1 & 2 THESALONIANS

**Author** - Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin and a Pharisee, who learned under the teaching of Gamaliel. He was converted by Christ on the road to Damascus and made an Apostle by direct appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was further instructed by direct revelation of Christ Himself (Gal 1:12). Paul is the author of 13 New Testament books.

**Background** – Thessalonica was a large and busy city with a population of over 200,000 people. It was a seaport located at the crossroads of a major trade route leading north, the Egnatian Way. Being the largest city in Macedonia, its people were quite diverse and included both Greeks and Romans, as well as many transient types such as sailors and travelers and various types of trades people.

From a religious perspective, having many diverse peoples, there was a pluralistic (the co-existence of many religions) religious environment. Having both Greeks and Romans, there would have been many gods and pagan deities that were worshipped. This was indicated by Paul’s statement in 1 Thess 1:9 that the Christian believers had “turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.” Archeological and in-scriptural evidence also reveals the popularity of various mystery religions dedicated to such Greco-Roman and Egyptian deities as Dionysus, Serapis, Isis, Aphrodite, Demeter, Zeus, and Asclepius. The most important deity in Thessalonica, however was Cabirus, the patron god of the city. This Cabirus figure was a martyred hero, murdered by his two brothers and expected to return to help the oppressed poor in general, and the citizens of Thessalonica in particular.

There was also a significant Jewish population as the city it had its own synagogue. The size and influence of this synagogue is also indicated in the book of Acts 17:4…

**Acts 17:4** - 4“And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.”

A “God-fearing Greek” was typically a Gentile convert to Judaism that was uncircumcised. Because there were a great number of these, the influence of this synagogue was obviously pervasive. It was this synagogue that Paul entered upon his arrival in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. The book of Acts chapter 17 records Paul’s visit to Thessalonica, and the planting of the church there.

**Acts 17:1-4** - 17 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.” 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

And so the first Thessalonian converts were evangelized and discipled for a very short period of time by Paul. Most scholars believe they actually spent more than three weeks there, but that they only spent three weeks reasoning in the synagogue. Regardless, the church was born and was very young when Paul met with his expected opposition. With false accusations and jealous brutality, the angry Jews sought for Paul but couldn’t find him.

**Acts 17:5-9** - But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” 8 And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard

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these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. NASB
And so Paul and Silas fled the city and went on their way to the next God ordained destination to
preach the Gospel. After being forced to leave Thessalonica, they traveled to Berea where in just
a short time the angry Jews from Thessalonica pursued them all the way to Berea to seek them
out and cause them trouble.
Acts 17:10-15 - 10 And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when
they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those
in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see
whether these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent
Greek women and men. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had
been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there likewise, agitating and stirring up the
crowds. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy
remained there. 15 Now those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command
for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed. NASB
And so Paul was forced again to move on to yet another destination and wound up in Athens. It
was there of course where he preached his famous sermon on Mars Hill.

Now as a result of this Jewish opposition to Paul, Silas and the new Christians at Thessalonica,
the fledgling church found themselves as the object of much persecution in Thessalonica.
Nevertheless, God’s elect people were called out of the dark idolatry of this pagan city, and the
very young and holy church was left to prosper in the face of no small opposition, upheld by
keeping power of God and shepherded by the Lord Jesus Christ. It was because of Paul’s
separation from the young church that he left with such great concern for them. Such is the
occasion of Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians.

Purpose and Themes present in 1 & 2 Thessalonians: The content of things covered
in 1 & 2 Thessalonians is really quite remarkable. Because Paul had spent such little time with
them, he writes to give both instruction and encouragement to them. Therefore his writing is
uniquely suited for their difficult situation being such a young church and facing the difficult
task of growing and learning with few mature leaders and persecution from other hostile
religious peoples. Therefore Paul’s general purpose was one of encouragement and instruction,
but he writes with several themes and topics in view in order to address important matters needed
in their theological development. His topics include:

- Joy, Thanksgiving and Encouragement for a healthy new church
- Responsibilities of a Healthy Church
- Instructions for Godly Living
- Eschatological Topics of grave importance

