thess. 1:10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

“To be glorified in his saints” means that the saints’ lives will be made public, at least to the extent of showing why they are kings and priests. Otherwise, how could the world admire those they did not know at all? Why God selected and honored certain members of the human race to be associated with Christ and reign with him in the Kingdom will be made known. A brief public exposition will be given in regard to each of the 144,000.

Additional Thoughts on 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10, as Presented in the 1981 Study

2 Thess. 1:5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

How are the persecutions “a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God”? The reward of being of the Bride of Christ is *so high*—with its attendant glory, honor, and *immortality*—that it is only right for us to be *thoroughly tested*. Even Jesus had to be tried before receiving immortality. Therefore, if we *suffer* with Christ, we shall reign with him. There is no injustice on God’s part when He severely tests us. The danger to the Thessalonians was that under long-term persecution, some might think the persecutions were punishment for wrongdoing. However, persecution can come from *right* doing, from living a *proper* Christian life. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Persecution should not discourage us, for this was part of the terms of our consecration, that is, to suffer for Christ and walk the *narrow* way of sacrifice. At consecration we knew we were taking up our *cross* to follow Jesus.

2 Thess. 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

It is “righteous ... [for] God to recompense tribulation” to those who trouble the true Christian. Not only is God just in allowing the sufferings of the Christian, but in due time He will inflict justice on those who cause the persecution. God is just in dealing with both classes, but the “vengeance is mine; I will repay” aspect is delayed (Rom. 12:19).

2 Thess. 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

2 Thess. 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not

the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Thess. 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

2 Thess. 1:10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

God is just and will inflict righteous judgment on the world in due time, but He is not delaying the enactment of justice on the Church, for they must make their calling and election sure in the present life—and progressively from beginning to end. Thus Paul was saying, “Be patient. God will take care of the persecutors. Rest with us in this matter.” Then Paul revealed when part of the retribution would come: “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed [*apokalupsis*] from heaven with his mighty angels.”

Jesus and his mighty angels will take “vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The “Man of Sin” chapter in the *Second Volume* covers this text from the standpoint of two classes. There will be a balancing of the scales in regard to the world and their iniquity and injustice. “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going *before* to judgment; and [with] some men they follow after” (1 Tim. 5:24). In other words, some men’s sins are punished before the Kingdom and some during the Kingdom, but *all* injustice and iniquity will be balanced out eventually. Certain sins will receive stripes. For example, nominal Christians who oppose the true Church are proportionately culpable according to their degree of knowledge.

Can a person *know about* God and yet *not know* God? Yes, that is possible in the sense that one is *not in harmony with God’s principles*. Verse 8 refers to just *one class*—a class who are *more knowledgeable*—and verse 9 indicates that the punishment for this class is *Second Death* (they “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”). This is an enlightened class who have the gospel but *do not obey it*. An individual does not incur the Second Death penalty unless he sins against *light*. This retribution will have a *dispensational fulfillment at the end of the age*.

If the Thessalonians realized that in due time God would take care of the troublemakers, the instruments of persecution, then whether the retribution happened in the present life or in the next life was really immaterial. The satisfaction of “resting” with the Apostle Paul in the confidence that vengeance is *God’s* to repay was the important thing. In the early Church and all down through the Gospel Age, there was a Second Death class. However, there will also be a Second Death class at the end of the age, in the time of the Lord’s presence, who will be dealt with in the present life, and Paul is referring to them here. The fact that Jesus will be revealed from heaven taking vengeance and that this will be an everlasting destruction indicates a dispensational fulfillment during the Second Advent. Having been taken up to the “third heaven,” Paul had *great* understanding, which is reflected in his language and knowledge without his telling too much of the time-period aspect (2 Cor. 12:2). For example, it would have been very discouraging for Paul to tell the Thessalonians that Jesus would not come for almost 2,000 years. Therefore, he just said, “When the Lord shall be revealed [comes]....”

Not only, then, is this judgment limited to the period of the Second Advent, but it is further limited to a certain time *within* the Second Advent. Those who “know not God” and “obey not the gospel” are a class with *information*. The “gospel” is the *heavenly calling*, not restitution.

This Second Death class will exist during the Harvest period but will receive “vengeance” *after* the Church is gone. This enlightened class will prove unfaithful, for although they know a lot

about God, they “know not God”—they do not know His ways and are not in harmony with His principles. The “gospel” is the good news that one can become a member of the Bride of Christ, that one has the opportunity to suffer with Christ so that he might reign with him. Hence this vengeance does not apply to the world in the Kingdom.

The vengeance pertains to the period of time when Jesus’ Second Presence is revealed with “flaming fire,” and this revelation will require a little time. These judgments have an *educational* feature in that they will open the eyes of the *consecrated* who remain on the earth after the Church is gone. Jacob’s Trouble, not these judgments, will open the eyes of the *world* to know that God is God! Thus there will be *degrees* of revelation. The world will be the last to know because those Gentiles in Israel who escape Jacob’s Trouble will return to their respective nations and testify what they have seen. Israel will know before the nations, but the Great Company will know before Israel. The message will come to the Great Company that the Lamb’s “wife hath made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). In the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the foolish virgins are informed that the door is closed. Since the foolish virgins will get this revelation in tribulation, in the Time of Trouble, they are called “tribulation saints.” In the process of the Lord’s descending from heaven in “flaming fire” (judgments), the foolish virgins will know what is happening.

Jesus will take “vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel.” The implication is that this class know about God but are disobedient and hence go into Second Death. Apparently, a significant number, proportionately speaking, of the enlightened ones will sell out the truth and forsake the Lord at the end of the age, thus incurring Second Death. The Great Company will not sell the truth but will be shocked into renewing their consecrations when they see what is happening around them—for, sad to say, some *brethren*, some of “like precious faith,” will abandon that faith (2 Pet. 1:1). Such abandonment will merit Second Death, as represented by Lot’s wife, who looked back and was, therefore, destroyed. However, Lot (picturing the Great Company) was saved, and he was closely associated with his wife. Abraham viewed the trouble from afar (picturing the Little Flock’s viewing the great Time of Trouble from heaven), whereas Lot was saved (or rescued) at the last minute. Lot’s wife pictures those who will sell out the truth, that is, the *Judas* class, who will sell out the feet members. This element will be right *in the midst* of the brethren. At the very end of the age, this class will reveal their true character and be dealt with.

Back in the apostle’s day, when he wrote this epistle, the sorest trouble that was visited on the Thessalonian brethren came from those closely connected with the truth. The charges were brought against Paul and others by some of the Jewish Christians, and the civil authorities wanted to get out of the situation (just like Pilate). The point is that there were *Judaizing brethren*. During Paul’s day, some right in the truth had a change of heart and mind in regard to the truth and became persecutors of the Church. These were “Judases,” a turncoat element. When the Gospel Age ends and the Lord is revealed, all will then know what previously occurred and who went into Second Death, including the Judas element of Paul’s day. Thus Paul was telling the Thessalonians to “rest” in the matter of unfaithful brethren, for at the time Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, God’s vengeance upon this *entire class throughout the Gospel Age* will be made manifest.

Verse 8 refers to *one* class who “know not God” and will, therefore, go into Second Death. Then Paul elaborated so that we can identify this class—they “obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Apostle Jude elaborated even more and showed that some of this class will be Spirit-begotten and some will not. However, the latter individuals will have a sufficient understanding of truth to make them culpable and accountable. Anyone who *truly knows* Jesus is the Savior, whether or not he consecrates, is fully responsible. That is what Jesus died for—that all men should come to a knowledge of the truth that he is the Savior (1 Tim. 2:4). With

knowledge comes responsibility. One who knows about present truth but does not consecrate has some responsibility in the sense that he has more knowledge than those in the world. All are judged *in proportion to the understanding they possess*.

Just as at the First Advent, much of Jesus' strife was internal initially because Judas sold him out, so at the end of the age, internal strife will occur in the Church because some will sell out the truth as the external persecution is beginning. The requirement will be to identify ourselves with the cause of Christ. The character of each one will be tested. For example, worldly people will be manifested as worldly, and nominal Christians will be manifested as nominal. That is why the tares will be "burned"; that is, they will cease their profession to be Christians. However, here Paul was talking not about mere professions but about *souls*, about *individuals*, who are on trial for *life*. The "flaming fire" is *retributive justice*.

Suppose we were of the Thessalonian brethren and this letter came from Paul telling us to "rest." We would have seen some in the Christian movement begin to oppose, and we would know their relationship with God was in jeopardy. And if they were particularly spiteful, we would know their fate, yet we would "rest," as Paul said. Jesus did not come and destroy this Judas element; however, their evil character was manifested in their opposition.

Those of the consecrated who later deny Jesus often suffer some kind of retribution whereby their fate becomes apparent to the brethren. The following is a true example. An individual turned back on his consecration and called Jesus the false Messiah. For a while he had an excellent job, but he ended his life as a Bowery bum in New York City. Matthew 6:23 says, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, *how great is that darkness!*" When one *utterly* forsakes the truth, the revelation of that darkness can sometimes be seen by others in the body of Christ. In fact, to a large extent, this judgment could be discerned not only in the apostles' day but throughout the Gospel Age. The judgment was manifested by the total darkness that followed. However, Paul carefully worded this second epistle to also give it a *dispensational* fulfillment. Although in principle much of this judgment could be discerned in the present life throughout the Gospel Age, Paul's strongest emphasis was on the end of the age—our day. All should "rest" in the assurance that God's *retributive justice will operate*. That is the issue here: the just recompense of God *in due time* upon the consecrated who oppose their brethren.

With regard to verses 8 and 9, the manifestation of this class at the end of the age will be after the Church is gone but at the *end* of the Harvest, for in the Harvest the "unripe wheat" (the Great Company) also have to be dealt with. Jesus will be with his "mighty angels" (the angels of his power, the glorified Church, the *ripe* wheat) when this judgment is enacted (verse 7).

This Second Death element's *not knowing* God refers to something much more intimate than just talking about God. Through their disobedience they will be "punished with *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord, and *from the glory of his power*." Not only is our obtaining eternal life with Jesus predicated on our *knowing* God, but any of the world of mankind who get life in the next age will also have to *know* God.

