

*Paul's first epistle  
To  
The Thessalonians*



*Bible Study Series*

*By*

*Victor A. Jawadrose*

[www.oasisoflivingwater.com](http://www.oasisoflivingwater.com)

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Paul established the church in Thessalonica during his second missionary trip in about 51 A.D. Few months later, while in Corinth, he wrote two epistles to the Thessalonians few months apart. Some scholars believe that the second Epistle was written in Ephesus, but Paul's 18-month stay in Corinth (Acts 18:11) gave him ample time to write the two epistles.

As we recall, while Paul and his companions Silvanus (Silas), Timothy and Probably Luke (who wrote the book of Acts) were in Troas, a vision appeared to him in the night: A man of Macedonia, stood and pleaded with him, saying, "come over to Macedonia and help us." (Acts 16:9) And the Holy Scripture tells us, that he immediately sought to go to Macedonia.

So, he crossed the Aegean Sea and landed there. His first stop was in Philippi where he and Silas were jailed for one night and that was a blessing for the Jail-keeper, for through them he and his household believed and was baptized.

Then he passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia and arrived at Thessalonica.

***Author of the Epistle:***

Paul without any doubt, as he writes his name in v.1.

Paul's authorship to this epistle went undisputed for centuries, until recently when some radical critics disputed it, but their claim did not stand.

***Time written:***

51 A.D. as mentioned above.

This has been archeologically verified by an inscription in the temple of Apollos at Delphi (near Corinth), which dates Gallio's service as proconsul in Achaia to 51-52 A.D. (see Acts 18:12-17).

And since Paul's epistle to the Galatians was written between 49-51 A.D., (which is known to be his first canonical epistle), then this epistle would be considered his second one.

***Purpose of the epistle:***

To strengthen their faith and assure them of Christ's return.

***Recipients of the epistle:***

Thessalonica became the capital of Macedonia in 168 B.C., and although it was part of the Roman Empire, yet it was a “free city” which means that it was ruled by its own citizen rulers (called Politarchs) (Acts 17:6, 8).

Its original name was “Therma” which means hot spring, and because of its natural beauty and weather and the hot spring, it was chosen by Cassander to be his residence, and he changed its name to Thessalonica after his wife Thessalonice who was a half sister of Alexander the Great.

And because of its geo-strategic location being on the great east-west highway (The Via Egnathia or The Egnathian Road), which connects Rome in the west to Constantinople in the east, Thessalonica became the center of both political and commercial activities of Macedonia and was known to be “The mother of all Macedonia”.

That is why Paul was so nervous about the success of his mission there, so much so that he specially sent Timothy to bring him back news about the church there, though he just left Thessalonica few weeks or months before. That also explains why his two Epistles were just few months apart, and also few months from his departure.

He knew that it is not just another city where he should preach the Gospel, but if his mission succeeds there, then the Gospel would spread as much east and west as the Via Egnathia can extend.

As we recall, he was chased out of the city by the zeal Jews who were upset and angry at his great success in such a short period of time (3weeks).

So, he left Thessalonica in a hurry, without actually establishing a solid church in its complete sense, meaning to ordain elders, deacons or disciples to carry on the work after him.

Its population in Paul’s days was about 200,000.

And it was 100 miles away from Philippi, a long trip which Paul may have made on foot, or least likely on a donkey, for the horses were used for chariots and high ranked soldiers like centurions, not even for the regular soldiers; and donkeys were the only transport means for commons.

The rest of events happening in this trip is all detailed in Acts 17.

Eventually, passing through Berea and Athens, Paul reached Corinth, where he was rejoined with Silas and Timothy. There, Timothy gave a good report about the church in Thessalonica, which triggered Paul to write this Epistle.

### ***Background:***

In spite of the encouraging news, which Timothy brought, there were some problems in Thessalonica, which Paul dealt with in this Epistle:

- 1- Allegations from the opposition about his preaching. (2:1-12)
- 2- Persecution. (2:13-16)
- 3- Moral impurity. (4:1-8)
- 4- Sluggard lifestyle, (4:9-12)
- 5- Wrong understanding of prophetic events. (4:13-5:11)

### ***Challenging Subjects:***

- 1- The coming wrath. (1:10&5:9)
- 2- Christ’s return. (2:19; 3:13; 4:15 &5:23)

- 3- The rapture of the Church.(4:13-18)
- 4- The meaning and time of the Day of the Lord.(5:1-11)

**Outline of the Epistle:**

- 1- Paul's Greeting. (1:1)**
- 2- Paul's personal thoughts.(1:2- 3:13)**
  - A- Thanksgiving for the Church. (1:2-10)
  - A- Reminders for the Church. (2:1-16)
  - B- Concerns for the Church. (2:17-3:13)
- 3- Paul's practical instructions. (4:1- 5:22)**
  - A- On moral purity. (4:1-8)
  - B- On disciplined living. (4:9-12)
  - C- On death and rapture. (4:13-18)
  - D- On Holy living and the Day of the Lord. (5:1-11)
  - E- On Church relationships. (5:12-15)
  - F- On the basics of Christian living. (5:16-22)
- 4- Paul's benediction. (5:23,24)**
- 5- Paul's final remarks. (5:25-28)**

## 1- Paul's Greeting. (1:1)

**Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy.**

Here Paul is affirming a fact that both Sylvanus and Timothy are not just companions of travel, but are as active in ministry as he is.

Let us know something about each one of them:

**Paul:**

Before conversion; was called Saul (Acts 7:58) (his Hebrew given name which means Asked of Yahweh); while his Greek or Latin name was Paul (Paulos). It was not uncommon in those days for a Jew to have or to be known by two names: one of them is the true or given name and that is always a Hebrew name and usually it means something biblically like the gift of God, or called by God, or God heard, or son of encouragement and so on. The second name is usually Greek or Latin to facilitate the regular day-by-day dealings with common Romans or the officials.

He was known as Saul in the book of Acts till Chapter 9:13 where the Holy Scripture states **"But Saul who is also known as Paul"**. After that he was always mentioned as Paul.

Nothing more is written about him in the book of Acts, except that he was a prime witness to the stoning of Stephen and that he consented to his death. (Acts 7:58; 8:1)

His conversion: This whole magnificent story is mentioned in Acts 9.

After conversion: His deeds and missionary trips are all mentioned in the rest of the book of acts. His Epistles to different Churches and Individuals are well known, and practically it furnished the whole basic Doctrines of Christianity.

These Epistles are as follows in their Biblical appearance: Romans, 1<sup>st</sup>&2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1<sup>st</sup>&2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, 1<sup>st</sup>&2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews (Contemporary Scholars do not consider it Paul's).

His life story:

Born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3), the capital of Cilicia, a province of the Roman Empire. Though he was Jewish, yet he enjoyed the Roman Citizenship, since he was born in a province of the Roman Empire.

Tarsus was a large center of science and politics because of its strategic location on the main east- west Roman built highway, connecting Rome to the occupied eastern provinces.

Born of Pharisee parents, he was raised under the tightest strict rituals and life style that the Jewish religion can permit. He even considered himself blameless according to the law (Acts 23:1 & Phil. 3:6)).

After finishing his adolescence education in Tarsus, he was sent to Jerusalem to study the law under Gamaliel, the greatest teacher of the law of all times.

He was a zeal very religious man, so much so, that he hated Christianity and whoever speaks for it. That led him to persecute Christians to the extent of dragging believers from their homes to jails and even killing or consent to kill some of them in Jerusalem and its surroundings.

Didn't the Lord Himself say:" The time will come that whosoever kills you thinks that he does God a service." (John 16:2). So, actually Paul in his blind zeal, thought that he was doing God a favor.

He did not stop there, but securing some letters of authority from the high priests, hr went to Damascus to catch those believers who fled there.

Here was the end of his previous life and the beginning of a new creation and zeal for He Whom he previously persecuted.

**Sylvanus (Silas):**

This is a Greek name originally taken from an Aramaic root word "Shnela" which means Saul.

He first came in the picture, when he and Judas surnamed Barsabas (Chief men among the brethren of Jerusalem) were delegated by the Apostles and Elders, to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch carrying a letter advising the Gentile churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia that they do not have to be circumcised, but to abstain from meals offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled and fornication. (Acts 15:22-33)

He was also a prophet and with Judas (Barsabas), he preached and exhorted the believers in Antioch. (Acts 15:32)

Then he joined Paul on his second missionary trip after the disagreement that happened between Paul and Barnabas when Paul refused Mark (Barnabas' nephew) to accompany them. (Acts 15:35-41).

He was imprisoned with Paul for one night in Philippi. And we should not forget how the Holy Spirit worked in them that night, for the Holy Scripture tells us that at midnight they prayed and sang praises. And the story ended in a very pleasant picture when the prison keeper and his family accepted Christ as their Lord and savior, and were

baptized. (Acts 16:24-34). And probably that family became one of the pillars of the church in Philippi.

Peter in his first Epistle, mentioned his name as the hand writer of it (5:12)

### **Timothy:**

A Greek young man, from a Jewish believer mother Eunice (Acts 16:1 & 2 Tim. 1:5) and a Greek father (Acts 16:1). His mother was faithful in teaching him the Holy Scriptures since his childhood.(2 Tim. 3:14,15)

Him, his mother and his Grandmother Lois, probably were converted to Christianity during Paul's first missionary visit to Lystra, their hometown. (Acts 14:21).