Joy, Thanksgiving and Encouragement for a healthy new church
Paul spends the entire first chapter of the letter thanking God and commending the Thessalonians
for their great faith.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 - 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our
prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in
our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father. NASB
He was sure they were God’s very elect and chosen people because of the fruits of their lives.
Paul was greatly endeared and encouraged by the Thessalonians, especially the way in which
they enthusiastically received the Gospel and the Word of God.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 - 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; 5 for our gospel did not
come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you
know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. NASB

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1 Thessalonians 2:13 - 13 And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. NASB

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

He even goes so far as to say that they are his very glory and joy, the fruits of his own labor in the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 - 19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy. NASB

This was indeed a model church of faith, hope, love and holy lives who were both evangelical and steadfast even in the face of persecution.

Responsibilities of a Healthy Church
MacArthur writes, “The Thessalonian epistles catalog the marks of a healthy growing church. They give the responsibilities of the leaders to the congregation (1 Thess 5:12, 14-15); the congregation to the leaders (1 Thess 5:13, 25-28, 2 Thess 3”1-2); of believers to grow spiritually (1 Thess 5:16-22); stand firm in the midst of persecution (1 Thess 2:14-16); an live orderly lives (2 Thess 3:6-13); and the church’s responsibility to discipline sinning members(2 Thess 3:6-13). They also emphasize the church’s responsibility to reach the lost world with the saving truth of the Gospel (1 Thess 1:8-10).” This letter gives such clear and concise instructions on church life its message can hardly be mistaken.

Instructions for Godly Living
In 1 Thessalonians chapters 4 and 5, Paul gives very practical instructions about godly living, even as he is commending the Thessalonians as already doing so.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-5 - Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

He commands them to avoid sexual immorality, which was so prevalent in their culture.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 - For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality: 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; NASB

He also commends and exhorts them to love and to be growing in love and also to work hard, lead quiet lives and not to be in any need.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 - 9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; 12 so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need. NASB

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5:12-21 is some of the most concise instructions on godly living in all of Paul’s letters. And then again in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3:6-14, Paul writes explaining the process of church discipline and commanding them to carry it out.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 - 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. NASB

Eschatological Topics of grave importance
Of all of the Pauline writings, 1 & 2 Thessalonians deal most profoundly with Eschatology. By Eschatology we mean the study of “last things” or, of the “end times” if you will. In fact, the
issues that Paul deals with here have absolutely massive implications for the whole world of mankind, whereas Paul actually speaks in great detail about the end of the world as we know it, the eagerly expected Second Coming of Christ Himself, to deliver His people and to bring judgment on a world full of rebellious sinners. The things which are here spoken of are some of the most profoundly important writings in all of the Word of God. Truly these warnings from God prove the very divine character of the Bible. What book in all of human history has spoken with such majesty and authoritative imperative as the Bible when it speaks to us about the end of the world at the powerful hand of God, and of the coming judgment of mankind. Here in Thessalonians we get a sneak peak at these most important and crucial issues of the Bible Prophecy. And it comes to us in the form of instruction and practical explanation for us to understand very clearly and concisely.

- **Deliverance of God’s people at the first resurrection** – Here in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4:13-18 is the famous passage on the rapture of the church which even deals with the death of Christians and their future hope. Here is pictured one very important event called the First Resurrection. We also learn in 1 Thessalonians that we are not destined for God’s wrath like the wicked, but more than twice are given promises of deliverance from God’s wrath.

  1 Thessalonians 1:10 - 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. NASB
  1 Thessalonians 5:9 - 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

- **The Second Coming of Christ** – In the book of 1 Thessalonians there is a reference to the Second Coming in every chapter (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:16-17, 5:23). In 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:2 this coming is referred to as “the day of the Lord.” In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1:7-10 we have not only a reference to the Second Coming but also the destruction of the ungodly and judgment of those who have rejected the Gospel.

  2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. NASB

Later in chapter 2:8 we have a reference to the Lord Jesus Himself personally destroying the Anti-Christ at His coming.