Paul wrote in his first epistle (1 Thess. 1:10) that the Church is "to wait for his [God's] Son from heaven." However, in getting that epistle, some brethren mistakenly thought they would be on this side of the veil when Jesus came. Some also misconstrued Paul's writing to think they would literally see Jesus appear while they were still in the flesh, but no—for the Church will be *with* Jesus when he comes in that sense, when he is revealed (*apokalupsis*). That is why Paul added in his second epistle (2 Thess. 1:10), "and to be admired in all them that believe ... in that [Millennial] day," that is, in the Kingdom, during Christ's reign. There are many "comings" of Jesus. The First Advent was the initial coming, but he also comes knocking on the door, with a

sickle in his hand, with a sword in his mouth, etc. The Church will be admired *with* Jesus during his reign.

Paul was preparing the Thessalonians for the last part of this second epistle. They thought he was hinting that the reign of Christ had already begun, so he had to correct that misconception. They reasoned wrongly on Paul's letter, on what they heard, and *possibly* on a false letter that was written by someone else and circulated. All of these things together precipitated the thought that a secret reign had begun. The Thessalonians thoroughly knew there would be a secret *presence* (1 Thess. 5:2), but when Paul wrote that the dead in Christ would be raised first, they began to think that the reign had already started with the dead on the other side and that those remaining would see a manifestation and then be caught up in connection with that manifestation. But Paul was not saying that. When Jesus "shall appear," *all* his saints will be with him (Col. 3:4), for the Church *cannot* be partly on this side of the veil in connection with this manifestation.

Jesus will "come to be glorified in his saints [not in 1874 but after the marriage], and to be admired in all them that believe ... in that day," that is, in the Kingdom. It will give Jesus glory when the world of mankind realizes and appreciates that 144,000 Christians down through the age followed in his footsteps. The world will then understand why the Kingdom was delayed. Verse 10 will be fulfilled after the great Time of Trouble. In the Kingdom the world will see that the trouble was needed as a corrective judgment. The admiration of Jesus and the Church will begin when the Kingdom is established and will continue throughout the Millennium.

2 Thess. 1:11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

Paul prayed for all of the churches, no doubt concentrating on each one. From our standpoint, wouldn't it be nice if a great number of us made our calling and election sure? Wouldn't that be a joyous occasion? Any sincere Christian will be happy for the ones who are successful in making the Little Flock and reigning with Christ. Just as the acclamation "Worthy is the Lamb" was made, so sincere Christians who see things in the proper perspective will say, "Worthy is this one who was faithful" and "Worthy is that one" (Rev. 5:12). The more who make the grade in each ecclesia, the better. Paul certainly rejoiced, for those who were successful and obeyed his message were like stars in his crown.

"We pray ... that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." The Pastor used an illustration of faith and power with the trolley car. The flexible arm that grabbed onto the power cable was like the arm of faith grabbing the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Comment: The NIV says, "With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith."

Making our calling and election sure is based upon our obedience to God and our pleasing Him. If we are thus faithful, we will be in the class that is admired. Paul prayed that the brethren would be faithful and "fulfil all the good pleasure of his [God's] *goodness*." It was hard for the Thessalonians to see God's goodness while they were being persecuted unless they had great faith like Paul and could sing in the dungeon.

2 Thess. 1:12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul began the epistle by speaking of the grace of God and Jesus. He greeted the Thessalonians this way because he hoped that when all was said and done, he could say they had made the grade. Chapter 1 is a preface to the entire epistle. In Chapter 2 Paul got down to his purpose in writing the letter, that is, to the pertinent point that was troubling him.

2 Thess. 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

Paul was entreating the Thessalonians: “We beseech you, brethren, concerning the presence [Greek *parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him.” Paul was the apostle who showed, particularly, that at the end of the Gospel Age, the presence would be a period of time and that those who slept in Christ would be raised first. Later the feet members of the body of Christ would be invisibly and spiritually raptured as a *group*. (To have a single last member would detract from the Head.) As pictured by Elijah’s being taken up by a whirlwind, a class will be taken together. When John the Baptist was beheaded, he portrayed the last members of the body of Christ.

At the end of the age, there are two collective gatherings of faithful Christians: first, the dead in Christ in 1878 and then the feet members at a yet-future date (1 Thess. 4:17). In between these events, saints who die as individuals do not sleep but are instantaneously changed (1 Cor. 15:51,52). However, when Paul uttered these words, he was probably thinking of himself and the brethren at Thessalonica, rather than the feet members especially, but he was quite aware of the latter.

2 Thess. 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Paul was cautioning the Thessalonians not to be soon shaken—“by spirit” (doctrine), “by word” of mouth (a rumor, for example), or “by letter as from us” (Paul’s first epistle and possibly also a letter purportedly from an apostle that was, in fact, false or counterfeit)—to believe “that the day of Christ is at hand.” They were not to believe that Jesus was already invisibly present. Part of Paul’s first letter was misconstrued, but in addition, other sources of information seemed to confirm their misunderstanding. For instance, when Jesus died on the Cross, an earthquake occurred, and “saints” (believers who had died during his 3 1/2-year ministry) were awakened from the tomb (Matt. 27:51–53). Being thoroughly confused at first to find out that Jesus had been crucified—the one they had listened to and accepted as Messiah—they waited and did not go into Jerusalem until the third day, that is, after his resurrection. When they received information that Jesus was alive—that he had been resurrected—they could then testify that they, too, had been raised from death.

Comment: The fact Paul said in verse 3, “Let *no man* deceive you,” indicates that individuals were erroneously teaching the resurrection had already begun (2 Tim. 2:17,18).

Paul said in his first epistle, “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:1,2). In other words, “You are fully aware that Christ’s Second Presence will be secret and invisible, and not a physical coming.” Based on this knowledge and the resuscitation of saints in the earthquake, the Thessalonians falsely concluded that Jesus was already present. They also knew that Jesus would deal first with his Church and afterwards with the world. Thus they thought the “day of Christ” had already come. Jesus had died and was raised as a spirit being, so what would stop him from setting up his Kingdom right away? In fact, in Acts 1:6 some of the disciples had asked Jesus that very question during his earthly

ministry: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Will you set up the Kingdom *now?*”

Paul was trying to tell the Thessalonians, “I fully informed you of the nature of the Second Advent—that Jesus would be invisible. You are correct on that point, but you are incorrect in thinking that Jesus’ presence is taking place now.”

If our Lord were to come *visually* for the feet members—whether in the flesh or by vision, as many erroneously expect—there would be no need for Paul to mention the “man of sin” (verse 3). If that were the case, our Lord’s Second Advent would be evident by his *visual* return, and Paul’s logic would be unnecessary. The Thessalonians knew Jesus was to have an *invisible* return, but they had to be informed that his return had not yet occurred. They were shaken and troubled in all three categories: doctrine, rumor, and letter. Matthew 24:24–26 verifies that Jesus will not be geographically visible here on earth at his Second Advent. He will not appear “in the desert” or “in the secret [and dark occult] chambers.”

Comment: Verse 2 is a good text to use in witnessing to prove that the return of Christ is invisible. Here would have been the perfect opportunity for Paul to say, “No, no! Your understanding is not correct. Jesus’ return will not be invisible but *visible*.” The fact that Paul did not so state is an obvious omission. He was not correcting them on the *nature* of Jesus’ return but on the *time period*, which was *future*.

Reply: Yes, first, the man of sin had to be revealed, and until that event happened, it would be impossible for Jesus to return (invisibly). But other things that had occurred seemed to be clues that perhaps he was present now.

The two epistles to the Thessalonians are unusual because Paul used the word “presence” (*parousia*) and talked about looking forward to the presence more frequently than anywhere else in Scripture. In fact, a beautifully written article was contributed and published in the *Reprints* from the perspective that if we were back there, we would appreciate the burning desire, anticipation, and hope of the Thessalonian brethren. Paul knew that spirit prevailed among them. We can see how it was easy for them to overreach in their understanding of the subject of the time period of the Lord’s return and conclude that it had already occurred.

The term “at hand” in the clause “as that the day of Christ is at hand” gives the thought of “near” rather than “*present*,” the latter being the correct thought in the Greek, namely, “As that the day of Christ is *here, present*.” The subject matter confirms that Paul was combating the idea of the Day of Christ and his invisible presence having already occurred.

Comment: A Scofield footnote has “is now present” instead of “is at hand,” and the Amplified says “has [already] arrived *and* is here.”

Reply: Yes, although the Greek is another word than *parousia*, the meaning is “present.”

2 Thess. 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

If we were not familiar with present truth, we might think of the “man of sin” as a literal being, as some wicked person, but it is the false religious *system*, just as the “man of God” is the true Church, a *collective body* made up of component parts, or “joints.” The ideal is the picture of Jesus as the Head and the Church as the body parts. Similarly, the man of sin is an organization with a person (the pope) as the head and the corresponding component parts of the Antichrist system (the Papacy) as the body. The man of God is The Christ, The Elijah, with Jesus as Head.

The man of sin is the Antichrist, the Papacy, a religious *system*, with Satan as its head. As the head of the man-of-sin system, Satan works through Papacy, whereas Jesus, the Head of the man of God, works through the ecclesia.

Paul received much information through visions. Although he was not allowed to reveal in detail what he saw, he was probably given certain parameters of liberty within which he could inform the brethren. With all the knowledge Paul was given, he would have carefully, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, selected the words he used when writing his epistles. Every single word is meaningful. Even a seemingly simple adjective can be extremely revealing. The point is that Paul was well informed about the length of the time period before Jesus' invisible return—it was not short, and the man-of-sin system had to first grow and develop and be recognized. General recognition of the man of sin did not occur until Martin Luther's day in the 1500s and the Protestant Reformation. Tyndale in England was just as clear on the subject as Luther, but Luther was favored as being the sixth messenger to the Church.

“Let no man deceive you by any means [as listed in verse 2: spirit, word, or letter]: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed.” *Even if a spirit being should come visibly*, the brethren were not to believe it was Jesus, for the day of his presence would not come until, first, a falling away from the faith occurred and the man of sin was revealed. Although Paul could not give details, his mention of the apostasy was a hint of what had to take place; namely, the man of sin had to come and be revealed before Jesus could invisibly return. A great deception would precede even the beginning of the Day of Christ.