On his second missionary trip, passing back by Lystra (Acts 16:1), Paul found in Timothy a man of love and zeal to serve the Lord. So, he asked him to join them (Paul and Silas) in the work of God. But because he was Greek, Paul had to have him circumcised (Acts 16:1-3) so that he would not be a stumbling block to the Jews, because as we notice, although Paul was called the Apostle of Gentiles, yet the Holy Scripture tells us that in every city Paul passed by, he preached the good news of salvation in the Synagogues first.

Apart from accompanying Paul in his travels, we should not forget his great work of correcting the Heresies and false teachings and also establishing the governing system in the churches of Ephesus and Corinth. (1Cor. 4:17 & 1Tim. 4:12).

On many occasions, Paul called him "Son". And he was well entrusted by Paul (Phil 2:19,20) as being as faithful and caring as he is.

Having full confidence in his abilities, Paul sent him to few side missions (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17 & Phil. 2:19).

Paul mentioned him in several of his Epistles such as 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians and Philemon.

He was imprisoned in Rome and then released; for The Holy Scripture tells us that Paul asked Him to go to Rome (2Tim. 4:9, 21). Then he was released from Prison (Heb. 13:23). And that is the last we hear of him in the Holy Scripture.

### **Unto the church of the Thessalonians.**

Paul usually addressed almost all of his Epistles to the Saints except in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians where he addressed them to the church as the case in this Epistle.

As for his Epistle to The Galatians, Paul did not mention neither saints nor church. (It seems to me that he was very angry with them).

### **In God the Father**

Christians are not simply people who have heard of God or Christ and just followed Him; they live in Him day by day as He also lives in them.

### **The Lord Jesus Christ**

Associating the Father and the Son shows that no higher view could possibly be taken of the person of Jesus Christ.

And using the word **Lord** indicates that He is God, because the word Lord is the regular word for **Jehovah** in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint). It conveys the sense of Divinity.

“**Jesus**” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word **Joshua** which means Jehovah is salvation.

“**Christ**” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word **Messiah** which means the anointed One.

By putting all these words together in one sentence, Paul wanted to convey a view of a person who alone can be ranked with God.

“**Grace be unto you and Peace**” (Paul’s Hallmark in all his writings)

Grace is the Greek greeting, and it is something that causes joy, favor, and kindness. But God’s Grace is God’s good free gift to mankind. What could be ever better than that free gift on Calvary?!

Peace is the Hebrew greeting (Shalom) and it means prosperity in its widest sense. And it was regarded as God’s gift as we use it now.

## 1- Paul’s Personal Thoughts. (1:2-3:13)

### A- Thanksgiving for the Church (1:2-10)

**Verse 2-4** is actually a prayer of thanksgiving, where he indicates that it is continuous and constant, and that he mentions them in this prayer.

**Verse 3** is a three fold thanksgiving:

Work of Faith meaning your work, which springs from your faith. We know that Paul is so emphatic that salvation is a matter of faith alone and not works. So, here, he emphasizes the good works that characterizes the life of faith.

Labor of Love out of love, they have labored to the point of weariness.

There are several words for love in the Greek language; the most popular one used in the New Testament is **Agape**, which describes God’s great love and what it gave us on the cross. And certainly the Hollywood meaning of love will never do it, if we wish to understand the New Testament.

God loves us although He knows fully well our complete unworthiness. He loves us knowing that we cannot repay, for there is nothing that we can bring Him that is not given by Him.

Indeed, it is only in the Cross, that we can really know what the pure love of God for sinners is.

Patience of Hope: Patience as William Barclay says, is the spirit, which can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope. This springs from hope, not as its dictionary meaning because it is actual solid certainty. In the New Testament, hope is always something which is as yet future, but which is completely certain.

We notice here, that Paul is talking about the Triad (Faith, Hope & Love), his hallmark which he also repeated it in 5:8, and mentioned in Romans 5:2-5 ; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:13 ; Galatians 5:6 ; Colossians 1:4-5. and in Hebrews 6:10-12 and 10:22-24.

Peter mentioned it once in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:2

“**Beloved, Election of God**”

Brotherhood was a very real thing in the early church, which was composed of different races and from different classes: low, high, men, women, children, slaves and so on.

The Holy Scripture in Acts 2:43-47, tells us that they were in one accord in prayer, fasting and normal daily life.

Christian brotherhood is not like the worldly ones we hear of, like clubs or fraternities; it is the fellowship of the redeemed in Christ and in each other.

Election is a Divine action of God. It means His own. Is there anything greater and more precious than that?!

### **Verse 5**

Here, he proceeds to give reason for his previous statement; and that is because the good news he preached them before, is true and real, because it was not just words but it is three folded:

#### **“In power”**

Because it is the power of God unto salvation for whosoever believes (Roman 1:16). It is not only that the Gospel tells of power, but when the Gospel is preached, God is in there and He is working, Whenever the Gospel is faithfully proclaimed, there is power.

#### **“In the Holy Spirit”**

This power is also associated with the Holy Spirit Who leads people to salvation, which God has prepared for them. It is not an evil power deluding people with false promises.

#### **“In much assurance”**

That is because they and all believers put their trust in Christ.

### **Verse 6**

Here, Paul points out how much they suffered like him and the Lord, when they accepted the word of God. But indeed, it was received with the great joy of the Holy Spirit, though the circumstances were of severe affliction for both Paul and them as they were harassed by the Jews.

#### **“With joy of the Holy Spirit”**

It is true that the believer will experience tribulation (John 16:33), but it is equally true that he will have inner serenity and joy, which nothing in the world can give or take away (John 16:22).

See for example, how the early believers were rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for The Lord’s name (Acts 5:41).

This wasn’t autosuggestion, neither then nor now, but it is of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Scriptures tells us, that joy is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

### **Verse 7**

The way you received the word with such joy in spite of the circumstances, was talked about everywhere, so much so, that you set yourselves as examples to the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

### **Verse 8**

#### **“Sounded out the word of God”**

Sounded out like a trumpet echoing its call allover, even the very far will hear it.

#### **“The word of God”**

Talking to those who were influenced before by the famous Greek philosophy, Paul assures them that this is not another philosophy, but it is the word of God which has been committed to you, that is why you present it without apology or amendment, that



we have nothing to add to it. **Verse 9**

For it also speaks for us everywhere how was your conversion. And here, Paul puts three points:

**“You turned to God from Idols”**

To become Christian, one must break with old religion and habits. There must be a turning point from our Idols. Conversion in its sense implies changing direction and re-orientation of our whole life. This was true then and it is equally true now.

**“To serve the living and true God”**

Paul, here, is comparing the God of Christianity as being living versus their previous Gods, which were dumb, deaf and blind. And since ours is living, then He is the True God who is responding to our needs and looking daily after our welfare.

**“Waiting for His Son from Heaven”**

This third point is in verse 10.

The word “Waiting” implies the notion of patience, trust and sustained expectation.

Paul here, stresses on the second coming of the Son Whom He (i.e. God) raised from the dead.

Then Chapter 1 finishes by the fact that this Jesus is the one who delivers us from the wrath to come.

The word “Wrath” sounds horrible to the human mind. But we should not measure God’s actions by our standards that spring from our sinful nature, because God is Holy.

The wrath of God is not a vindictive passion, and it does not imply lack of control as a human wrath. It gives a strong expression of the active opposition of a Holy God for all that is evil. It is also inevitable and it will be manifested at the end of all things.

**B- Reminders for the church (2:1-16)**

Before we start this section, we need to know certain fact.

Paul was accused among other things (as we shall see later), of insincerity and that he was actually concerned of making money out of his converts rather than proclaiming the Gospel as he appears to be. He is no more than a regular orator or speaker who earns his living by speaking. That was true about orators in those days; they were paid for their speeches. But that was not Paul’s motive. His sincere motive was solely for preaching the Gospel. In defending himself, he depended on his confidence in them that they know the truth, because the facts were common knowledge to all, that he earned his living by working by his own hands..

Now, we go back to the Holy Scripture.

He starts by the word “**For**”. This actually links to verse 9 in chapter one. There, he puts outsiders as witnesses, but here, he puts them as their own witnesses. So in a sense, he tells them: you need no outsider to witness, you yourselves know that our (himself and his companions) coming to you was not without fruit

“**was not in vain**”. Some scholars interpret it as hollow, empty or lacking earnestness.

So, in a way, he is affirming the well-known purpose of his visit to them.

Then, he refers to the shameful incidence in Philippi, which would certainly discourage anyone to pursue his preaching; but certainly not Paul.

He and Silas suffered so much indignity in that jail, that he insisted that the magistrates themselves must come to remedy their wrongdoing. Yet with such hurt and indignity, Paul proceeded to Thessalonica **“Waxed bold”**. This has a very interesting and powerful meaning of feeling at home with no sense of stress or strain. This attitude involves boldness and confidence and that is why he mentioned **“in our God”** for that is the source of this boldness and confidence. And because he lived in his God, he was always at home no matter what the outward circumstances are.

So, he proceeds to present **“The Gospel of God”**. Here, he points out that it is not a gospel of men. It is the Gospel of the Living God Whom he talked about in chapter one. This Gospel does take its origin from God, it talks about God, and it invites man to take God’s offer of salvation. Please note that this phrase **“The Gospel of God”** is repeated few times in this chapter.