  2 Thessalonians 2:8 - 8 And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; NASB

- **Explanation of the coming day of wrath and judgment including instructions about the Antichrist and Great Tribulation** – Both 1 & 2 Thessalonians deal with God’s judgment and destruction of the wicked and rebellious world. Paul explains in 1 Thessalonians that “the day of the Lord will come like a thief” to the unbelieving world, and when it comes, it will bring “sudden destruction” down upon them who believe themselves to be safe from harm.

  1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 - 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

However Paul instructs the Christians that this day will not “overtake them like a thief” because they walk in the “light of day,” enlightened by the knowledge of the signs of His coming.

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1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 - But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. NASB

After the passage in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 (quoted above), where Paul describes the destruction of the Gospel rejecting sinners, he then goes into a lengthy discourse on the revelation of the Anti-Christ and the Great Tribulation period in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Although Paul does not expressly call this the Great Tribulation as Jesus does in Matthew 24:15-21, Mark 13:14-20, we know clearly from other texts in Scripture that the events of the Anti-Christ’s rise to power and reign of terror are the very events that make up the Great Tribulation period, which are included in the Seventieth Week of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27, 11:29-12:3). Paul does in fact give many very clear indications of the nature and character of this dreadful time in human history. These events are also cataloged in such passages as Revelation 13-14, Daniel 7, 8 and 9-12, as well as the Olivet Discourse of our Lord as described above. Understand that 1 & 2 Thessalonians are the only letters wherein Paul gives such extensive instruction about eschatological events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ, barring a few brief references in various other letters.

I might add that much of this Pauline Eschatology very closely parallels the teaching of our Lord in His Olivet Discourse which is recorded in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The similarities are striking, but more than this, follow very distinct patterns and themes. Even though our Lord’s discourse follows a chronological timeline more than Paul’s, nevertheless they expose the same topics with much clarity and force, as we will see in the course of our study.

Now with all of this very wonderful instruction on the faith, hope and love of the commended Thessalonian Church, let us consider these letters and instruction from God as a very timely interlude in the life of our Church, Heritage Christian Fellowship. As we peruse these very practical instructions for church life and existence, let us use these as a plumb line or measuring stick to examine our own Church and life as Christians.

**FIRST THESSALONIANS: A Teaching Outline**

I. Paul's Personal Reflections on the Thessalonians 1:1—3:13
   A. Paul's Praise of Their Growth 1
   B. Paul's Founding of the Church 2:1-16
   C. Timothy's Strengthening of the Church 2:17—3:13
      1. Satan Hinders Paul 2:17-20
      2. Timothy's Visit 3:1-5
      3. Timothy's Encouraging Report 3:6-10

II. Paul's Instructions to the Thessalonians 4:1—5:28
   A. Directions for Growth 4:1-12
   B. Revelation Concerning the Dead in Christ 4:13-18
   C. Description of the Day of the Lord 5:1-11
   D. Instruction for Holy Living 5:12-22
   E. Conclusion 5:23-28

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)
1 Thessalonians 1:1-1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. NASU

A. Paul and Silvanus and Timothy - It is notable that Paul does not identify himself as an Apostle in his greeting in 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Typically Paul’s greeting includes a reference to his position as an Apostle.

1 Corinthians 1:1 - 1 Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, NASB
Galatians 1:1 - 1 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), NASB
Ephesians 1:1 - 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: NASB

It appears that his status as an Apostle was not in question by this church, or even in this entire region where Paul had established so many churches. Additionally, he adds the names of Silvanus and Timothy, his travelling companions on his second missionary journey and fellow laborers in the Gospel. Silas, likely a Hellenistic Jew (note the Greek name Silvanus), was a prominent member in the early church establishing churches with Paul in the Gentile world and later acting as a scribe for Peter as is stated in 1 Peter 5:12. Timothy was Paul’s “son in the faith” and faithful companion and worker through much of Paul’s Apostolic ministry. Timothy worked tirelessly in the ministry as pastor, evangelist and missionary. He is the subject of Paul’s Pastoral Letters 1 & 2 Timothy. Even though both Silas and Timothy are included in the greeting, this is simply a consolation of grace on Paul’s part to include them as they were fellow workers with him in the church’s conversion and ongoing health. This was a frequent practice by Paul, who’s authorship of the Thessalonians letters is rarely questioned noting the use of the personal pronoun “I” in 2:18, 3:5, 5:27. Paul the Apostle is the author of both 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

B. To the church of the Thessalonians – Paul’s inclusion of the word “church” is the common word for gathered Christians which is the English translation of the word “ekklesia” meaning “the called out ones” or “the chosen ones.” No doubt this remarkably healthy church is among the true elect people of God as is evidenced by their fruitful life and Paul’s statement in verse 4.