The “man of sin” is called the “son of perdition” because the system is going into everlasting destruction, never to rise again. Stated another way, under the symbol of “the beast,” the system will be “cast alive” into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:20). The deception at the end of the Millennium will not be along religious lines.

The natural mind thinks of the man of sin as a *literal* individual, a *literal* man—something like Judas, who was also called the “son of perdition” (John 17:12). The word “perdition” means everlastingly lost.

2 Thess. 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

This verse sounds so appalling that we would think anyone who is reading the epistle would notice it and want deeper understanding. However, to interpret the man of sin as a literal individual prevents further understanding because the verse seems to be self-explanatory. The “Man of Sin” chapter in the *Second Volume* is excellent and very strong in quoting declarations of various popes and their assumption of blasphemous titles. The quotes show past popes as claiming to have all knowledge—even in heaven. Those who are aware of these pompous quotes should know immediately when they read verse 4 that Satan is working through the Roman Catholic Church.

The pope opposed and exalted himself “above all that is called God” by claiming to rule as vicegerent in Christ's stead. In the *Diaglott* the following distinction is made for the word “God.” The pope exalts himself above all that is called “a god,” or that is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple (the church) of “the God,” “openly showing himself” that he is “a god.” The absence of the Greek article allows the English translation to be rendered “a god.” The Apostle Paul said of the true Church, “Ye are the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:16). Accordingly, the Roman Catholic Church claims to be the temple of God with the pope as head. (The pope is also the head of the Papacy, a separate function.) The Adversary has skewed Scripture to seemingly justify the Antichrist system he has set up.

Comment: Familiarity with Scripture would show that verse 4 cannot be referring to a literal wicked individual who will sit in the temple of God because (1) the Third Temple will not be defiled (“there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts”—Zech. 14:20,21) and (2) the Temple will contain no throne, or chair.

Considering itself to be *above* the apostles, Papacy has presumed to “change times and laws,” thus annulling what was previously said and taught by both the apostles and Jesus (Dan. 7:25). The man of sin can be identified because of “forbidding to marry” and advocating “to abstain from meats” (1 Tim. 4:3). Daniel 7:8,20 predicted that a “little horn” would arise having “eyes like the eyes of man” and “a mouth speaking great things” and that it would exalt itself above its fellows. The doctrine of the Mass is the “abomination that maketh desolate” (Dan. 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15).

Revelation 6:1–8 describes four horses. First, a man on a white horse was given a crown, and he went forth conquering (in pursuit of worldly power). Then came a red horse followed by a black horse and, still later, a pale horse. The rider of the black horse had a pair of scales in his hand, portraying conditions during the Dark Ages. At that time there was a famine for the Word of God. One measure of wheat and three measures of barley each sold for a penny; that is, barley, the food of the harlot, was more plentiful than wheat. Stated another way, *three times as much barley* could be purchased for the same amount of money as *one measure of wheat*. Papacy made its own doctrines attractive and plentiful and the Word of God scarce.

The “temple” is the church. Ostensibly, the church is where God communicates with His people. The church (or *ecclesia*) is a group of the Lord’s *people*, but Papacy turned the people into the *building*. Instead of “Christians” continuing to meet in private homes as their numbers grew, larger and larger buildings were erected. As time went on, the *priesthood* became the church instead of the people. The pope sits in the midst of his clerical hierarchy. The gradual change was from “two or three” being gathered together to hundreds, to the building, to the Roman Curia (bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and the pope).

2 Thess. 2:5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

2 Thess. 2:6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

Paul was saying, “When I was there with you in Thessalonica, I told you about these things.” He had discussed end-of-the-age events with the Thessalonian brethren at some length, for he did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). But in their overreaching, in their zealous desire for the Day of Christ to come quickly, they misunderstood some of his teachings and needed to be refreshed. Therefore, Paul was saying, “What I tell you now, I said before, but you have evidently forgotten. Something will withhold, or prevent, the Day of Christ’s presence from coming right away, but in due time that day will be revealed. Think about what I previously said. I am reminding you of those things.”

Pagan (or Imperial) Rome withheld Papacy from developing for a time. (In the early Church, the apostles themselves were a deterrent, for they could read the hearts of professed Christians.) Pagan Rome ruled over its subjects with both civil and ecclesiastical power, the latter through its pagan priesthood. Therefore, Papacy did not prosper or grow in an *ostensible* fashion until the day of Constantine (the early 300s). When Constantine became emperor, his adoption of Christianity was a big step for the development of the man of sin. Then in 539 the Roman emperor Justinian acknowledged the right of the Church of Rome to be the head in all ecclesiastical matters, while he was the head in all civil matters. At the time Justinian gave this decree, he was in Constantinople, for the civil government had been moved from Rome. As a

result, those in Rome began to look to the church there for leadership, whereas previously they had looked to the emperor for advice.

Thus several important developments were conducive to Papacy's growth; namely, (1) the capital of the Roman Empire was moved to Constantinople, (2) the Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity, and (3) Justinian decreed that the bishop of Rome was the head of the church. Prior to Constantine's day, the man of sin was just a seed, a "mystery of iniquity" not revealed or seen openly (verse 7). Many years after its revelation, various Reformers called attention to the bad practices of the Church of Rome. Those who saw *early* the danger inherent in Papacy and spoke out are called "Antipas," meaning "against the fathers," that is, against Papacy (Rev. 2:13). They, the Lord's faithful martyrs, opposed the idea that the bishop of Rome was superior to other bishops and was in Christ's stead.

The man of sin was thus revealed as early as the third period of the Church, Pergamos, but up until the present Harvest period, those who saw the evil were still trying to reform the nominal system. Now it is apparent that the system is beyond reformation, and the message to the Christian is to "come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4). To show the futility of reformation, Bro. Russell used the parable about a new piece of cloth being unsuccessfully put on an old garment (Matt. 9:16).

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

It was the Apostle Paul, the messenger to Ephesus, the *first* Church, who made this statement. The Apostle John, the messenger to Smyrna, the *second* Church, said, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that *it* should come; and even now already is *it* in the world" (1 John 4:3). The "it," *the* Antichrist system, was an outgrowth of false doctrine, which our Lord spoke of in Matthew 13:25, "But while men [the apostles] slept, his [Jesus'] enemy [Satan] came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." Satan's attempts did not prosper until after the apostles died; that is, Antichrist rose to power in the *third*, or Pergamos, period and then reigned in Thyatira, the *fourth* period of the Church.

Comment: The New Living translation has, "For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way."

"Letteth" means "hindereth" in the Old English. The thought is that "that which now hindereth will be taken out of the way." That which "withholdeth" (verse 6) and "he [it] who now letteth [hindereth]" both refer to Imperial (or Pagan) Rome.

"He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." Pagan Rome became divided when the emperor moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople. He thought the new site, the midpoint between East and West in that day, was a better location. However, there was such an attachment to Rome that when the emperor and his authority moved, the door was open for Antichrist to prosper in Rome in the emperor's stead. Revelation 13:2 describes, in symbol, Imperial Rome's being "taken out of the way" when the capital was moved to Constantinople: "The dragon gave him [the papal beast] his power, and his seat, and great authority." Ultimately, instead of keeping the Roman papal power in a bottle like a genie, Pagan Rome became the servant of the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, the dragon felt a responsibility to uphold the Papacy. Stated another way, when the Roman Empire became the *Holy* Roman Empire, civil power became subservient to Papacy itself.

The emperor of Imperial Rome was called Pontifex Maximus (Chief Religious Ruler), and in

that capacity he wore the red cardinal flamen hat and even had his own priesthood. The emperor, therefore, was both the civil and the religious head of the empire. We can see the similarity to Papacy, which, as a *religious* system, has its own *government*, the Vatican.

2 Thess. 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

“And then shall that Wicked [one or *system*] be revealed [uncovered, Greek *apokalupsis*], whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness [epiphania] of his coming [*parousia*].” Notice that the spirit of the Lord’s mouth and the brightness of his presence will destroy the Wicked One. This is where the erroneous doctrine has developed that truth binds Satan. Although verse 8 does say that the revelation of Christ will have the effect of destroying the Wicked One, the reference is to the man of sin *system* and not to Satan personally. When the people know the Church of Rome is the Antichrist, that knowledge alone will destroy the system. Satan, however, is an individual, a personality, not a system—and he is *invisible*. An invisible being cannot be fought with truth! Satan’s visible system can be destroyed with truth but not Satan himself. At the end of the present age, the beast will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone—into perdition, everlasting destruction, Second Death—from which there is no resurrection, but Satan’s destruction will not occur until the end of the Millennium. The Church, risen and glorified, not truth and light, will destroy Satan at the end of the Kingdom Age. Satan’s visible organization, system, or headquarters down here on earth will be destroyed earlier, but the invisible cannot be equated with the visible.

And even so, this verse is speaking of Jesus’ *epiphania*, that *particular period* of his presence and not the present time. When the *epiphania* comes, Jesus will be reigning, but *now* Satan is the god of this world. *Now* there are children of disobedience, but in the Kingdom—when Jesus rules and exercises his great power—all will have to obey, even if they are not in heart harmony. Insurrection will not be tolerated until the Little Season at the very end of the Kingdom. As the Pastor said, some will falsely conclude that the Kingdom Age is over and improperly try to seize power.

“Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” What is going to be destroyed? Not Satan but his system, the nominal Church (both mother and daughters). At the beginning of the Harvest, Jesus served a meal to his followers through the faithful and wise servant, a human agent. However, that was a quiet message, not a startling one. It is very enlightening and even mind-boggling to be brought out of darkness and given understanding of the Scriptures, but what will destroy the nominal system is a subsequent *public* enlightenment as the result of Christ’s presence. First, Jesus feeds his Church quietly, and he will not interfere with the last members’ being taken violently—just as God did not interfere with the Crucifixion of His Son. The Father restrained Himself because Jesus’ death was a necessity and a fulfillment of prophecy. Therefore, at the present time during the Second Presence, Jesus is feeding and strengthening his few people (a relative handful), especially with the end-time message, but in time the message will seep out to more and more people to become general knowledge. That general knowledge and enlightenment—when the people see the incongruities—will be the downfall of Papacy. The attitude has been that the fault lies with certain leaders and popes but that the system is legitimate and ordained of God.

Comment: This verse shows that the *epiphania* is future. If the *epiphania* had started, there would be enough information to destroy the man of sin.