But the Gospel of God will always be met **“with much conflict”** from those who are destined to perish. But one has to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12 & 2 Tim.4:7). And though he is talking about Philippi, yet he is reminding them of the intense opposition he met in Thessalonica so much so that he was forced to leave after 3 weeks from his arrival there indicating that his preaching was not easy at all. So, how could it be that he is doing that to collect money ?!

Now, we shall talk about the other accusations:

- 1- Accused of being completely mistaken in his preaching and that he misunderstand or misinterpret the Old Testament prophecies. He answers by saying **“Our exhortation was not in error” Verse 3**. Other translation is “Deceit”.
- 2- Accused of uncleanness, which denotes moral impurity. Now, we should know that sexual impurity was a regular practice of idol worshippers in those days (we have seen that when we studied Ephesians before). Ritual prostitution was carried regularly. The idea behind it was by doing that, they have achieved union with their god by union with one his consecrated priestesses. Jews in those days frequently accused Christians as being morally impure. Paul answers by saying **“Nor of uncleanness”. Verse 3**
- 3- Accused of trickery. The word **“Guile”** refers originally to catching fish by bait. Which means that man tricked the fish by giving it bait, then the word was used on a wider scale as using trickery for gain. So, they accused Paul of using trickery to ensnare people to follow him. He answers by saying **“Nor Guile” Verse 3**.

Then in verse 4, he expands his defense a little further.

- 1- He cannot possibly be in error because he is **“entrusted by God”** to carry His Gospel to the people.
- 2- He cannot possibly be impure because he is **“approved by God”**.
- 3- He cannot possibly be a tricker or Guile because He is **“pleasing God not men”**. This reminds me of what Peter and the other Apostles told the Council in Acts 5:29 **“ We ought to obey God rather than men”**. NKJV  
Paul in his mission is actually serving men, but not with the aim of pleasing them, but in serving them, he pleases God.

The word “**Tests our hearts**” Reminds me of what the Psalmist says in Psalm 139 “**O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.**” Indeed, God in His Holiness Whose word is divine would not entrust anyone to proclaim it, unless He has searched him in and out. The word heart in the Holy Scripture involves the thoughts, the intentions, the feelings, the emotions and all the inwards and outwards of the person. So, when God searches the Heart of a person, He searches the whole of that person, for nothing is hidden from Him. And that I suppose is what the Psalmist meant in Psalm 139.

So, in a sense Paul, has been searched by God and approved, otherwise he would have not been allowed to carry the Gospel to the nations.

And when he says our hearts, he means his, Silas’ and Timothy’s. But of course it means us too.

Verse 5

“**For**” This still links with verse 3

“**Neither at any time**”

Paul is talking about the time he was preaching amidst them, but this again holds good for any time and in our present time as well.

Then he mentioned three points that he and his companions did not do: -

- 1- **Flattery**: It is a means or a policy by which one can convincingly persuade another to do his will. So, it goes very well with the trickery or deceit he was talking about in the previous verse. We notice here, that he says, “**As you know**”. Which means that the matter is common knowledge, and he is asking them to witness for that.
- 2- **Cloak**: Cloaks are used so often to conceal one’s identity. So, it is a sort of deceit also, although it might have been used here to conceal one’s real motive. So, in a sense, Paul is saying here that his evangelism was not a cover for underlying covetousness. And the word covetousness signifies an eager desire to have and to have more. It applies to anything that one can desire including sexual immorality (which he was accused of) where the person looks for gratification of his own lust without any regard to the right of others. It is interesting here, that Paul associates covetousness with cloak, since human beings never admit to covetousness, and like to keep it secret. It is also interesting that Paul here, puts God as his witness.
- 3- **Nor did we seek glory from men** (or praise or esteem) from you or anyone else, although as Apostles of Christ, they are entitled to that. It may also carry the meaning of being entitled to financial sustenance or support by the community of believers, although Paul himself seldom exercised this right.

**Verse 7** is self-explanatory.

Paul says that he and his companions were very gentle with them like a mother nursing her own children. There is a great difference between a lady nursing her own children and a lady nursing children who are not her own. This is a strong expression for the extreme length to which Paul and his companions went to meet the needs of the Thessalonians.

### **“In the midst of you”**

It probably indicates equal to you, or one of you.

### **Verse 8**

**“ So affectionately longing for you “** Other versions **“ Affectionately desirous of you “**

It expresses a real depth of desire.

**“ We were well pleased to impart “** Other versions **“ We were willing to have imparted “**

Through out their stay in Thessalonica, they were quite happy or willing to give (Imperfect tense which implies continuity which means it started in the past and still happening till the time of writing or even till now).

To give what? First the Gospel of God. Second their own lives.

So, in essence Paul is saying that in their preaching, they also gave themselves.

I am sure this meant so much to Paul. And all that is because they have become dear to them (Paul and his companions).

This is the true sense of love of God, because Paul went to preach the Thessalonians as the subjects of God's love, and therefore as the subjects of the love of God's servants as well.

### **Verse 9**

Indicates that Paul and his companions worked very hard, day and night, to support themselves, so that they would not be a burden on the converts.

As we discussed before, Paul may have hinted to that when he talked about his authority as an Apostle. We also mentioned that he seldom used this right.

As for the legality of reimbursement for one's work, the Holy Scripture is quite clear about it Since Jesus Himself said: **“For the laborer is worthy of his hire”** (Luke 10:7).

And in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:17 **“The laborer is worthy of his reward.”** And also it is mentioned: **“Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.”** (Deut. 25:4; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 9:9; and 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:18)

Then at the end of this verse, he mentions “The Gospel of God” again. And again this is to stress that the message he carried to them is from God. And that what gives Christianity its power.

### **Verse 10**

Again, he appeals to the Thessalonians themselves to bear witness to the truth of what he says. Not only that but he puts God as witness as well.

Then he puts three characteristics to their conduct as deliverers of the Gospel of God: - Devoutly, Justly, and Blamelessly.

**Devoutly:** They did not spare any effort or time, even their lives (Souls), to deliver the message to them.

**Justly:** (Holily or righteously in other versions). However, they are all the same since righteous in the Holy Scripture fundamentally means conformity to God's law.

**Blamelessly:** Can imply the same meaning as righteously but in the negative, as in ugly and not pretty or in strong and not weak.

### **“Among you who believe”**

I think that Paul here, is trying to say that he may understand if non believers stand firm with the accusations, but he also understands that believers would not accept these accusations.

So, whatever other people might think of them (Paul and companions), the Thessalonians church had every good reason to have good opinion about them.

#### **Verse 11**

And as he puts three-folded conduct in verse 10, he puts here three-folded service rendered to the church: - Exhorted, Comforted, and Charged.

**Exhorted:** preaching or directing the converts into suitable lines of conduct.

**Comforted:** Consoling the fainthearted and those who found it difficult to live the Christian way facing the opposition.

**Charged:** or Testifying in other versions. Both words signify solemnly declared. Or it can refer to serious words addressed to slackers or the like.

#### **Verse 12**

All the above was done to see that the church should "**walk worthy of God**". Meaning the highest standard that could possibly be conceived. Nothing less could be given to Him Who gave His Son for us.

**"God Who calls you"** Although God's calling to the Thessalonians through Paul has already happened, yet Paul used the present tense (calls) in the NKJV.(has called, calling) in other versions. All mean that His calling is continuous and never ends till the end of age..

It also indicates something else: God in all His Sovereignty can give orders and we must obey. Yet He calls, which means He invites us. So, He gives us the choice. If we choose to accept His invitation, we enjoy His kingdom and Glory. But if we choose not to accept, then our end will be everlasting Hell.

We should not forget that God does not impose Himself on anyone. Let us listen to what the Holy Scripture says in Revelation 3:20 "**Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.**"

He will come in only if we open the door.

As if Paul says in this verse, you Thessalonians have been saved by such a wonderful God. You have been brought into His kingdom. You will face a glorious future. Then live as to be worthy of such a glorious God.

#### **Verse 13**

Here, Paul stresses on the fact that what he preached is not his own message but God's, repeating what he said in verse 9, and that is for emphasis.

And that he never ceased to thank God for their acceptance to the message as such, perceiving it as the "word of God". Where its ultimate source and originator is none less than God Himself.

Then he follows that by an expression indicating the presence of faith in the recipients and the working power of God.

#### **Verse 14**

Is self-explanatory.

Jesus has promised persecution with belief. It happened to His disciples in Jerusalem, and they were scattered everywhere. Peter was imprisoned and James was beheaded. It also happened to Paul, and the same happened to the Thessalonians who believed. It is happening now to the Christians everywhere in the Muslim and non Muslim countries,

and it is happening even here in the United States. You can say that persecution became a Hallmark associated with Christianity everywhere.

**Verses 15&16** Are linked together

Here, Paul is putting all the blame of persecution on the Jews.