1 Thessalonians 1:4 - 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you: NASU

Now Thessalonica was no small city but was in fact the capitol city in the entire province of Macedonia. Therefore God’s establishment of such a prominent and healthy church here, in spite of strong Satanic opposition, was a very strategic matter in regards to the evangelization of this region of the Roman World. William Burkitt comments; “Thessalonica was the metropolis, or mother city of Macedonia, where a Christian church was planted by the ministry of St. Paul and Silas, but with great opposition from the Jews, who forced Paul to fly to Berea for his own safety, Acts 17, and Jason, with others that entertained him, had like to have been sacrificed in their own houses; yet there, in despite of the devil's rage, and persecutor's malice, doth God erect a glorious church, a Christian church, in honor of his son, who purchased it with his blood.” Wouldn’t it be something if we could see ourselves as such a strategic and fruitful ministry in our region of the world and point in history as this glorious Thessalonian church.

C. in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ – It is a marvelous truth to understand the relation that we now have with God through Christ. Just like the greeting in 2 Thessalonians Paul states that the church is “in God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is no small statement but one which describes our union with God and also with Christ. We are “in” Him. That is, we participate in the very life of God because of the unique position we now hold because of our redemption by Christ. Having been sanctified by the blood of Christ in the atonement, we have now become the very dwelling place of God, who lives in us by the presence of His Holy Spirit. As Paul states elsewhere, we are the very “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19). But even
more than this we are said to be “in Christ” and He is said to be “in us.”

*Galatians 2:20* - 20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. NASB

*Colossians 3:3* - 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. NASB

This union with Christ and with the Father is great mystery of what it means to be a Christian. In fact all three members of the Godhead are said to live in us and us in them as we share in and experience the divine and eternal life of God Himself. Consider the wonderful and powerful love and affection for God and Christ that wells up within our hearts. What amazing love is this that dominates our soul with such strong affection? It is in fact the experience of the very life of God within our souls which comes from our union with Him! We are in Christ and He is in us! This wonderful Union with Christ is seen in many places in the NT, here are just a few.

(Rom 8:1-2, 39, 2 Cor 5:17, Eph 1:3-4, 2:10, Col 1:27, Phil 4:19, 1 Thess 4:14, 16, 2 Tim 2:10, 1 Peter 5:10)

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 - 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, NASU

A. We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; - Here we begin to see Paul’s great affection for the church and his commendation of God’s great work in their hearts. Inherent in his thanksgiving is a recognition that God is the One who is responsible for their great “faith, hope and love.” Thus he is not commending men, but thanking God. For what good virtue, do any of us Christians have except that which has been a gift of God’s gracious hand, as Calvin writes here…. “Hence instead of congratulations, he makes use of thanksgivings, that he may put them in mind, that everything in them that he declares to be worthy of praise, is a kindness from God.” And not only is Paul grateful, but “Silas and Timothy” as well, he says “we give thanks to God.” But notice here they give thanks “always” and also for “all of you.” Not only are they thankful to God for the amazing testimony of this young church, but have in mind a constant offering of thanksgiving to God for each and every one of the Thessalonian believers. Their love for them is a sincere and genuine love for the people themselves. It is this love for them that drives them to pray for the church as they are “making mention of you in our prayers.” Notice here the heart of devoted thanksgiving and prayer of a devout and dedicated Christian leader for God’s people.

B. constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love – As Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians he is “constantly bearing in mind” the great things God is doing among them. And this is no small thing for the Apostle here speaks of the great wonder of Christian life. It is a “faith” that works, a “love” that labors, and a “hope” that is steadfast. When he refers to their “work of faith” he is undoubtedly speaks of the fruit that their faith produces, not in any way to be misconstrued as faith being some kind of work. The Greek word itself for faith is the word *pistis* which refers to a “strong moral conviction, assurance, belief and/or fidelity.” Elsewhere in Paul’s teaching he makes it very clear that salvation comes by faith alone, the great doctrine of *sola fide*, and is “apart from any works,” that is, salvation cannot be earned but is the “free gift” of God’s grace received through faith.

*Romans 3:20-24* - 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

*Galatians 2:16* - 16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith
in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

NASB

Therefore this “work of faith” is the work that their faith produces. That is the glorious worship of God that is now being manifested in and by them, who have repented from those vile sins of pagan idolatry and “turned to God from idols,” v-9, “to serve a living and true God.” This “work of faith” then is the obedience and service to God that Christian faith produces in those who are “in Christ.” And this he also identifies as a “labor of love.” For what is it that drives a Christian to serve and obey God except their great love for Him and for Christ in response to the wonderful things He has accomplished on their behalf. Christian life is a constant labor, but it is a labor that is motivated by tremendous love, both love for God and our neighbor. Indeed did our Lord tell us that the entire Old Testament was summed up in these two commandments;

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 'This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 'The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 'On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.' NASB

It is this working faith and laboring love of the Thessalonian Christians that Paul is so thankful for. Indeed it is the evidence of God’s calling them out of the darkness of the world into His glorious Church. Concerning Paul’s esteem of these Christians Calvin notes…… “And unquestionably, the more that one excels in piety and other excellences, so much the more we ought to hold him in regard and esteem. For what is more worthy of love than God? Hence there is nothing that should tend more to excite our love to individuals, than when the Lord manifests Himself in them by the gifts of His Spirit.” In other words, the more we become like Christ through faith, the more worthy of high esteem we become, having taken on the very character and nature of God. Christian virtue is a glorious thing, it is our pursuit and the longing of our hearts to be like Christ! It is this piety or virtue that we “work” and “labor” to posses and to manifest, and this to the glory and honor of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Notice then, that Christian “faith” produces “work” that is also described as “labor.” This work is NOT what brings salvation to us, but is the product or fruit of the life of one who is saved. True saving faith produces works that verify the reality of salvation as this is one of the great purposes for which we were saved so that God may be glorified in our service and obedience to Him. This is very clear in the teaching of the Apostles.

Ephesians 2:8-10 - 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. NASB

1 Peter 4:8-11 - 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. NASB

C. and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father – Christian faith and love are not complete in and of themselves if not accompanied with hope. Here notice the “steadfastness” that the Thessalonians possess as a result of the “hope” in the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. How else can a Christian persevere in this dark world apart from the knowing that there will come a day when evil will no longer prevail, but will be destroyed and removed from God’s creation. To this we eagerly look that we might be united to the Father and His Son, in His glorious Kingdom where there will never again be hurt and pain, tragedy or loss, and evil will never again show its ugly face forever and ever, world without end.

Revelation 21:1-5 - 1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth

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...and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them. 4 And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." NASB

This is the motivation of Christian “hope,” and the amazing catalyst to patiently wait for our Lord, even in the midst of “much tribulation” v-6. This we see clearly in the Thessalonian Church as we recall that they were in a very hostile environment to their new found faith and being troubled regularly by many in their city. But they not only stood strong in their faith, but “sounded it forth,” v-8, “not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place.” The Thessalonians had great resolve in their faith because they were “in the presence of our God and Father.” They were living in God and He was living in them! Even though they were vehemently opposed by many, they were busy “working and laboring” in the faith, waiting with a “steadfast” resolve, being driven by the great “hope” they had in the soon coming Kingdom of our Lord. They were “laying up treasures in Heaven” knowing that our Lord would come and His reward for their service and obedience to Him would be with eternal treasures that would never fade away.

Matthew 6:19-22 - 19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal: 21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. NASB

The Thessalonians then, had a “faith” that works, a “love” that labors, and a “hope” that was steadfast. All of these they lived out in the presence of God the Father.