Reply: Yes, the *epiphania* and the *apokalupsis* portions of the *parousia* are for the world. The

parousia extends for the entire thousand years.

What is the “spirit” of Jesus’ mouth? Jesus will *consume* the Wicked One with the spirit of his mouth and *destroy* with the *epiphania* of his *parousia*. “Consume” means “destroy”—they are synonymous terms here. The technique of couplets and dual expression is often used for emphasis, especially in the Psalms. The same thing is said two different ways to reaffirm and strengthen a statement. (Of course sometimes a difference in meaning is intended. Only with the help of God’s Holy Spirit can we determine the sense correctly.) Verse 8 is emphasizing the *destruction* of the man of sin. Jesus will consume; he will destroy. Thus there will be complete eradication. In the first epistle, Paul said that the trouble would come *suddenly*, as *the birth pang* (1 Thess. 5:3). Now, in this second epistle, he was again stressing the *destruction*; he was not indicating a gradual process.

In a paraphrase of verse 8, the truth that is revealed at the time of the *epiphania* will destroy Papacy. The destruction will be *sudden* as in the smiting of the image—within a few weeks or months. The clue here is that when the time comes for Papacy’s fall, something will happen to expose the system and incur the wrath of the people. In the past, at the time of the Protestant Reformation, Papacy suffered a wound unto death, from which it revived and survived, but it will not survive this future wound (Rev. 13:3). Such anger will be directed against Papacy that the people and her own eunuchs (from within) will tear down the system. The true Church, the Little Flock, will be with the Lord before Papacy’s destruction. The Christ will come forth and ensure the Day of Jehovah’s *wrath* and Papacy’s *permanent* destruction. The destruction is stated twice in verse 8 lest we get the thought that the deception at the end of the Millennium might be religious. No, the deception at that time will be along the lines of a civil insurrection.

When Luther and others exposed Papacy, they were trying to reform and reconcile the system. Only a relative few saw the iniquity of the system. Moreover, it was not destroyed, only wounded. Thus we know that Paul was talking about something different here. In the near future, when the majority of the people see the evils, the system will be everlastingly torn down. In former days the Reformers were persecuted rather than Papacy.

Verses 7 and 8 cover a *long* period of time. Imperial Rome was taken out of the way, Papacy developed, the Protestant Reformation revealed the Lawless One, and Papacy will be destroyed during the *epiphania*. Jesus will be revealed in fiery judgments, taking vengeance.

2 Thess. 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

The words “even him,” supplied by the translators, should be deleted to make Paul’s intended meaning clearer. Verse 8 talks about Jesus’ “coming”: “whom the Lord [Jesus] ... shall destroy with the brightness of his coming [presence].” Verse 9 continues with the same thought: “whose [Jesus’] coming [presence] is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” Just as Satan, the god of this world, is present but invisible as a spirit being, so Jesus can be present but unseen at his Second Advent because he is an invisible spirit being.

The Greek word rendered “after” can be variously translated. The correct thought is that Jesus’ Second Presence is “accompanied by [or with] the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”

Comment: The word “after” is important to consider here lest we think it means that Jesus’ Second Presence will occur *afterwards*, that is, after Satan’s power, signs, and lying wonders cease. Instead, at the very least, Jesus’ presence is *during* the energetic working of the Adversary. More likely, however, Satan will manifest even greater and stronger delusions with

all power, signs, and lying wonders in the near future.

Reply: When we consider Jesus' presence to be a *period of time*, then sometime *in the period of his presence*, there will be a spectacular (in the evil sense) display of lying and deceitful wonders. In the "Man of Sin" chapter in the *Second Volume*, page 359, the Pastor gave a rendition of this verse that is slightly different from the King James. "Whose presence is with [accompanied by or during] an energetic operation of Satan [Satanic energy and action] with all power, and signs, and lying delusions." Although not in the King James Version, the word "during" is appropriate because it expresses a period of time. Unfortunately, the usual concordances present the Greek *kata*, translated "after" in the King James, as signifying something with *place* or *location* when it is used with the accusative case, and they drop out the application of *time*, which is listed in Liddell and Scott (page 749, eighth edition, example VII) as one of the interpretations of the preposition.

Comment: The word "all" in "all power and signs and lying wonders" is very significant in regard to future testings that will befall the consecrated.

Reply: The word translated "working" is the Greek *energeia*, indicating *great energy*, an *energetic operation*.

Comment: The energetic operation corresponds to Revelation 16:13,14, which reads, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Reply: Let us start backwards. The quoted verses in Revelation 16 are talking about the great Day of God Almighty and the battle of Armageddon. Deceptive influences are pictured by three symbols: the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet. Out of the mouth of these systems will come forth froglike spirits, which symbolize great declarations and boastings. The systems will issue warnings to maintain the status quo, but Christ will found his Kingdom, his government, on the *ruins* of the present systems. The Thessalonians account has "ALL power," and who is doing this? Satan—a POWERFUL being. He will use all manner of deception, signs, and lying wonders, and "all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" (verse 10). This somber matter involves many different strata of society, but the bottom line for us is how it will affect the consecrated. However, professing Christians in the nominal system, as well as civil authorities, will also be affected. In fact, when this time comes at the end of the age, *all* will be deceived except the Very Elect (Matt. 24:24).

The following three paragraphs on 2 Thessalonians 2:9–11 are excerpted from *Reprint* article No. 4583 entitled "All Deceivableness of Unrighteousness."

"The intimation is that the severity of the testing will come first to the saints. In whatever proportion our doctrines include fallacies, errors, in that same proportion will be the severity of our testing. Those whose faith structure contains little of wood, hay and stubble will suffer least; while those who have more of these combustibles will suffer the more.

"Be it noticed that all the creeds handed down to us contain many errors and that the test of our loyalty to the truth was our willingness to renounce these and to replace them with the gold, silver and precious stones of the divine Word. For one reason or another this matter of confessing error and relinquishing it is a severe trial to many. It tests loyalty to God and his Word. It tests humility of heart. It tests willingness to confess our errors. It tests love for the brethren. However trifling the mistake, it requires an overcoming courage to declare it, to

renounce it. [In other words, if we find out that what we have been holding is wrong doctrine, it is very difficult, in humility of heart, to have the courage to say that we now think differently.] This has been the procedure for the past three hundred years, as God's people have emerged more and more from the smoke of the 'dark ages.' Because of these difficulties and tests the progress out of darkness into the full, clear light has been slow. At every step of the journey light and truth have been slandered, opposed, vilified, persecuted, and the advocates of truth have been pilloried and roasted either figuratively or literally....

“But we cannot hope thus of all—especially now when the light of truth is shining so much more brightly and when the Lord is especially testing the loyalty or disloyalty of those professing his name, with a view to their separation and to the determining of their eternal destinies. No doubt some who will be of the ‘great company’ will be more or less deceived of the adversary by the strong delusions of this hour. Such in their blindness and deception may set forth darkness for light and light for darkness. They may do it with great positiveness, but scarcely, we think, with bitterness [they are a little off track, but at least they do not manifest a bitter attitude]—anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife—works of the flesh and of the devil.”

In the phrase “all power and signs and lying wonders,” what would be the “signs”? What kind of “signs”? “Signs” are something *visible*. For example, the world will see the “sign” of the coming of the Son of man (Matt. 24:30). The Pastor gave this text a past application until late in his ministry when he changed his view and said it is still future and is the sign that will be given to the world.

Comment: Galatians 1:8 warns of a possible deception: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” The hypothesis is that the Adversary will materialize and visibly manifest himself. Since most of nominal Christendom expects Jesus to return visually, Satan's literally appearing as an “angel of light” would be a strong deception (2 Cor. 11:14).

Reply: Yes, the Evangelical Protestant view is that a visual manifestation of Christ will be seen in the heavens. Most people today are cultured by television to think that the spirit world is friendly and that such manifestations are for beneficent purposes. People reason, “Since an angel is supernatural and his wisdom is beyond our comprehension, he must be more intelligent than we are.” But there are evil supernatural beings as well as good ones. We must distinguish between that which is right and that which is harmful. *If an angel comes from heaven, as Galatians 1:8 warns, the Lord's people are not to be deceived. That is a very valuable Scripture, but materializing as an angel of light is only one arrow out of Satan's quiver, or arsenal. Notice that the signs and lying wonders are plural.*

Comment: An example of a deception in the form of a materialization was the impersonation of the Pastor in Australia. Supposedly he appeared to a sister, but he was not even on that continent at the time.

Reply: Yes, he could prove that he was in another place at that very time.

Comment: The distinction is that a “sign” is visual and a “lying wonder” is both audible and visual.

Reply: An example of a lying wonder would be a materialized angel.

Comment: At the end of the Kingdom, when there is a full measure of light and understanding, Satan will be loosed for the Little Season. If the number who follow him at that time—*after receiving full light and being in perfect condition*—can be described as the “sand of the sea” (Rev.

20:8), how many more will succumb at this end of the age!

Reply: Yes, in spite of the education or enlightenment that is now available to the common man, that type of information will not be a safeguard against the deceptions the Adversary will use. He has already cultured much of Christendom to be expecting *as bona fide* the very things he plans to use as deceptions. The minority who point out the deceptions will be severely tried.

Comment: If Satan will use “ALL power and signs and lying wonders” in the near future, then *in no way* is he being bound or has his power been curtailed.

Reply: That is true. If Satan is being bound by light, then so are all of the other fallen angels. If light binds Satan, the *chief* of the fallen angels, it certainly binds his cohorts as well. Therefore, that type of reasoning falls flat. At the end of the Kingdom, when mankind is fully instructed in righteousness and there is no need for one to say to his neighbor, “Know the LORD,” for all shall know Him from the least unto the greatest, Satan will be loosed to test mankind (Jer. 31:34).

Comment: Another line of reasoning is in connection with the binding of the fallen angels in chains of darkness. Jude 6 tells us, “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” The implication is that the fallen angels will be loosed during the “judgment of the great day,” which is our day and the near future. In terms of deceptions, it would not be unreasonable to expect the fallen angels to impersonate the dead and/or some of the living consecrated and to do all sorts of spectacular things to mislead the world, such as getting them to think the resurrection has taken place.