So, he begins by saying that they killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets before Him. Stephen in his famous speech was asking the Jews : "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" (Acts 7:52) But even before Stephen, The Lord Jesus

Himself underlined this fact speaking to the Jews on two occasions: "**Wherefore you be witnesses unto yourselves, that you are the children of them who killed the prophets.**" (Mat. 23:31) "**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who have killed the prophets, and stoned those who were sent to you.**" (Mat. 23:37& Luke 13:34)

Then he continues to say that the Jews also drove us out. He may be recalling how he was persecuted and forced to leave Antioch, Jerusalem, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and so on. He may have been also remembering the beating, the lashes, the stoning and all the other corporal assault he encountered on many occasions. Not only that, but later on, they were the direct cause for him to be in chains awaiting his trial in Rome which also ended in his martyrdom. By doing such things, they have displeased God and acted against all men.

No wonder why Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman historian accused the Jews as being "**Haters of the Human Race.**"

His (Paul) indignation mounts as he thinks of their attempt to prevent the Gospel being preached to the Gentiles; quite in line with what the Lord Jesus Himself said: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men, for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. (Mat. 23:13) May be he was also remembering the sad incident recorded in Acts 17:5 (The assault on Jason's house).

**"So as always to fill up their measure of sins"** Which means that the Jews were so determined to persecute, so that they may fill up to the last drop, seeing to it, that nothing is left out in the catalogue of their sins. And the consequence is sure, for their punishment has come upon them. The punishment here as I think, may refer to their deprivation of knowing the Lord Jesus and they will not have salvation; because the verb used "**Has come**" which means it started and still going on.

Bicknell in his interpretation says: "They can do no more to provoke the Divine wrath."

Phillips in his interpretation says: "Alas, I fear they are completing the full tale of their sins and the wrath of God is over their heads."

Paul here, seems to be very angry with the Jews, his own people and nation. But I think of it, as more of expressing sorrow than anger. He is grieving over the pitiful state; his people and nation have put themselves in, and the effects of their misdeeds. I support my view by recalling that Paul on one occasion showed the grief of his heart, and on another occasion, he stated how much he desires and pray for his people to accept Christ. Let us hear what the Holy Scripture Says: -

- 1- "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness to the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. 9:1-3)

2- "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." (Rom. 10:1)

### **C- Concerns for the Church (2:17-3:13)**

#### **Verses 17&18**

**"But we"** This is in contrast to the previous verse. Paul wants to tell them: "see what the Jews and your country men have done to you, But we." I think he wants to emphasize here that they are different.

**"Having been taken away from you"** "Having" here takes the meaning of "though". So, Paul here says: "though we have been taken away from you". And the term "taken away from you" in the original Greek is actually "being orphaned" which means cut off or severed away from. Like a child when severed away from his parents when they die. We must not forget what Paul said before as being to the Thessalonians as a nursing mother or a caring father. Now he is like an orphan without them. And now the whole picture is complete. It is a family kind of relationship rather than a preacher who came to preach and then ran away in such a short period of three weeks.

It is most affectionate to show others that we are one family. Aren't we? After all, we are all children of the one and same God, and brothers and sisters in Christ the Lord. Then he proceeds to say that our separation was not permanent like the orphan, but for a short while. It was only a physical separation because we have been always with you by heart (soul or spirit).

Then he uses the phrase "endeavored more earnestly" other translation "endeavored more exceedingly". The word endeavored carries in its meaning haste and earnestness. Yet he puts the word earnestly again as an emphasis to show his sincere desire to come to see them. He wants his friends to be in no doubt as to the strength of his feelings for them. Then he proceeds to say: we have tried hard to come again and again (or it may mean more than once)

**"Even I Paul"**.

Here he puts his name to emphasize what he says as in writing a legal or binding document such as "I John Smith agree to do so and so." It also indicates his personal desire (not we as the theme in the whole epistle).

**"But Satan hindered us"**

It is always Satan no one else who hinders our good intentions and desires.

#### **Verses 19&20**

Let us condense these two verses in a short one. Let us put it this way "For, what is our hope, joy, or crown rejoicing (glory) in the presence (before) our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? Aren't you?"

Talking to people of the Greek islands, Paul may have in mind the wreath awarded to the victor at the games (as we see on T.V. in the Olympic games).

If this is the case, then he would be talking here about victory, glory, rejoice and may be boasting too.

Now this entire honor will not be in front of human audience of this world, but in front or in the presence of our Heavenly God the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only that, but it is even more honorable to be at His triumphant coming.

One of the commentators says that what it means in the Greek language is “Coming to be present” and that is a royal term that was used for the arrival of a great person like a king or Emperor, and it also meant a royal visit. And what is more royal than that? Isn’t He the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords?

In short, Paul is indicating here that the Thessalonians are the cause of his pride and joy at the time of writing the Epistle and at the day of His coming.

### **Chapter3**

#### **Verse1**

##### **“We”**

Paul used the word “We” throughout all this Epistle because he is talking on behalf of himself and his companions. But here “We” means himself only, because he mentioned “we thought it good to be left behind in Athens alone.” And we know that he went to Athens alone leaving Timothy and Silas at Berea. (Acts 17:14). Unless He took that decision, with someone else whose name is not mentioned in the Holy Scripture.

This fact was reinforced in verse 2 \* and sent Timothy ” without saying “I” or “We”, which in this case being linked to verse 1, then it must be “we”.

##### **Verse 2**

He says that he thought it is better to send Timothy, ” **brother and minister of God**”.

By using the word “brother”, he puts Timothy in the same and equal level as his.. The word “Minister” has the same origin as the word “Deacon “ which was used then and still been used now. So in another sense, whether a deacon or a preacher they are both of God.

He also uses these two words to impress the Thessalonians, that Timothy is not just a helper, but he serves the Lord exactly as he does.

##### **“The Gospel of Christ”**

This expression does not mean possession as in “The house of Robert” It means the good news of what Christ has done for the sinful Humanity. So, it indicates His work rather than a book or a Gospel named after Him. Then one asks why Paul sent Timothy? **“To establish and to encourage”** Both terms indicates strengthening or supporting.

“To establish” originally means to put a buttress or support.

“To encourage” usually means to help or support by exhortation.

So, this means that Timothy was sent to support them and encourage their faith.

##### **Verse 3**

Here, Paul is afraid that the Thessalonians may have been shaken of their faith or persuaded by any other means to leave the faith because of all the afflictions happening to him.

But Paul again is calling for their own witness to the fact which they already know that Paul and his companions are appointed to this afflictions because God promised him future afflictions when he commissioned him for the ministry through Ananias (Acts 9:16). He wanted to assure them that these afflictions are appointed previously to him by God, and not that God is displeased with him, which may shake their faith in his preaching and upset their confidence, and hence Satan would have succeeded.



Although Paul is talking about himself, yet he uses the word “We”. Perhaps he means his companions as well, or he may be indicating every believer including the Thessalonians as well as us.

In this matter, Moffat says: “Troubles are our lot, so long as we know that the lot is a portion of God allotted to each one of us.”

The word “appointed” gives the impression that it is something inevitable and cannot be changed. So, we should not look at it and say “Why me God?”

We also should know whom to turn to in afflictions, and that He in His Grace do not give us more than we can bear or handle.

#### **Verse 4**

Paul repeats what he had said before, but this is to assert that they know about that since he was with them and that he foretold them about that and that it is certain to happen and actually it did happen.

As tribulation is inevitable, then we should not dismiss it as totally evil.

But we must understand that the hand of God is in it. He has appointed it to us.

He stresses all this at the beginning of the verse.

#### **Verse 5**

This is a repetition to what he previously said in verses 1 & 2.

Paul being very emphatic about his personal feeling and action, he uses “I” instead of “We”. He also wanted them to know that he is very anxious to hear that their faith has not failed in the time of testing.

And he indirectly tells them that they endured and that his labor was not in vain.

#### **Verse 6**

Till now, Paul was talking about what happened in the past, but starting from this verse, he talks about now, the present.

#### **“Now”**

It seems to me that Paul was so thrilled about the news that Timothy brought, that he immediately wrote this Epistle. He uses the word “now”.

He says that Timothy brought “**him good news**” (other translations “**Glad Tidings**”) which is used in the New Testament only when the angels brought “Glad Tidings” to the shepherds when Jesus the savior was born. This in a way reflects how glad and joyful was Paul with the news that he considered it as glad tidings in its biblical sense.

Then we ask, what are these glad tidings? They are Three: -

##### 1- **“Their Faith”**

We have already seen how concerned was Paul about their faith in verses 2 & 5. Now, he is relieved that their faith is not shaken.

##### 2- **“Their Love”**

Paul must have been very joyful when he heard that they are exercising the virtue of love towards each other as also towards God.

Faith and love work together. Hear what the Holy Scripture says in Gal. 5:6

“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” And in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:13 “And now abides faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.”

##### 3- **“Their Attitude Towards Paul”**

We have seen before, that Paul was worried that the enemy may have succeeded in spoiling his image in their hearts and minds. Now he is delighted for the news that they have good remembrance of him. His image has not been distorted and they still have affectionate memories of his visit and they eagerly look forward to seeing him again.

#### **Verse 7**

Here, Paul says that it was the faith of the Thessalonians that strengthened him through the distress and afflictions he found himself into. And this is the 4<sup>th</sup> time in this chapter that he mentions the faith of the Thessalonians.

#### **Verse 8**

##### **“For now we live if you stand fast in the Lord”**

To understand this, let us see how Paul thinks:

In Phil. 1:21 he says; “For to me, to live is Christ”. So he is saying that Christ is his life. And in 1st Cor. 9:22 he says; “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” And here he shows that he is ready to become all things that he may be able to bring salvation (which is eternal life) to some.