1 Thessalonians 1:4 - 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; NASU

A. knowing, brethren beloved by God – The word “knowing” here is understood in the sense of “seeing” or “perceiving” and points the phrase “His choice of you.” It reveals Paul’s assurance of the divine election of the Thessalonians believers. Because of the evidence presented in verses 1-3 and also verses 5-10, Paul is convinced that God has chosen them unto salvation being witnessed by the amazing fruit born in their lives through the Gospel. The testimony of the Thessalonians’ faith was so great that the reality of their regeneration was not in question but “known” not only by Paul, Silas, and Timothy but also “in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth.” It was an amazing tribute to the mighty power of God’s Spirit at work in the young Church. But also note here an amazing statement expressing the warm affection that the proud Pharisee Paul has for these despised Gentiles. In these two epistles Paul uses the term “brethren” twenty-one times to refer to them. See here how the insurmountable barrier that existed between Jew and Gentile has been done away in Christ! The enmity that existed between Jew and Gentile has been “put to death” by Christ whereas now we are “brethren” together in one family in Christ, God Himself claiming us both together as Father. Paul speaks with much clarity of this issue in Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:11-16 - 11 Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands — 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace. 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. NASB
Paul not only acknowledges their state of being his “brethren” now, but also and greater God’s own divine love for them as he states they are “beloved by God.” What more reassuring and comforting words could be spoken to anyone that they are “beloved by God?” And so it is with every individual Christian, they are “beloved by God.” More than this, every individual Christian is “chosen” by God, from eternity past, to be the object of His saving love. In Christ and through the Gospel we have been seen(by the powerful effects of faith), to be the objects of God’s own divine and sovereign love, having been called out of the darkness of this world and chosen by God for salvation from the beginning, through the Gospel of our blessed Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

B. His choice of you – And so then why is Paul’s “knowing” about “His choice of you” with such confidence? It is because these are no common marks of God’s power upon this infant church. Indeed they had a “working faith” and a “laboring love” coupled with a “steadfast hope” fixed surely on the coming of our Lord in Glory. Their salvation was obvious, but consider that Paul does not commend their wisdom in choosing to follow Christ but rather thanks God for their faith. This is because saving faith is granted by God, bequeathed to those whom He chooses to save, which is an act of His free grace and not a human response to the Gospel but rather a supernatural working of the Spirit of God effectually calling those whom He has predestined before time began. Paul here, points to God as the primary source of their saving faith. GK Beale states this so clearly…. “The main point of 1:4-5 must not be lost from sight. The primary point of thanksgiving in 1:2-3 continues on into 1:4-5: recognition of the evidence of one’s election is the ground from which thanks to God swells up; since God is the one who elects and ultimately inspires good works in people (Phil 2:13), He, not they is the one deserving to be thanked.” Christians are chosen by God. Divine election is a constant theme in Paul’s epistles (1 Cor 1:2, 18-30, Eph 1:3-11, Col 3:12, Titus 1:1-2, 2 Tim 2:10), including a lengthy discourse on it in the book of Romans chapters 8-11.

Romans 8:28-34 - 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; NASB

In fact the truth of this matter is so crystal clear in Paul’s teaching that it must be ignored in order to overlook it. Not only this, but it is a major theme in the teaching of our Lord in Matt 11:27, 13:10-17, 24:22-24, 31, John 6:37-40, 44, 60-71, 15:16, 17:9-17, and also in the teaching of Peter (1 Peter 1:1-5, 2:9-10, 2 Peter 1:10). As John MacArthur so aptly states it, “Christians are the elect, chosen of God solely by His sovereign, loving purpose, apart from any human merit or wisdom. God in eternity past Sovereignly chose all believers to salvation, drawing them to Himself in time, by the work of the Holy Spirit.” As controversial as the topic may be, it nevertheless is clearly taught in Scripture and can be difficult to grasp. For further study on this matter see this link to my website;


Or additional resources at

http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermon+Series/189
http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByTopic/84/

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1 Thessalonians 1:5 - 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction: just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. NASU

A. for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction - Paul goes on here to give reasons for his knowledge of their election as he stated in verse 4, “knowing, brethren, His choice of you.” How do I “know” you were “chosen” by God says Paul, “our Gospel came in Word, and in power and in full conviction of the Holy Spirit.” Their conversion was real and everyone knew it because it was plainly evident by the powerful transformation it had wrought in their lives. When the Gospel came to Thessalonica, these people were radically changed from their sinful pagan idolatry to a holy life of worship unto the true God. Note here the convergence of Word and Spirit. The Gospel must come by “word,” that is what the “Gospel” is, a “word” or message about what Christ has done.