Reply: The deceptions will be very great, for Satan will use ALL POWER. However, while Satan may visibly appear as an angel of light, for example, the great inundation of fallen angels will occur still later—at the time of Jacob’s Trouble.

2 Thess. 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

The words “in them that perish” are troublesome because we want to know the *degree* of the perishing and of the being “damned” (verse 12). Furthermore, there is the sobering statement “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” The word “damned” is usually thought of from the standpoint of judgment. Concordances list three related Greek words that pertain to judgment: *krima*, *krisis*, and *krino*. Without quoting from concordances, we will use a simple rather than a scholarly approach. It is interesting that in our vocabulary the word *krima* is “crime” and *krisis* is “crisis.” (For *krino* we do not have a comparable English translation.) A person who has purportedly done something wrong is guaranteed the right to a trial, and so the defendant has to be exposed to a *process* of judgment either to find him guilty or to exonerate him from the charges. The crime (*krima*), the act, is set forth. During the crisis (*krisis*) period of trial, the jury listens to all of the lines of evidence. The climax occurs when a decision, a verdict, is reached by the jury, but it is the judge who pronounces the sentence.

In *Reprint* article No. 4583, previously quoted from, the Pastor said that the verdict to be rendered will be proportionate to the knowledge and the responsibility of the individual. The degree to which one has been either faithful or unfaithful affects the verdict. For instance, Acts 24:15 speaks of the “resurrection of the dead, both of the just and [the] unjust.” And the Apostle John, in referring to the general resurrection, said that the hour is coming when all “shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28,29), but the “resurrection of

damnation” is a resurrection of *judgment*. Education will be necessary, and stripes will be meted out for willful disobedience, but the “resurrection of damnation” does not necessarily mean Second Death. Of the different groups, the most responsible individuals are those who have consecrated. As part of that group, we must be alert, for the Lord has furnished information to both safeguard us from the dangers and alert us to them (such as Galatians 1:8 and Matthew 24:24). Truth is a shield to protect the Christian.

In considering verse 10, we ask, “How can unrighteousness deceive?” An illustration is the extreme doctrine of Universal Salvation, or Universal Reconciliation, which teaches that all will eventually be saved, including even Satan.

Comment: Another example of how unrighteousness can deceive is *false* love along moral lines. We should love the things *God loves* and hate the things *God hates*.

Reply: We must not be more magnanimous than God or Jesus in our judgment of wrongdoing. One of the problems in the brotherhood today is the failure to distinguish the difference between sins committed *before* consecration and sins committed *after* consecration. God casts behind His back sins that occurred before consecration, and we should not pry into other people’s backgrounds for nosy information. God forgets and so should we. But grievous sins committed *after* consecration should be dealt with for the safety of the brotherhood and their reputation in representing Christ before the world. Such sins become more serious to various degrees depending on what the aberration is.

Consider the nominal Church. Some denominations, or portions of denominations, approve of homosexuality and lesbianism *in the Church*. There is even pressure to sanction marriage between two men or two women, that is, to have it enacted by law. What good, then, is all the enlightenment that has come through education when Satan is turning upside down the fundamentals of Christian life and doctrine and subverting almost every area? People think they are enlightened, but they are deceived in unrighteousness. Under today’s conditions the Scriptural norm becomes relatively meaningless, for people’s own imaginations take priority. Practices commonly seen today would have seemed impossible 40 or 50 years ago. Therefore, the term “deceivableness of unrighteousness” means that the unrighteous think they are right.

Comment: An example is the free distribution of needles to drug addicts with the rationalization that at least this way the needles are sterile.

Reply: Yes, and condoms are freely distributed through some schools.

What about the term “in them that perish”? To a certain degree, there are samples of deception even among the consecrated, even among the brotherhood. To a somewhat greater degree—and in some cases to a very blatant degree—there are deceptions in the nominal system. In recent years at *religious* conferences, women have performed erotic acts on the stage with the approval of segments of the denomination. To an extreme degree in the world, moral restraints have been cast off so that anything goes, the philosophy being, “That which is pleasure is not sin.”

Truth is what we treasure, and we should *ever hunger* for grace and knowledge. We should not stagnate or come to the Laodicean position of feeling we are rich and have need of nothing (Rev. 3:17). However, verse 10 is a warning to all three classes: true Christians, professed Christians, and the world. Romans 1:18 refers to the world: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” Many in the world “hold the truth in *unrighteousness*,” and the Apostle Paul was speaking about the world, as verses 19–24 reveal: “Because that which may be known of

God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead [Deity]; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God [through observation of the heavens and nature], they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible [immortal] God into an image made like to corruptible [mortal] man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.” The non-Christian world can hold the truth in unrighteousness, but something is wrong, something is missing, when people do not search and hunger for the One who made the glorious universe. Thus there are different degrees of holding the truth in unrighteousness.

We sometimes call ourselves the Truth movement, but actually truth is mighty, mighty deep. It is true that we are walking in the way and in the direction of truth, but we should not feel satisfied that we have the whole truth and nothing but the truth, for there is *always* room for improvement.

Comment: With brethren who know the Lord and know what is right, the problem is often that love for their families supersedes their love for God’s Word. They love mother, father, sister, brother, etc., to an inordinate degree rather than face the truth as God declares it.

Reply: Imagine how God feels looking down at this earth and seeing us make decisions without heeding His instruction. Right and wrong are clearly set forth in the Scriptures. If we ignore principle and are influenced by the peer pressure of family, neighbors, friendships, and worldly and business associations, thus violating God’s instruction, what does He think about us? None of us can be too sure of ourselves.

Comment: Romans 1:29–32 is also pertinent: “Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

Reply: Yes, such individuals consort with or are party to these things in both principle and practice.

Comment: Brethren have differences of opinion with regard to capital punishment, whereas the divine principle is a life for a life. Even the Ten Commandments are not understood. “Thou shalt not kill” means “Thou shalt not *murder*” and, thus, does not forbid capital punishment.

Reply: Yes, the Adversary has his own definitions of Scripture. An individual who reads, say, six pages of the *Volumes* each day should also read six pages of Scripture. Both are important, but the Word of God is the bottom line. We appreciate others in proportion as their ministry has helped us to understand that Word. We acknowledge their superiority in being used of the Lord and are thankful, but the bottom line is the Word itself.

The first chapter of Romans implies another safeguard: conscience. To a certain degree, the conscience has been damaged through heredity, but nevertheless, we all have a conscience that tells us some things are blatantly improper. However, when wrong things are practiced, the conscience becomes seared, and the individual is unable to distinguish between right and wrong. Paul showed that there are three witnesses: the heavens (nature), the conscience, and

the Word of God.

2 Thess. 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

2 Thess. 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The level of damnation is scaled in proportion to our enlightenment. Enlightenment is a blessing, not a curse, yet some are willingly ignorant because they do not want the responsibility of knowing too much. That type of reasoning, which appeals to the old creature, is Satanic. If the Apostle Paul were on the scene today, he would buoy us up with bundles of energy, but he would also be very searching in his comments. He would not flatter everyone by any means, regardless of the ecclesia, for there are problems that need to be rectified.

Comment: In the beginning of verse 10, the *Diaglott* uses the term “are perishing” rather than “perish,” the thought being “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that are perishing [or are in the way of perishing].” In other words, if this condition is not corrected, depending on what class is being addressed, it leads to Second Death.

Reply: Yes, Second Death is the end of the path if that way is continually followed, and of course our path is the present life. We are to be faithful unto death in the *present* life, whereas the world has the Kingdom Age before them. Those still under Adamic condemnation have not yet come to the light. Stated another way, if Adamic condemnation is not lifted, the sentence of death remains on an individual. The Scriptures seem to suggest that in the next age there will be some stubborn individuals who, when they come forth from the tomb, will refuse to bend the knee to Christ. Because they refuse to listen to “that prophet,” they will be cut off summarily (Acts 3:23). They will die the Second Death, but in their case Second Death will be Adamic death because they would not accept the provision of salvation.

Additional Thoughts on 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12, as Presented in the 1981 Study

Note: In the 1981 study, these four verses pertaining to the end of the age were treated in detail and only from the standpoint of the consecrated. The expanded explanation follows.

2 Thess. 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

This great energetic operation of delusion by Satan is to take place during the Lord’s Second Advent, not initially when Jesus first came but *during* his presence and *yet future*. This great deception will *precede* the destruction of the nominal systems and will take place shortly before the *epiphania*. Satan will control and manipulate the man of sin so that it will be working very feverishly.

What is the difference between “power,” “signs,” and “lying wonders”?

1. **POWER.** Satan will use *all* the power he has ever had down through the ages. He is *not being bound*. In fact, he will get even *more liberty and power* during Jesus’ Second Presence. Stated another way, instead of being progressively bound, Satan is *being loosed more*. He will work with *all power* to do what he wishes with only certain, hardly evident limitations. He will operate through the *man of sin* with all kinds of delusions and *tremendous power*. Therefore, the future hour of great trial has to do with the power and deception of Satan. At the time of the Crucifixion, Jesus said, “The prince of this world [now] cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John

14:30). Like Jesus their Head, the feet members will have a similar experience and die at the hand of Satan.

2. **SIGNS.** The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a sign from Jesus: a “sign from heaven” (Matt. 16:1). They did not want a healing miracle but a sign from heaven. Here at the end of the age, if Satan is going to manipulate great power to produce “signs,” the account is suggesting that something visual could occur—not just a bleeding icon, for example, which is a localized sign, but *visible signs* that will have a *worldwide* effect. It could even seem as if something is happening in regard to the God of nature—something clearly *supernatural* and *in heaven*.

3. **LYING WONDERS.** These deceptive, false phenomena will teach untruths. Sometimes an untruth is taught without words, as when Satan had the serpent eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. However, these future lying wonders will probably be *audible as well as visual*. In the past there were visions of the Virgin Mary, as well as voices and messages giving false instruction. Many do not believe the visions actually occur because they take place in a localized area, but what if such things happened on a *worldwide* scale—or even to a whole city or country? In a recent case in England, all television airwaves were jammed simultaneously by an unexplained message. Such possibilities are open to Satan and his fallen angels. Suppose a “sign” were accompanied by a television message. Suppose angels were seen flying over the Vatican. Suppose a UFO landed with seemingly friendly superior beings who gave advice. The point is that there will be *large-scale* deceptions (small ones worked all down through history) with *all* power (not some power). Future deceptions will be more demonstrative and widespread than anything to date. They will give a lie to all that is good and true through a *frenzy* of delusion (Greek *energeia*, an energetic operation with *all* power, that is, a *frenzy* to do certain things in order to *delude*).