Now if we correlate these two statements, we can see how important, how joyful and how delightful to his heart when he got the news from Timothy about their standing fast in faith in spite the very short time he preached them. This means that now they have eternal life. How much more, this news brings life to him.

#### **Verse 9**

##### **“Thanks”**

Wouldn't he thank God for that? Wouldn't you? Shouldn't we all?

Then one asks, what is the “Thanks” for?

If anyone knows, Paul would know better, that this work in the Thessalonians, is neither his work nor theirs, but it is the work of God through the Holy Spirit.

That is why he is rejoicing. And this rejoice is from within, from the depth of his heart where the Lord abides.

#### **Verse 10**

##### **“Night and day praying exceedingly”**

Means continuous, fervent, and abundant praying. He is praying because he has been deprived from being with his friends, so he prays earnestly so that he may:

- 1- See them again.
- 2- Perfect what is lacking in their faith.

He said the same to the saints in Rome but in a different way: “That I may impart to you some spiritual gifts”.

And I think that is probably what he meant to say here., unless in between the good news he received, Timothy may have mentioned something indicative of some lacking in their faith (which is not mentioned in the Holy Scripture).

I also think that he meant equipping for the work of God as he mentioned in Eph. 4:12 “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry”.

For encouragement, it is always useful to sit with others and share one's spiritual experience. It helps both sides, and lifts them spiritually.

#### **Verse 11**

##### **“Now may our God. ....direct our way to you.”**

This is a short prayer. Let us put it this way; **“I pray to our God.....to direct our way to you.”**

When we look at this verse, we find that Paul is actually talking about the **Trinity**: He mentioned the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, (since the Holy Spirit is the One Who directs his way, since He abides in us).

Paul knows very well that God is the One Who runs the show so to speak.

He can wish and pray, but the work is from God the Trinity.

We should always remember this fact when we pray asking for something.

**“Our Father”** not “My father”

Because he is including the Thessalonians, since they have entered now in the heavenly Family of God by faith, so they as we, are His children.

### **Verse 12**

Then, he prays that they may abound in love to one another. Christians should always do that, because they are all brothers and sisters being the children of God. Yes, brothers sometimes may kill each other like Cain killing Abel. But they were brothers in flesh (the sinful nature), while we are brothers in Spirit ( the renewed regenerated nature). We are new creation (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:17).

We should not forget that love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22)

We should also walk in love as Christ also has loved us.(Eph. 5:2)

Jesus' love to us is Agape, so should be our love; a love from the heart regardless of the worthiness. After all, our love to others springs from our loving Father.

When a person becomes a new creation, he sees others by the measure God sees them.

And I am sure that Paul in loving the Thessalonians, he set an example to them, because a dedicated honest preacher should practice what he teaches.

### **Verse 13**

**“So that He may establish your hearts”**

Means, may God provide the needed support to keep your faith firm, unshaken no matter what happens.

**“Blameless”**

Nothing can do for the Christian, less than the highest standard set to us by the word of God.

**“In Holiness”**

Means been set apart for God.

Holiness is a very important word, which in the Old Testament was used only for God.

In the New Testament, it is only used by Paul and in two places: here, and in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 7:1

Other similar words are used in the New Testament like “the Saints” and “the Holy ones”.

Here, Paul tells the Thessalonians that they belong to God, they are set apart to serve Him. So, they should meet His standards of Holiness because He is Holy.

These standards are not only for now, but they should continue till the day of the Lord, when He comes with His Saints or the Holy ones (be it the Angles or the resurrected ones).

### 3- Paul's practical instructions. (4:1-5:22)

#### A- On moral purity (4:1-8)

##### Verse 1

Paul here gives emphasis to what he is going to say, by putting two words successively which have the same meaning: "Urge" and "Exhort".

##### "Brothers"

Who else is dearer to him than the ones he served and loved and cared for?

It is important that Paul used the word "Brothers", because first he was a Jew and they were Gentiles, and we know how the Jews despised the Gentiles. Second being a Jew, he knew and worshipped the living God even before he was converted, but they were pagans who did not know the living God and worshipped idols.

So, Paul by addressing them as brothers shows them that there are no class differences in Christianity, and that we are all brothers and sisters in the Lord

##### "In the Lord Jesus"

The authority here is from the Lord Jesus, not from Paul. He is talking in the name of the Lord Jesus.

##### "Abound and walk"

Means walk in His way or in His footsteps with overflow or in abundance.

This is not new to them, because he told them when he was with them before that they ought to (must) conduct themselves this way. The word "ought" implies compelling necessity.

A saved person whom Jesus bought by His precious blood (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:20), becomes His slave; so, serving Christ is not an option. It is a compelling obligation.

And although Paul is exhorting them to walk Christ's way, yet he turns around and tells them; "I know that you do that". This means that he urges them to further their endeavor.

The word "abound" means in excess, overflow or copious. So, in a sense, Paul is asking for more and more of walking in the Christian way.

##### Verse 2

##### "You know"

Paul keeps using this term again and again in this Epistle. He again tells them that what he says, they already knew, because he told them before.

This way, he affirms them to be witness to what he said before.

##### "Commandments"

To me, commandments means commandments.. There is no second opinion about that. It means orders on how to deal with different subjects. But unfortunately, some conventional scholars feel it is a harsh word and it is unusual for such a word to be used in a Christian life (as if they are in the Army).

To these people, I say they are profoundly mistaken. How about the well-known Ten Commandments? Can they say the same about them?

We must understand that whatever Paul or any other Apostle wrote, it was not their ideas or thoughts. The Holy Spirit inspired all to them, and the Holy Scripture is quite clear about this. Let us see what is written: "Knowing this first that no prophecy of

Scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:20,21) And as for the Christian way of life, God does not recommend, He orders whether some people like it or not. You want to be a Christian, then follow Him, follow His way, follow His footsteps; there is no choice in that. You just cannot have Christ in you and hold on to the previous life you used to live.

Then, he stresses this point by saying that these commandments are from the Lord Himself; as if he foreknew that some people in the future will think this way.

### **Verse3**

It is not a surprise that Paul talks about abstaining from sexual immorality. However, this passage does not imply at all that the Thessalonians were engaged in sexual immorality. But we are talking here about a Greek community who up till a short time before were pagans. Sexual immorality to the pagan Greek was actually morality for two reasons: -

- 1- Their famous Greek Philosophy gives the man every right to indulge in extramarital affairs. That was not immoral then.
- 2- The pagan in general (Greek or not), were practicing that as a part of their worshipping rituals as we have discussed before.

Paul here is not accusing them of sexual immorality or even correcting a mishap, that have happened as was the case with the Corinthians.. I think that it is just because of his love to them, that he wants to warn them that this behavior does not fit in the Christian life style. And he enforces this by saying that “It is the will of God”, which means that he is not talking about ethics or community moral standards, but he is talking about God’s will. As if he says, “God wants you to do so or not to do so.” And since God is the one who says so, then this is the highest standard and no less. Why is that? Because every one who believes in Jesus Christ is cleansed by His atoning death. So, now he is holy or sanctified. That is why in most of his Epistles he addresses the Believers as “Saints”..

Paul says that since you have been cleansed and sanctified by the blood of Jesus, then you should keep yourselves clean by abstaining from such immorality, because you are not yours any more, you are His.

### **Verse 4**

#### **“Possess his own vessel”**

There are two interpretations for the word “vessel”:

- 1- Means body. And this is the most popular.
- 2- Means wife. And this is less popular although it was suggested and adopted by Saint Augustine and others of the early church fathers. They supported their view by:
  - a- what Apostle Peter said in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:7, about the weaker vessel meaning the wife.
  - b- the fact that the Jews sometimes used this term as wife in the old days.

I am of the opinion that it means the body, and to answer their two supports:

- a- Actually what Peter said supports the “body” more than the “wife”, because what Peter said is **“Giving honor to the wife as the weaker vessel”** which means that the wife is the weaker vessel

versus the husband who would be the stronger vessel. And had he meant the vessel to be the wife, he would have said **“giving honor to the vessel as she is weaker.”**

- b- Paul was writing to a Greek population in their own Greek language, which they understand, and as a matter of fact, vessel in the Greek language means body. There are two other considerations that supports the view that vessel means body:
- c- Paul uses the word “possess”, and the wife is not a possession at least in Christianity. She may have been so in Judaism, but that was not so to the Greeks either.
- d- If Paul was writing to men only, then it could mean wife, but he was writing to the whole church both men and women.

As for the word **“possess”**, my personal view is that Paul is not using it in its common meaning familiar to us as if owning something. Sure one may say we possess our own bodies; but I think he means, **“keep”**. Let us substitute the word **“possess”** by the word **“keep”** and see how the verse goes: It will read as such **“ Each one of you should know how to keep his own vessel in sanctification and honor.”** Now I think it makes more sense.

#### **“Sanctification and honor”**

The word sanctification carries the process of cleansing within it. So, in a sense Paul wants to say “your bodies have been cleansed and washed by the blood of Jesus, keep it like that.”

The word honor is very significant here, because impurity disgraces the body, and we as Christians should keep our bodies pure to honor the One Who lives in, The Holy Spirit

#### **Verse 5**

This verse is a continuation of the one before.

If we still substitute the word “possess” by the word “keep”, then the whole statement will read like this:” Keep his own vessel (body) in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God.”

#### **“Passion” of “lust”**

Passion means an urging fervent desire, and lust also means a strong desire of any kind, usually but not always an evil one.

Paul here describes the life of the Gentiles who do not know God, reminding the Thessalonians of what they were before knowing our Lord Jesus Christ.

I think that the condition of the world nowadays is even much worse than the Gentiles in their days, because they are rejecting the knowledge of God as Paul put it in Rom.1: 28, and the result is that they are delivered now up to unnatural lusts as the Romans then. (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

#### **Verse 6**

#### **“Defraud”**

Paul is still talking about sexual immorality. He says that in some way , it defrauds someone, whether the parties involved, the spouse, the family, the friends and on a wider scale the whole community, of their rights.

### **“As we also forewarned you and testified”**

This phrase or the like has been repeatedly used by Paul in this Epistle.. He keeps saying “as I foretold you” or “as you know”. This makes it very obvious that during his very short visit, he very thoroughly instructed them and touched on so many subjects. Why did he forewarn them? Because God is **“an avenger”**

I think somewhere in translating this word from the Greek language, the early scholars could not find the equivalent of it in the English vocabulary, because I think that God is not an avenger in the sense we are familiar with, like settling a score or passionate revenge. It all does not extend beyond the scope of; “The wages of sin is death.” It is not even a punishment. It is wages. One receives wages for what he or she has done. To me, it is a choice. You believe, and follow in His footsteps; your eternity will be pleasant. You don’t believe and walk wherever you like, your eternity will be unpleasant. There is no revenge in that. God is very faithful in that he gave you what he had promised you before. And since it is God’s law, then there is no escape.

#### **Verse 7**

Paul here describes an aspect of the Christian life. He is using double negative to mean affirmative. So, instead of saying “For God called us to cleanness”, he says “For God did not call us to uncleanness”. This is very important, because it is a strong positive renunciation of uncleanness.

#### **Verse 8**

Here Paul says that impurity is a sin against God, because He called us to sanctification, and anyone who fails to observe this fact, does not only break a human code, but he also sins against the Holy Spirit given by God, and who dwells in us.

### **B- On Disciplined Living (4:9-12)**

#### **Verse 9**

The Characteristic Christian attitude is a profound faith in God, a faith that spells out into all of his life in the form of self-denying and self-giving love. Paul talked about this love in 1:3 and 3:6.

The Thessalonians showed the manifestation of God’s Divine Agape, which led them to see men in a measure as God sees them. Not only that, but the fellowship with others who are filled with the same love will naturally draw them together in love, a brotherly love (Philadelphia). John in 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:14 marks this as a sign that man has really “Passed out of death into life.”

Paul gladly acknowledges that there is no real need for him to write about love to them who are well taught in this subject by God, (not by him – self-denying).

As if he says, it is not me who taught you this, but it is the Holy Spirit who dwells in you. However, Paul is never satisfied by standing still even if it is at such high level. But high is not enough, he wants higher. So in verse 10, he urges them to abound more and more. And the song says “Onward Christian Soldier.”

#### **Verse 10**

To be satisfied with what one has done, and standing still, is like putting the first nail in the coffin of Christian service. That is why Paul urges them for more and more. We have to be ready all the time.

**Another word about the love that God taught them.**

Nowadays, we read about God's love in the Holy Scripture, which is available to everyone. But in their time there was no written Scripture at least of the New Testament. So, they depended on the word of mouth delivered by whoever told them about the good news which I would imagine circled around the Divine Atoning Sacrificial work of Jesus on the Cross. And what more could show this heavenly Love than:" For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have Everlasting Life." (John 3:16). That is how God taught them love. On the Cross!

And that love was not local in their church, but it expanded to all Macedonia, a thing that in its own way had made Paul's vision come true.

### **Verse 11**

Here is what misunderstanding or misinterpreting of the Scripture may lead to. And I am talking about what had happened then as it does happen now.

The message, which they received from Paul when he was with them, was to be ready for the second coming of the Lord. Some of them misunderstood that and thought that they sit and watch for that day to come. Of course no one knows how were they watching for the day to come. But the fact remained that this dragged them into laziness and idleness that they did not do any work to earn their living and they became a parasitic burden on the rest of the church.

So, Paul tells these people to correct their way of life.

### **"Aspire to lead a Quiet life"**

Aspire means to be ambitious or to strive earnestly for.

So, Paul tells them to strive earnestly for a quiet life, not to create or to be involved in any trouble, to mind their own business, and to work with their own hands. This is degrading to the Greeks, because it was improper for a Greek to work with his own hands; that was the duty of the slaves. But apparently they accepted that, perhaps they remembered that Paul worked with his own hands when he was with them, or they may have remembered the life story of Jesus working as a carpenter before starting His mission.

Then again at the end of the verse, he repeats that this is what he commanded them before.

To summarize this verse, I imagine Paul is saying; "Since you are waiting for the Lord to come again, then it will look better and nicer for you, that He finds you living quietly, minding your own business, causing no trouble and working with your own hands."

### **Verse 12**

This verse is the outcome of verse 11. It shows two things: -

- 1- To be a good example for non-Christians. Believers are ambassadors of the Lord. So, they should behave in a way that glorifies Him, and not to stumble others, or cause them to reject the faith. And of course idle hands open the gates widely to idle gossip, picking on others, putting their noses where it do not belong, criticizing what is going on in the church and perhaps demanding support and the list goes on and on. That is why Paul tells them to live quietly and mind their own business.



- 2- By working, you will lack nothing, and you will not be burden on others. And of course, those who impose on the generosity of others are not living in brotherly love.

### **C- On Death and Rapture (4:13-18)**

#### **Verse 13**

For a long period of my life, I always thought that Paul in this verse, talks about our usual grief and sorrow when we lose someone by death, because we became separated and shall not see each other again at least in this life. And I also thought that he is giving them as well as us, a word of comfort that those who died (slept) in Christ are alive enjoying being in the presence of the Lord. We even go further when we comfort others for the loss of a dear one, we go to the extent of saying that we envy the deceased because now he or she is in the company of the Lord and the saints.

But just in the past few weeks, as I was preparing for this study, I stumbled on a thought of one of the commentators, and I shall share it with you.

He says that the sorrow of the Thessalonians believers was for a different reason. It was because there was a belief among them, that those who died (slept) before the second coming of Christ, were sinful and God was angry at them and so He deprived them of the Joy of being alive to see the Lord coming in His Glory. That is why they were grieving because those whom they loved are also going to hell because of their sins. That is why in verse 15 as we shall see, he tells them that those who will be alive at that day, will not have any advantage over those who died; as a matter of fact the dead are the ones who are in advantage, since Christ will raise them first, and then all (the raised and the alive) will meet with the Lord in the clouds.

This sounds a very sensible thought I might add, and I find it plausible although Paul did not even hint to it, and as far as I know there is no actual documentation of it. But what I do not agree to, is that the author says in the light of what Paul wrote in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:30, some of them thought of the deaths as indicating that the deceased were under the wrath of God. Let us see what that verse says and let us start from verse 29 "For he who eats and drinks, in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. Verse 30 for this reason many are sick and weak among you, and many sleep." My interpretation to this verse is that Paul is saying to the Corinthians that many of you who are alive, have disrespect to the body and blood of Christ, even those who died shared this disrespect with you.

But the point, which I do not agree with, is that the Thessalonians could have not possibly heard about what Paul wrote to the Corinthians because the 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians was written in 55 AD while the 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to Thessalonians was written four years earlier in 51 AD.

However this thought, which the Thessalonians acquired, God only knows from where, is originated from ignorant interpretation of the Biblical facts. That is why Paul tells them that he does not want them to be ignorant.

The risen Lord has overcome death, and that has changed the scenario dramatically, because we now live on hope, the hope of resurrection and be with him. That is why Paul says in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:55 "O, Death, where is thy victory? O, Death, where is thy sting?"

And in Phil. 1:21 He says "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain"

And in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:14 he says " And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty."

#### **Verse 14**

##### **"If"**

This does not imply uncertainty or condition. It is simply used here to mean since.

Let us substitute "if" by "since" and see what the verse looks: "Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again; even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus".

##### **"Sleep in"**

Means those who died in the faith of Jesus' work on the cross for our salvation.

#### **Verse 15**

We already have discussed this verse partially in verse 13

##### **"By the Word of the Lord"**

Paul shows here who is talking. It is the Lord Himself, it is not me, it is not my invention or imagination.

Now, none of the four gospels described how the Lord will be coming, then why Paul says by the word of the Lord? Paul also when he was in Miletas sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus and gave them a long farewell speech during which he said " And remember the words of the Lord Jesus that He said: It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). This also was not mentioned in any of the four Gospels. This adds to the above-mentioned question.

Two facts are in order here: -

- 1- John in the Gospel he wrote mentioned "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." (John 21:25), So, it is clear that the Lord Jesus has done and said so many other thing that were not recorded in the Gospels.
- 2- We also know from the Epistle to the Galatians, that Paul received his commission and teaching directly from the Lord Jesus Himself and not from any man. (Gal.1:15-24) So, the Holy Spirit in those long 11 years of preparation should have told him a lot of things that are not recorded in the four Gospels.