Incidentally, the *Volumes* are the *keys* to the Scriptures, but the *Scriptures* have all the information so “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:17). Those who use only the keys fail to get the POWER of Scripture, and those who use just the Scriptures lack dispensational understanding. Both are needed!

Two adjustments should be made. The supplied words “Even him” should be omitted, and “whose coming” refers to Jesus’ presence. Under the subcaption “Antichrist’s Final End,” pages 358 and 359, the *Second Volume* translates 2 Thessalonians 2:8–12 as follows: “Whom the Lord Jesus will *consume* with the spirit of his mouth, and annihilate with the *bright shining of his presence*. Whose presence is with [accompanied by or during] an energetic operation of Satan [Satanic energy and action] with all power, and signs, and lying delusions, and with every iniquitous deception for those perishing; because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be preserved. And for this reason God will send to them a deluding power, that they might believe the error: so that all not believing the truth, but taking pleasure in iniquity, may be judged” unworthy to share the Millennial Kingdom as joint-heirs with Christ.

Most translations incorrectly slant the “whose coming” of verse 9 to refer to the Antichrist. “Coming” (*parousia*) should be “presence,” and it cannot refer to the Adversary because he has been present all along, that is, throughout the Gospel Age. The thought is that *during* the Second Presence of the Master, Satan will have a very energetic operation of delusion.

2 Thess. 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

The epistle is addressed to the consecrated, and so is this verse. At the very end of the age, some of the consecrated will be perishing “because they received not the *love* of the truth, that they might be saved.” This is a stern message. If other Scriptures did not tell us about the Great

Company, verse 10 would sound as if there were only two possibilities: (1) those who are not deceived will not perish (Little Flock), and (2) those who are deceived will perish (Second Death). It is true that any of the consecrated who have the spirit of error or the spirit of being deceived will be in danger of “perishing,” but certain Scriptures, such as Jude 23, show that some who will be in a measure deceived will yet be rescued. In other words, at the very end of the age, all of the consecrated who remain after the feet members are taken off the scene will be in danger of perishing in Second Death *unless* there is a proper response and repentance. All of the consecrated except the feet members will be deceived to a greater or lesser degree, at least momentarily.

Verse 10 is not directed to the nominal Church, the tares, but to the consecrated, to those who *have received the truth but not the love of it*. This class responded to the truth but with ulterior motives. Even though we may *initially* receive the truth in the love of it and consecrate on that basis, then, depending on how we respond to trials and experiences—whether we compromise on principle, etc., and thus undergo a deterioration—we would no longer be pursuing the truth because we *love* it. And some have ulterior motives for consecration to *begin* with. Our love for the truth should be *maintained*. Whether we end up in the little Flock, the Great Company, or Second Death will depend on how much of the spirit of the truth we have imbibed and been faithful to. A full imbibing results in a destiny of Little Flock, a partial imbibing results in the Great Company, and neglect brings Second Death. The Great Company do the Lord’s will but not joyfully and out of love for it; they act out of necessity and because of circumstances of life that bring them to their senses.

Verses 9–12 refer to the end of the age. During the Lord’s presence, the Adversary will work with an energetic operation that will have the effect of delusion. Since the world has been under Satan’s influence all along, throughout the Gospel Age, these verses refer to something Satan will try to do to the consecrated before the Gospel Age fully ends. In other words, when Satan deceives all but the Very Elect, some in the truth will also be deceived and thus will incur a more responsible judgment than the world. The world will be deceived too, but they will have a future opportunity.

In the *Fourth Volume*, pages 581 and 582, the Pastor said, “Great delusions ... are just before us, ... [and] some of these ... may come *closest* upon those possessing the largest degree of the light of present truth.” Thus the consecrated, as well as the world, will be liable to deceptions. Matthew 24:24 implies that all of the consecrated who are not of the Little Flock will in some manner be at least temporarily deceived. Combining several Scriptures, we can conclude that the Great Company will be deceived, slumber in measure, and lose out on the oil for a time, but afterwards they will be restored, rescued, and saved “so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15). As the Apostle Peter stated, “The righteous [will] *scarcely* be saved” (1 Pet. 4:18).

If the whole world lies in the Wicked One—and has been all along, ever since the Flood when he became the god of this world—then 2 Thessalonians 2 is talking about an *added* deception aimed specifically at the consecrated. Put another way, Satan knows that a battle lies ahead between Christ and him, and that only one can win it.

In due time Satan will come to realize that *his* is the losing battle, but that time is future, for now his cause seems to be the winning one. And before this realization comes, Satan will get still more power than he currently has. Eventually Jesus will take a more active role as regards the dispossession of Satan. When Satan realizes the criticalness of the hour, he will want to destroy with him as many as possible. In addition, he will try to destroy all of God’s plans, to frustrate them as much as possible. He will direct his attack at the consecrated wherever they may be, at the godly element who sincerely love God and want to serve Him—whether in or out of the nominal system.

The progression of Satan's attack will be (1) the feet members, (2) the rest of the consecrated, and (3) the nation of Israel—against whatever pertains to God. The world is already blinded, deceived, and absorbed in anything other than the gospel: sports, sex, science, money, fame, etc. Therefore, Satan will concentrate his deception and attack on anyone God is dealing with, on those who have some measure of understanding and truth.

Revelation 12:17 reveals that at the time of the French Revolution, Satan began to lay plans which would culminate at the very end of the age. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Specifically, Satan is determined to destroy the "remnant" (the feet members) of the woman's "seed" (the true Church). Then the attack will focus on the remaining consecrated. When they are off the scene, Satan will fire at Israel through Gog and Magog.

The lying signs and wonders, the delusions and deceptions, will be slanted against the truly consecrated. The *plurality* of the deceptions shows that they will be along several lines and methods and that Satan will try anything to discourage, undercut, and deceive those who love God. To get at those in present-truth circles will require a more refined deception—something that those not in the proper heart condition will be unprepared for. Such will be unaware of the nature of his attack.

Since the delusion will be a "lie," the point is that the deluded ones will consider the lie to be *truth*. The Book of Jude suggests this delusion will be along the lines of the flesh, along the lines of compassion and love. Hence a *false conception of love* will be the real deluding power of the future. The reasoning will be based on the fact that "God is love" and the Bible expounds the principles of love. An example of such false reasoning even now is the belief of some brethren that Judas did not go into Second Death.

2 Thess. 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

2 Thess. 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The deluded ones will have "pleasure in unrighteousness" (*lawlessness*), that is, in truth not taught by God. The *Fifth Volume*, page 198, says, "The 'spirit of error' assumes to be wiser than the Word of God, and suggests to human reason that it should judge God according to its own standards, rather than correct its own standards by the Word of divine revelation." For example, some read about God, His love, and His character but interpret them upon the premises *they think* are correct, whereas we should desire to know what *God's Word really is teaching*.

If a fallen angel or even Satan should materialize and pose as the returned Lord, it would be an *obvious lie* to those of present truth and hence would not deceive a large portion of the Great Company class, let alone the elect. Therefore, we know the coming deception has to be along multiple lines.

In regard to deceiving the consecrated, if fallen angels materialize as individuals, they could pose as *teachers* in the true Church. They would have powers of elocution and flowery oratory so as to deceive the consecrated. We do not know the backgrounds of all those who come into the truth. And it is true that we should have a certain guilelessness and lack of suspicion in our character, yet we still need to have a watchful attitude. While to a certain extent we may accept

a brother based on the recommendations of others, when he *teaches* the Word of God, we must be careful—regardless of background. We must *analyze* what we hear to see whether or not it is truth. With proper analysis we would be able to discern that a message is wrong—even if it is presented by a materialized fallen angel. Such a thing could happen within the Truth movement itself, causing a great deception. Imagine the powers of such a fallen angel: rhetoric, predictions, “education,” great ability to quote Scriptures (to suit his evil purposes), etc. The only safeguard we have is the *truth* itself—not appearance or manner of speech or seeming outward zeal. The *message* is what counts. What a strong deception this would be for the consecrated—and a determining factor as to whether they would get life even as part of the Great Company! We must *beware of deceptive reasoning!*

The *initial* period of a deception determines whether or not one is deceived. After the deception becomes obvious, it is too late to pass the test. Suppose one chooses the wrong course and finds out later. Those who would be of the Great Company class will retrace their path as soon as their eyes are opened. However, it will be a very crucial period, for the temptation will be to save face and to go along with the deception until it leads to excesses. The Apostle Jude mentioned the class who are saved through extremity (the Great Company) and those who are not saved (Second Death). The initial period of the deception will be very important for determining whether one will be of the Little Flock. Then, as the deception begins to run its course, the Great Company will realize their mistake and take a proper stand, the result being their retrieval. The Second Death class will not take a proper stand and will, instead, go into even grosser excesses. Suppose one is partially deceived for a while and then *all of a sudden* sees the drastic effect of the deceptive doctrine. Such individuals will be *shocked* into a realization of what has happened.

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins teaches the principle of Proverbs 23:23 that we are to “*buy the truth, and sell it not.*” When the foolish virgins go into the marketplace to those who sell, they will learn from the sellers and return with the oil. Those who “sell” are those who will *sell out* the truth. When the foolish virgin class see what is happening—when they see some selling the truth as Judas did—they will be shocked into a realization of their own condition and recognize the danger in communicating with such individuals. The foolish virgins will be repentant, renew their consecrations, get more fullness of the Holy Spirit, and wash their robes white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). They will knock on the door after going through the experience of acquiring the oil. The Book of Jude, 2 Peter 2, the type of Judas, and the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins all tie together regarding the end of the age.

Now we will return to combined notes from the 1998 and 1981 studies.

2 Thess. 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

Comment: Paul broke salvation down into two steps: (1) the “sanctification [*process*] of the [Holy] Spirit” and (2) “belief of the truth.”

Paul showed earlier in the chapter that some who consecrate do not have the “love of the truth,” and for those individuals the picture is dark. Now he was saying he was hopeful that the Thessalonian brethren would continue to observe his teaching and doctrine, which would preserve them in the way. But he was also saying that the conditions he was discussing were a picture of the end of the age. In other words, he was writing to contemporary brethren and saying, more or less, “I am hopeful and confident that if you follow my teachings, you will make your calling and election sure. However, at the time of the Lord’s Second Presence, one class of the consecrated will be faithful, and another class will go into Second Death.”

Of course Paul knew that the Second Advent was almost 2,000 years away because he had been caught up to the third heaven in vision and given advance information. He knew that when he died, he would remain in the tomb for a long time until that future day. “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). Therefore, Paul knew that the Thessalonians, whom he was addressing, would not be tempted with the “man of sin” deception.

“From the beginning” refers to the beginning of the Thessalonians’ walk as consecrated Christians. Paul was reassuring them about the doctrine of the high calling and that God was dealing with them—and would continue to deal with them—through sanctification of the Holy Spirit and belief of the truth. In other words, the Christian walk is a *continuous* exercise and it is *REAL*.

In addition, the phrase “from the beginning” may have been intentionally inserted for Christians at the end of the age. While the phrase had a good application for the Thessalonians back there, it will also be helpful to those in the future who realize they have been deceived. Having a tender conscience, they will need reassurance that they can be made right with God and that He will still deal with them if they show contrition for having taken a wrong stand. It will help if they reflect on how God dealt with them at the beginning of their walk. Other Scriptures will comfort the Great Company class as well. At first, they will weep and have problems, but later on they will rejoice to be able to go to the marriage supper. First will come the anguish of spirit, then the rejoicing. If those who are left behind when the Little Flock is complete do not reflect on their calling at the beginning, they may get so discouraged that they will go into the world and give up *all* hope.

Although Peter and Judas both denied Jesus, Peter was simply suddenly swallowed up in the exigencies he was going through, but Judas premeditated and coldly calculated the betrayal, arranging for it in advance. The example of Peter will be helpful to the Great Company class in showing that proper remorse brings forgiveness.

As circumstances get shockingly worse in their development, those of the remaining consecrated who are in the right heart condition will experience a rude awakening—and there will be hope for such individuals. Those not in the proper heart condition will have no awakening—just a complete slumber and Second Death.

In the near future, the Truth movement as we know it will seriously deteriorate. We are not to be suspicious, but we should be alert. And we must have *confidence* that *God* can handle the matter. We do not have to “steady the ark” for Him (2 Sam. 6:6,7). Having this admonition alerts us in advance as to what can happen.

One other caution: The study of *only prophecy* can lead to a feeling of superiority.

2 Thess. 2:14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonians were severely persecuted, and Christians who live underneath persecuting conditions usually have a better chance of securing their salvation; that is, Christianity seems to survive more wholesomely in times of persecution. Paul was the messenger to the first Church, Ephesus, which means “desirable.” Of that period of the Church, Acts 5:13 says, “And of the rest durst no man join himself to them.” Why not? Because it was known that consecration is serious business, and probably, based on Scriptural circumstantial evidence, a

greater proportion of Christians from the Ephesus period will get life than from any other period. Paul pointed out only a few individuals by name as being unfaithful, and of those, he gave two a chance of recovery. In fact, even Satan had a chance of recovery, but there comes a point at which the die is cast. As babes in Christ, we are in a state of flux—we are in a growth period—but a time comes for crystallization in one form or the other, for good or for bad.

Notice that “*God hath ... chosen you*” and “*called you ... to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

2 Thess. 2:15 **Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.**

When we read the first epistle, we saw that the Thessalonians were very enthusiastic about the Second Advent. Paul talked repeatedly about the time of the end, the return of our Lord, and the *parousia*. Probably a good proportion of those he was addressing were faithful and did “stand fast”; this assessment is based on their character development and their joy and interest in seeing Jesus. The Apostle John says, “Every man that hath this hope in him [of seeing Jesus] purifieth himself” (1 John 3:3). Therefore, thinking on the subject of Jesus’ return and being with him is both helpful and essential in crystallizing our character.

Before Paul died, he said that all those in Asia had “turned away” from him (2 Tim. 1:15). But the Thessalonians and the Corinthians, for example, were not in Asia. Therefore, based on the information in the various epistles, we get a perspective of the overall situation. Usually those who are forgiven much *and realize it* are more steadfast in their character development.

In regard to “traditions,” Paul instructed the Corinthians to set aside on the first day of the week a sum of money, as they were able, that could be used to help the brotherhood in one way or another (1 Cor. 16:2). That was a tradition Paul established. Another tradition was coming together for a weekly meeting on Sunday, the first day of the week, rather than on Saturday, which was a Jewish custom (Acts 20:7).

As we have seen, some of the Thessalonian brethren thought Jesus had already returned, while others thought his presence was imminent. Therefore, Paul counseled the ecclesia to *patiently wait* for the *due time* of the Second Advent. They were to “stand fast” and hold to “traditions” (instructions) taught by his “word” (spoken in person when he was at Thessalonica) and “epistle” (letter). Paul had personally instructed them in regard to Jesus’ return, the man of sin, etc. In this context the word “traditions” means instruction from the apostles themselves.

A comparison of the three Scriptures listed below is helpful. Notice the repeated and/or similar *constructive* use of terms: “spirit[s]” or “traditions,” “word,” and “letter” or “epistle.”

1. “That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by *spirit*, nor by *word*, nor by *letter* as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand” (2 Thess. 2:2).
2. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the *traditions* which ye have been taught, whether by *word*, or our *epistle*” (2 Thess. 2:15).
3. “And I saw three unclean *spirits* like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the *spirits* of devils, working miracles” (Rev. 16:13,14a).

Down through the age, “spirits of devils” (erroneous demonic doctrines) were used by Satan and the fallen angels to promote Papacy, Satan’s greatest instrument for deceiving the world as

regards the message of Christ. Thus the *principle* of false teaching has existed in Christianity from the apostles' day up to the present. The Revelation text is telling us that, in addition, three unclean froglike spirits (doctrines of demons) will come out of the mouths of the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet at the end of the age.

2 Thess. 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

How clear it is that God and Jesus are two separate beings! Paul was saying that *both* of them, the Heavenly Father and the Son, want us to make our calling and election sure. They have given the instruction and the means by which we can be received into their communion beyond the grave. Knowing that their interest and concern are operative toward us at all times should be a consistent and constant consolation to us throughout our Christian life.

2 Thess. 2:17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

We should comfort each other (comfort one another's hearts) with a fraternal hope and expression. Stated another way, we should build one another up in the most holy faith with the promises of God's Word.

Paul said, "I have not shunned to declare unto you *all* the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Paul's whole counsel included future events, especially his epistles to the Thessalonians and the subject of the man of sin. Jesus took time in Matthew 24 and 25 to discuss future events. The Apostle John recorded the Book of Revelation—future events from the time the brotherhood started. Therefore, if we do not have the interest in and/or are not receiving instruction on future events, there is something wrong. Unfortunately, many discredit the study of prophecy because expectations did not materialize at a particular date, but instead of avoiding the subject, we should be led by mistakes or miscalculations to an even closer examination of prophecy.

In verses 15–17, the Apostle Paul was telling the Thessalonians that they should wait patiently, that God loved them, that the hope of the high calling was a good hope, that grace was the underlying element, that they should be comforted with the message of truth, and that they should not get into a frenzy of thinking the Lord was already present. Incidentally, *uninformed* energy and zeal can lead to problems, as it did with Papacy's thinking the reign had come and, accordingly, putting "heretics" to death and having the hierarchy exercise authority and rule in "Christ's Kingdom" *prematurely*.

2 Thess. 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

"Finally" signifies concluding thoughts. "Pray for us." Paul was asking for prayers primarily for Timothy, Silas, and himself but also for others such as Luke (2 Thess. 1:1). Paul asked for the prayers of the brethren to the end that "the word of the Lord may have free course [run—see King James margin], and be glorified, even as it is with you." Other translations have that the word of the Lord might speed on, go forward unhindered, spread rapidly, triumph where it goes, and bring God glory. While Paul was not asking for prayers to escape persecution, he was anxious to fulfill his responsibility in spreading the Lord's message.

Next Paul complimented the Thessalonians, who were suffering for their faith and Christian walk: "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may ... be glorified, *even as it is with you*." Their efforts and zeal cost them something. In the present life, the Thessalonians were disesteemed, but in the Kingdom Age, when films are played and replayed, others will admire what they did and how they stood for the truth.

2 Thess. 3:2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

Paul continued his prayer request of the Thessalonians by adding “that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.” What did Paul mean? It was one thing for him to be persecuted and then go on preaching the gospel, but if he were put to death or jailed for life, his ministry would come to an abrupt end. Paul was anxious for the whole world of his day to hear the message of truth, and since this epistle was written near the middle of his ministry, there remained much work to do. He desired to live long enough to fulfill his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Therefore, he asked the Thessalonians to pray that the message would go forth unhindered. If Paul, Silas, and Timothy had been imprisoned with no access to the brethren, Paul’s commission would have gone unfulfilled.

In regard to Paul’s prayer to be “delivered from unreasonable and wicked men,” there are two types of persecution. The Lord’s hand can be seen more clearly in one type because the persecution is for the Word of God. To be persecuted for the truth is an honor and a privilege. There is more meaning in being persecuted by seemingly intelligent people with rational minds, whether in or out of the brotherhood, for if one is persecuted and put to death by irrational people—like a mob—the suffering is not because of the truth but appears to be an accident. Another example is dying from a stray bullet that is randomly fired at people down below or from a moving car. As prospective saints, we would rather be persecuted for righteousness’ sake than die a seemingly accidental death. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean one is not of the Little Flock if he dies an “accidental” death. That type of death is simply not our preference. To state the matter another way, being burned at the stake for the Word of God, as Tyndale was, is a more meaningful death. The pain is not necessarily removed, but the *joy of suffering for Christ* is added to the pain.

“For all men have not faith.” Not all men believe in God.