##### **"And we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord"**

Does Paul include himself in the word "We"? Yes of course and so every believer if he or she is alive at that day. There are four points here: -

- 1- "We" means all believers in his time, now and till the second coming. So, it was not particular for whom he wrote the Epistle.
- 2- The word "and remain" is a conditioned phrase, which means if they will be still alive till that day. So Paul would be included if he is still alive.
- 3- No one knows when that day will be. Paul himself says in the next chapter verses 2 & 3 that it will come like a thief, when no one expects. So, all what is required from us is to live as if it is going to happen in the next moment.
- 4- In 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:14, Paul classes himself with those who will be raised.

So, in summary, Paul wanted to assure the living Thessalonians, that their loved ones who died (slept), will not be at a disadvantage when the Lord comes.

## Verse 16

Here Paul makes 3 points clear: -

- 1- The one who comes is the Lord Himself. Who else should majestically announce the end of this world except God Himself? It is not that He cannot or does not delegate an angle, but He Who created this world would be also the One Who announces its end.
- 2- The Lord's second coming will be as majestic as His first. Didn't the angles in heaven sing "Glory to God in the Highest and peace on earth" at the day of His birth?

### **"Shout"**

The Scripture does not say whose shout is that? It could be the angles or Archangels rejoicing and celebrating His second coming as they did in His First. But it could be also the shout of the Lord Himself. From the next verse we know that the first thing the Lord is going to do, is to raise the dead. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus did to raise Lazarus from the dead? The Holy Scripture says that He shouted or cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth" (John 11:43). So, it could be the loud cry of the Lord to raise the dead.

### **"Voice of an Archangel"**

I do not think that it means the voice of one (person). I think the term includes the Archangel and his battalion, like the centurion meaning himself and the hundred soldiers under his command. I do not know how many are in the Archangel's battalion but they certainly will produce quite a loud voice.

### **"The Trumpet of God"**

In times passed, trumpets were always used in times of religious festivities and great religious events and processions.

So, this could indicate the ecclesiastical nature of the coming One.

Isn't He our High Priest after the order of Melchizedec?

And apart from being of religious significance, it also fits in as part of the greatness of the day.

- 3- The departed faithful will be raised first. They will not miss any or part of the event from the beginning till the end. They will be even in the picture before the ones who are still living till that day

This verse, though descriptive to some extent, yet it does not reflect to us the whole picture of the glory of that day. There is a lot left to our curiosity and imagination, but the Bible is not there to gratify our curiosity.

The Holy Scripture mentions enough just to tell us to watch for that day and to be ready because it is very near, even after 2000 years, for the day in the eyes of the Lord is like 1000 years and vice versa.

## Verse 17

Few important thoughts can be drawn from this verse: -

- 1- Paul stresses on the fact that those who are still alive on that day, will be **"together"** with the risen ones to meet the Lord in the clouds and to be with Him. This is a very precious fact for those who were mourning the ill fate of their

loved ones who died before the day of the second coming as we mentioned before.

- 2- **“Caught up”** in the Greek Language insinuates a sudden swoop with a force that cannot be resisted like a magnet, which matches very well with the word **“Rapture”** which we frequently use though unbiblical. Didn't Jesus Himself say “And I if I am lifted from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32)

Now there are several trends in between the different Christian communities to describe this rapture in so many ways and applications which are not mentioned in the Holy Scripture and they believe in it and find support for their views from a word or an Hyphen here or there in the bible. But I would like to say, let us not be so dogmatic about these things and stick to what is mentioned in the Scripture be it as short and concise as it may appear, especially that the precise words that are used by Paul here do not take us far in our understanding of the details of that day.

- 3- **“The air”** is the meeting place. This also may be significant, because for ages, the air to the earlier Christians and the Jews was often thought of as the place where the Demons abide. For example in Eph. 2:2, Satan is described as “the prince of the powers of the air”. If that is true and doctrinally correct, then we might say where else would the Lord choose to meet with His elect than the domain of Satan to demonstrate His Triumph over him?
- 4- **“To meet”** Again in the Greek language, it means a formal reception of an arriving dignity or a great person.. This may mean a true Royal Reception, where the subjects are to be presented to their King.
- 5- **“Thus we shall be always with the Lord”** Everything sums up to this. If we think about it, even Jesus' first coming and sacrificing Himself for our sins is for this moment where we shall always be with Him. What a Bliss!

### **Verse 18**

#### **”Comfort”**

Means strengthen or hold by the hand for assurance.

This good news should impel them to be active in seeking one another and stretching their hands to and strengthen each other.

This is inspiring because death makes no difference to our relation to the Lord.

### **D- On Holy Living and The Day of the Lord (5:1-11)**

#### **Verse 1**

Nothing much here except that Paul reminds the Thessalonians of what they already know on the subject and there is no need to write to them about it.

Apparently, the subject of the second coming (Perousia) was discussed in detail when Paul preached them.

#### **Verse 2**

Here Paul tells them that they themselves know perfectly well (complete knowledge) that needs no addition, that no one knows when that day will come.

Perhaps he gives the same account on this matter as was mentioned in Mat. 24:43; Luke 12:39; and Acts 1:7.

### **“The Day of the Lord”**

It is a well known expression in the Old Testament e.g. in Amos 5:13 and it expressed or meant the day of judgment, and that meaning was carried to the New Testament.

It is interesting to know how this day was referred to in the New Testament:-

“The last day”. (John 6:39)

“The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5)

“The day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 1:8)

“The day of the Lord Jesus” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:5)

“The day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30)

“The day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6)

“That day” (2<sup>nd</sup> Thes. 1:10)

“The great day” (Jude 6)

“The day of judgment” (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:9)

“The day of God” (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:12)

All the teaching about that day in the New Testament is summarized in three points: -

- 1- It is certain it will come.
- 2- No body knows when it will come.
- 3- No one will escape that day. (mentioned in the next verse)

### **Verse 3**

On the other hand, the unbelievers will have no concept of that day. They will be happy eating and drinking and marrying and suddenly the day of wrath comes.

The Lord Jesus gives a vivid example of this scenario in Mat. 24:38-39 “For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving into marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark. And did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

The disaster itself is described as “**Destruction**” which probably means perished in everlasting Hell, banished from the living presence of the Lord.

This word is repeated in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thes. 1:9

And as we said earlier, it is completely impossible for man to escape.

#### **Verse 4**

Then he says but you should not fear that day because you do not live in darkness as those who find themselves all of a sudden in the day of wrath and condemnation. And though you don't know the time, yet it is not going to take you by surprise, because you know about it and you are watching for it.

#### **Verse 5**

##### **“You are all sons of light”**

This means that the light is their distinguishing feature.

In the *Semitic languages*, to be a son of something means to be characterized by that thing. Paul does not only say you walk in the light, but you are also sons of the light which points to the complete transformation which takes place when a person believes.

##### **“Sons of the day”**

This certainly means sons of the light. Here what the Holy Scripture says: ” And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night” (Gen. 1:5).

Some commentators refer to it as sons of the Day of the Lord because it fits in the subject just discussed. But I don't see that, because as we just saw, the Day of the Lord is for everyone, believers or unbelievers, and as a matter of fact, it is more of a Day of Judgment and wrath than anything else.

Then he changes from you to we indicating that this is for all believers as it is for them.

#### **Verse 6**

Those who sleep by the night are sons of darkness. We are not. So we should not conform our conduct to theirs.

##### **“Watch and be sober”**

Watch means to be awake. We hear about the four watches of the night where the person (soldier or any other) takes his turn to be awake and watch.

But what to watch for? I think for the second coming (Mat. 24:42 & 25:15; Mark 13:34). And sober means to be aware of spiritual danger. I do not think that it has to do with alcohol consumption.

#### **Verse 7**

I am not sure if Paul means by drunkenness here, alcohol abuse, but I feel he means those who are drunk by their moral indifference.

#### **Verse 8**

That conduct is not fit for us, because we are sons of light. We live in and by the light of our savior the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, we should be awake and sober as in a battle (onward Christian Soldier), and we should armor ourselves. Paul likes to use this description probably because he was surrounded by soldiers quite a good deal of his missionary life; two years in prison in Caesarea, probably two more years in prison in Rome, several months on his fourth trip to be put for trial in Rome, and in all riots raised against him where violence necessitated soldiers' interference. So he is quite familiar with what they wear. He also used the same description in Rom. 13:12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:7 & 10:4 and Eph. 6:13. But his description of these armors varied probably to suit the occasion. But what important is that he again refers to the triad of faith love and hope, which nothing can surpass in the day to day Christian life.

However, I would like to stress again on the word “**Hope**” which implies in every day use something we wish for to happen; but this is not so in the Biblical sense especially

in the New Testament where it means assurance of its happening. Salvation is a sure and true fact, but we shall not see what it actually means till the day of the Lord when we shall enjoy being in the Lord's presence. That is why Paul here uses the phrase "and as a helmet, the hope of salvation".

### **Verses 9 & 10**

Wrath is not for us the believers, because all the debt has been paid. Our Lord saved us from paying the price. Christianity is characterized by not asking man to do anything to obtain salvation. It is a free gift, again because the price has been paid and God would not collect the price twice.

The purpose of Christ's death is that believers should live with Him whether they live or die. The believer lives in Christ and death cannot affect this relationship.

### **Verse 11**

As if he says here; "So go on cheering and strengthening one another with such thoughts." Which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of believers for one another, and Paul knows that they do just that.

## **E- On Church Relationships (5:12-15)**

### **Verse 12**

Apparently, there were some problems of some people in the church who defied, resented and ill respected the leaders.

So Paul here, feeling that the matter is somewhat delicate; he addresses them in his usual affectionate way saying "Brethren". Then he proceeds to say "I urge you", or I beseech you to recognize and appreciate those who...and here he avoids the word elders, but he describes their functions which are: -

- 1- "**Labor among you**" which means work hard till the point of exhaustion.
- 2- "**Over you in the Lord**" which means who have authority of formal or informal leadership. And "**In the Lord**" could mean, "accept this authority in the love of the Lord", or it could indicate that this position they have attained is to serve the Lord. It is an authority exercised for the Spiritual good of the church and not for showing power or importance.
- 3- "**Admonish**" which means teaching or instructing in a brotherly manner, the truths of God's words.

### **Verse 13**

Here Paul makes it clearer saying, you should hold them in very high esteem in Christian love (Agape) for what they do, and not because they hold a position or office of authority.

A church cannot be expected to perform effectively if its congregation does not loyally support its leaders.

### **"Be at peace among yourselves"**

Defying or resenting authorities, always invites criticism which in turn opens the door of grouping against each other and ultimately leads to separation and breaking of the church unity.

That is why Paul says, "be at peace" and that is also why he mentioned it at the very beginning of the Epistle.

#### **Verse 14**

We urge you brethren to: -

- 1- **“Warn who are unruly”**: As was mentioned at the very beginning, some of them sat idly doing nothing waiting for the second coming of the Lord. Those are described here as unruly who are out of line, slackers, disorderly and loafers. Paul tells them to put those back in line by warning them “no work, no food” as is stated in his 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle 3:10..
- 2- **“Comfort the Fainthearted”**: Expresses tender concern and encouraging to those who are fearful and in doubt or succumb to stress.
- 3- **“Uphold the weak”**: Support those who are without spiritual, moral or bodily strength. Cleave to them in their difficulties.
- 4- **“Be patient with all”**: The Christian should not be putting his own interest first and taking a strong line with those who do not agree with him. He must bear with them all, and better still to render some service to them, and that is walking in the footsteps of His Lord.

#### **Verse 15**

This verse ties in with the four points mentioned above. So it will be number 5

- 5- **“See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone”**

What is said in verse 14, naturally leads to the fact that the Christian is not to be provoked into retaliation, rather to be kind towards all, even those who are hostile. This is the Agape Love, which our Lord gave an example of on the cross. Paul said something of the same nature in Rom. 12:17, so did Peter in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:9.

**“but always pursue what is good”**

This is a general Christian rule, but it is more effective when we practice it, when it is least expected like in hostile circumstances, because as Paul said it is good for others and us.

### **F- On the Basics of Christian Living (5:16-22)**

#### **Verse 16**

Some commentators tie this verse with the previous one on the basis that forgiveness ought to be a joyous affair. This could be rightly so, but I think that verses 12-22 are all general exhortations, however, the first 4 verses (12-15) are dealing with a special and specific local problem in that church.

**“Rejoice always”**

This means Christ is our rejoice in every aspect of our life, not only in forgiving others, but also in pains, in sufferings, in sickness, in death, in richness, in poverty, at work, in church or wherever and whatever the circumstances may be.

The Apostles in Jerusalem rejoiced because they considered themselves worthy of persecution for the name of the Lord. (Acts 5:41)

#### **Verse 17**

**“Pray without ceasing”**

All through our life, we must understand that by ourselves, we are inadequate and insufficient, and I mean in every respect. So, we are always in need for and dependent on His help.



The only communication with God is at the Altar where we offer our prayers of praise and glory for the God Who is everything to us.

Prayer is a fellowship with God

Prayer to Paul was as natural as breathing. Shouldn't be the same with us?

### **Verse 18**

The unbeliever thinks of what he achieves in his life as his own doing whether skill or smartness or hard work, on the other hand, he looks at his failures as bad luck. For the believer, there is nothing called luck whether bad or good. It is all by the abundant merciful graceful providence of God. The unbeliever does not see the hand of God in anything, on the other hand, the believer sees the hand of God in everything, suffice to say being saved. So, who in the midst of tribulations would not give thanks when he knows that the Father Who loved him so greatly has permitted these tribulations only in order that His wise and merciful purpose might be worked out?

Then Paul puts a seal of authenticity by saying **“This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”**

Why does Paul put the phrase “In Christ Jesus” here? The sentence seems to be quite complete without it. No, but we must realize that people before the first coming of Jesus Christ, did not know God as He really is, but for us the believers, God has revealed Himself and His will in Jesus Christ. Without Him people would have been still in the darkness at least as for the true nature of God. So, Jesus Christ is the center or core of Christianity.

And of course mentioning the two names “Jesus” and “Christ” together is to stress on both the Deity and Humanity of the incarnated Son.

### **Verse 19**

**“Do not quench the Spirit”**

**“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit”** (Eph. 4:30)

The things that Paul mentioned before like loafing and immorality and other sins, will grieve the Holy Spirit and eventually will quench Him in the person's life and results in the loss of Spiritual power and Joy.

But there is another opinion here and it relates to the human understanding or concept of the Holy Spirit. The earlier believers conceived the Holy Spirit only in His manifestations like speaking of tongues and prophecies and others described by some commentators as ecstatic. In our days. We think of Him in terms of the power within the believers, which enables them to overcome evil and to produce the “fruit of the Spirit”. So, in a way, Paul may be talking in the language they understand. No one knows.

### **Verse 20**

**“Do not despise prophecies”**

The Holy Scripture and/or the history books is not quite clear about the position of the Thessalonians towards prophecies, whether they believe in it or not.

We know that they were very much interested in the second coming of Christ. This by itself is a prophecy. Whether this caused some of them who were not assigned to prophesy (False Prophets), is not known. If that was true, and if by chance those false prophets were known to have bad reputation, then one can understand why they would despise prophecies.

However to talk much about this subject will be mere of a guess and speculation.

But the fact remains that Paul is preaching them not to despise the prophecies

#### **Verse 21**

##### **“Test all things, hold fast what is good”**

If we feel that what was said in the previous verse is right regarding the false prophets, then this verse is a continuation to it. As if Paul says:” Do not despise the prophecies, but test all things”. This is in line with what John said:” Examine the spirits” (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:1). So, it could simply mean discriminate between the false and the true and hold fast to the ones that are proven good, right or true.

Hold fast denotes firm acceptance and keep.

#### **Verse 22**

##### **“Abstain from every form of evil”**

After testing and proving, keep the good and refuse or keep clear of the bad. And the bad in biblical understanding is all what comes from Satan or the evil one. That is why our Lord taught us to pray “And deliver us from evil”.

We know that evil comes in many forms, so we must abstain from any form of evil.

### **1- Paul’s Benediction. (5:23-24)**

These two verses are a short final prayer and blessing

#### **Verse 23**

##### **“The God of peace Himself”**

“**Himself**” reinforces the fact that only God can do what follows.

“**Peace**” has been discussed before, it means prosperity in its widest scope including Spiritual prosperity and this reminds us also that peace can only be granted by God.

“**Sanctify**” also discussed before, it means to set apart for God, to be His own and since it carries with it the sense of cleansing and purification, it also means to be declared holy or saint.

“**Spirit, Soul and body**” All commentators agree that human being is body and soul only and that Paul puts “Spirit” for the sake of emphasis only.

So, in essence, Paul prays to God to keep them wholly set apart for Him and blameless till the day of His second coming.

#### **Verse 24**

And God Who says will do, because He is faithful and the only one Who can do.

### **5- Paul’s Final Remarks. (5:25-28)**

#### **Verse 25**

Paul here asks them to pray for him continuously. He knows that he needed their prayers just as much as they needed his.

#### **Verse 26**

##### **“Greet all brethren”**

I would imagine that he couldn’t remember all of them by names, so here he includes all of them, even the ones who caused trouble.

### **“With a Holy kiss”**

Kissing was a customary way of greeting in the old days, and still used in some countries till now; in the middle east men kiss each other’s forehead and women kiss each other’s cheek; in Saudi Arabia and its vicinity, men rub each other’s nose; and in Iraq men kiss each other’s shoulder, some others hug each other.

So, here Paul (apparently speaking to the elders), to greet and kiss each one on his behalf in the pure Holy love of God.

“Holy kiss” is also mentioned in Rom. 16:16; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 16:20 and in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:12.

“Kiss of love” is mentioned in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:14.

### **Verse 27**

“**Read**” here means read aloud because partly, I imagine not every one knew how to read, and partly it is easier for all the church to hear the message together at the same time and discuss its contents.

“**I charge you**” equivalent to “I put you under oath”

“**To all**” May be that Paul thought that some like the trouble makers may not like to know its content expecting some sort of rebuke from him, or may be that others may hold the message from those. But this is just a guess.

### **Verse 28**

This is a farewell short benediction for Grace to them all.

*May God Bless You All*

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