In sequence Paul’s itinerary covered Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth; that is, he went from the northern end of Achaia to the middle part and then to Corinth. Paul wrote this second epistle from Corinth. Silas and Timothy had returned to him there in Corinth with news about the progress of the Thessalonian Church, and based on their report, he wrote the second letter. God had told Paul, “I have much people in this city [Corinth],” so Paul stayed for 1 1/2 years and wrote both epistles from there (Acts 18:10,11). During this time the Jews persecuted him and brought him to the proconsul Gallio, but Gallio would not listen to the Jews’ charges. Then the Greeks persecuted Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and again Gallio would not listen. Paul had an experience that is implied, where they tried to apprehend him. The Jews planned to kill Paul when he left Corinth, and knowing of their evil intentions, he asked the Thessalonians to pray for him.

The prayer request and the second epistle were written near the end of Paul’s stay in Corinth. This time frame means that the Thessalonians had been consecrated for only about a year and a half, yet they had made great progress. Paul hoped that the other churches would make as much progress and that the Word of God would similarly activate them (“even as it is with you”—verse 1).

The Bereans were on an even higher plane of activity because they diligently studied the Word on a daily basis, but nevertheless, the Thessalonians were to be commended. Paul wanted them to get the truth as fast as possible, for he knew the growth would come later.

2 Thess. 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

“The Lord is *faithful*, who shall ... keep you from [the] evil [one].” Paul expressed his confidence that nothing could frustrate God’s cause, even though he had a sense of nervousness about his own responsibility.

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

Paul exuded confidence in the Thessalonians because he could see that they had progressed considerably in maturity of character. In their zeal they grew fast—just like Stephen, who made his calling and election sure in perhaps one year’s time. His zeal, knowledge, and action were so rapid and unusual that he matured like a rocket. In almost all cases, the Christian experience is a *marathon* race, but there are occasional exceptions.

Paul was confident that the Thessalonians both were doing (present tense) and would do (in the future) the things commanded. In 2 Thessalonians 2:16, Paul said that both Jesus and the Father were concerned for and interested in their welfare. Now he added that the brethren were doing well, and he had confidence they would continue to do well and follow the traditions and instructions he had left with them by word of mouth and by epistle.

2 Thess. 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Paul especially counseled the Thessalonians to develop “into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” They were somewhat impetuous in their response to the truth. Therefore, Paul counseled them not to exhaust themselves in their early zeal, for they had to run a *long* race. If they ran too fast and furiously in the beginning, they would become winded and would be unable to finish the marathon race.

Notice the order: (1) love of God and (2) patient waiting. How could one patiently wait for the fulfillment of God’s plans and purposes without first knowing them and having a love for, and confidence and faith in, God? This combination constitutes a “love of God,” which is the key to success. Obedience, trust, knowledge, love, faith—all are embodied in knowing God.

2 Thess. 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

2 Thess. 3:7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

2 Thess. 3:8 Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

2 Thess. 3:9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.

2 Thess. 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

Paul first observed the problem of “disorderliness” (of loafing and not working either physically or spiritually) when he was briefly in Thessalonica for several months. When he noticed these conditions, he was careful to set a good personal example. The fact that he had to

bring up this matter again in his second epistle means that sponging had become a growing danger in the church there.

Sponging without working obligated other brethren. If such individuals had been laboring in word and in doctrine, then that might have been a contingency, but even so, it was wrong to embarrass someone into providing hospitality, to obligate that person for a lengthy period of time, without the *spontaneity* of hospitality being offered. Here in Thessalonica many were not only sponging but also refraining from laboring in doctrine, and thus avoiding persecution. Instead they were loafing and talking (even being “busybodies”—see verse 11). They were not supporting themselves with a profession, and they were not witnessing either.

Verse 6 is a harsh commandment. Spongers were to be denied fellowship. “We command you ... in the name of ... Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.” This situation was somewhat different from that in 1 Corinthians 5, which was more serious in some respects. Here the command was to “withdraw”; with the Corinthians the command was to expel, that is, to excommunicate. Moreover, the Corinthian instruction was to the *ecclesia*, whereas this was a command to an *individual* regarding everyday living. When someone visits us in our home, that situation is apart from the *ecclesia* arrangement. “Withdrawing” from the visitor means to make him feel unwelcome. However, he is not to be treated as an enemy (see verse 15). The idea is to show the sponger that we do not appreciate his behavior, his walking in a way that is not orderly and not according to Paul’s teaching (“tradition”—verse 6).

Because Paul was *very active* in the Lord’s service, he was actually entitled to accept the hospitality and food that were offered, but he purposely refrained from doing so in order to set a good example. The “disorderly” ones were not entitled to receive hospitality, however, for they were *inactive* in the Lord’s service, as well as not trying to support themselves.

“Sponging” would not be staying just a day or two but would involve taking up residence and tying down the host(ess) to supply meals, whereas the party should have worked and earned his own food. Not only was such an individual not doing the Lord’s work, but he was hindering the host and/or hostess from doing the Lord’s work too. Paul’s advice strengthened those who might be timid in this matter, being hesitant to tell a sponging brother or sister to leave and to extend coolness. It would be wrong for a brother to give the impression that he was coming to visit for only a few days and then stay for an extended period of time.

2 Thess. 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

Sponging can lead to busybodying and evil speaking. Not only would the sponger interfere with the host’s serving the Lord, but he might tear down the brotherhood with evil speaking and undercutting and undermining that would discourage the host from associating with other brethren.

Possibly this could occur in a consecrated marriage where one or the other partner willfully and deliberately ignored his or her duties, that is, homemaking or earning a living. And another thing could happen. In the Society, activity and service were given the prime emphasis, and character development was denied. As a result, it was said that the wife or the husband should devote a lot of time to Pioneer service, thus ignoring regular duties, because witnessing was a “higher service.” This policy often left the sisters with a financial burden.

In a consecrated marriage, *if* there is a *real* grievance, the one party can suggest a separation (but not a divorce) to try to bring the erring one to his or her senses. This form of

“withdrawal” would prevent a situation from going from bad to worse and becoming a crystallized part of one’s character.

“Working not *at all*” means working *neither* physically nor spiritually.

2 Thess. 3:12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Paul said not only that these individuals should work but that they should work “with quietness,” that is, *without busybodying*. Verse 12 is directed to the disorderly one, to the one doing the imposing, whereas verse 6 gives instruction to the grieved one, to the one being imposed upon. Again Paul commanded in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, this time commanding the disorderly one to work and eat his own bread.

2 Thess. 3:13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

2 Thess. 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

2 Thess. 3:15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Sometimes there is group, or communal, judgment where the ecclesia expels (1 Corinthians 5), and sometimes, as here, it is an individual matter. The Apostle Paul’s advice and backing would have encouraged the one being imposed upon to confront the issue and make the sponger feel unwelcome if he did not reform.

“Note that man” means that an *individual* should *personally* note the disorderly one. However, *if*, after being warned, the sponger leaves and imposes upon another family, etc., etc., then the matter should be taken up by the ecclesia with excommunication being the result. On the other hand, *if*, after being made to feel unwelcome, the sponger leaves and then works to earn his living, he should immediately be received back warmly by the one imposed upon—without any formal repentance through the ecclesia. Nevertheless, an apology should be made to the host.

It is helpful to compare verse 14 (“have no company with him”) with 1 Corinthians 5:11 (“I have written unto you not to keep company”). The Corinthians text pertains to fellowship *outside* the ecclesia as well as *inside*. It stresses disfellowship both in the ecclesia and socially. The Thessalonians text emphasizes the outside or social life but is silent regarding the ecclesia in the hope that the erring one will change. Only if the sponger persists should the matter be taken to the ecclesia.

2 Thess. 3:16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

2 Thess. 3:17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

2 Thess. 3:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Paul dictated the letter but added the last two verses in his *own* handwriting. He wanted it known that these strong commands and advice were from *him* (not from Silas and Timothy).

“The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle.” Here and in a

few other instances, Paul included the phrase “with mine own hand” (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; Philem. 19). Nevertheless, although the actual phrase is omitted in his other epistles, Paul wrote the salutation in every epistle. In other words, at the end of each of his epistles, he wrote a similar expression about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Rom. 16:20,24; 1 Cor. 16:23; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; Col. 4:18; 1 Thess. 5:28; 2 Thess. 3:18; 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philem. 25; Heb. 13:25). Some critics claim Paul did not write the Book of Hebrews because the style is so different, but the same ending ascribes it to Paul. (The critics do not realize that the style is so different because Paul’s *purpose* was different.) The epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude end in a different way, not mentioning “grace.” The only exception is the Book of Revelation, but that book *clearly states* the Apostle John to be the stenographer. Incidentally, the only apostle who had a frame of reasoning similar to Paul’s was James, although he lacked Paul’s capability.

In his own handwriting, Paul wrote an expression about grace at the end of each of his epistles in order to stamp his letters as authentic. Since he dictated the epistles to others, his epistles were written in various handwritings and, without his addendum, could easily have been counterfeited.

One or two epistles, such as the Book of Hebrews, Paul wrote entirely with his own hand. Several epistles were dictated by Paul and written down by someone the recipients could also trust to deliver a genuine epistle. One such individual was Timothy, who served as Paul’s right-hand man. After Timothy recorded an epistle, he took it to the particular church to whom it was addressed. The church then accepted the epistle as coming from Paul. In other words, every epistle had to be authenticated to be sure it was not a forgery. Since Paul thought an epistle might be deemed a counterfeit, he authenticated it by writing a brief note in his own handwriting. He characteristically opened or concluded an epistle with a benediction about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, one who was familiar with Paul’s teaching would have recognized certain repetitive phrases, or habits of speech, as coming from him.

Of course the circumstances under which the end of 2 Thessalonians was written were a little different from Paul’s writing to the Colossians from Rome while under house arrest (“in bonds”) and manacled to a soldier with one hand so that he had only one hand free. Therefore, it became very meaningful for him to write just that one verse. Under similar conditions Paul wrote Philemon and Ephesians. How zealous Paul was, and how providential that the soldier(s) did not interrupt the witnessing! Paul was right there in the Praetorian, in Caesar’s household, on the emperor’s doorstep, figuratively speaking. Through sheer zeal, preaching, and lack of fear, he was even responsible for the conversion of some in Caesar’s household.

This second epistle to the Thessalonians was written around the middle of Paul’s ministry. Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon were written near the end of his ministry, as were the epistles to Titus and Timothy. Perhaps the original letters, or fragments thereof, will be found in the future. Similarly, Jeremiah’s deed will be found. The prophet made two copies, one of which was hidden for preservation.