James 1:18 - 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. NASB

But the “Gospel” by itself, without the powerful work of regeneration by God, is nothing but words. But when it is combined with the “full conviction” that comes from the “Holy Spirit,” the result is new birth and transformed lives. This is God’s power in converting His elect.

Titus 3:5 - 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. NASB

1 Peter 1:3 - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Ezekiel 36:26-27 - 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. NASB

This “conviction” is a powerful work of God’s Spirit whereby He causes sorrow over sin and a longing for reconciliation to God, which result in repentance from that sin which caused the sorrow, and faith in the life and death of Christ, the only thing that can reconcile us to God. This repentance and faith is the divine power of God which He works by His Spirit in the conversion of every true Christian. True repentance and faith are the marks of salvation, clearly evident in the Thessalonians. When a person is born again by the power of the Spirit, they are changed, as Paul describes in;

2 Corinthians 5:17 - 17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. NASB

And so these Thessalonians were by God’s power changed from worshipping and valuing dead and lifeless idols to serve and worship the living and true God.

B. just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake – Paul here recognizes for them that he and Silas and Timothy were in fact examples of this transforming power having demonstrated lives in which the power of God was plainly evident. There are many professing Christians in the world, but fewer who actually demonstrate lives that have been so powerfully transformed by the Gospel and the Spirit so that it is evident to all and so that others “know what kind of men we proved to be among you.” The power and conviction of these apostles’ Gospel was plainly evident in their life, and this was “proved among” the Thessalonians by their very presence. Consider that Paul, Silas and Timothy had been so changed by the God that they were now devoting their life to preaching the Gospel in places like Thessalonica, literally hundreds of miles from their homes, and in what were many times, very hostile circumstances. All of this they did at great personal cost, but for the “sake” of their hearers, as he states “for your sake.” The apostles ministry was an amazing story as they would move from city to city, and province to province, preaching the good news that God was now forgiving sin based on repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this ministry was...
now “calling out” God’s church from every tribe and people. This was an amazing display of selfless sacrifice on the part of the apostles who were so devoted in love to the church that they would endure much opposition and at great peril, just to tell people about the great things God has done in Christ.

2 Timothy 2:8-10 - 8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. NASB

This was the command of our Lord being lived out in the lives of His Apostles. They had “lost their life” for the sake of Christ and His Gospel.

Mark 8:34-35 - 34 And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s shall save it. NASB

1 Thessalonians 1:6 - 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, NASU

A. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord – Another reason why Paul knew they were elect. They not only affirmed the truth of the Gospel by their profession, but it was accompanied by changed lives. They “became imitators” of the apostles, who had become imitators of Christ. And so this is the case for all true Christians, we not only turn our back on the dead idols of our former life, but we now serve the living God. This is our constant pursuit and what it means to “follow Jesus.” It is to live a life mimicking our Lord, and living lives of love as He did.

Ephesians 5:1-2 - 5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

B. having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit - Consider here the amazing example of these Thessalonians who not only turned their back on their idols, but became powerful spreaders of the Word of God in their entire province and the surrounding areas in just a few short months. They truly had become imitators of these blessed apostles. This was clear by the powerful work the Word did in their hearts “having received the word in much tribulation” as these Christians endured much persecution for their new found faith. The same hostility which had run Paul out of town was now upon them daily, as they were being severely persecuted which is indicated by Paul’s describing it as “much tribulation.” The picture here is not only had they “received the word in much tribulation,” but now they were taking it to “every place” around them because they had received it “with the joy of the Holy Spirit.” They were glad to serve God in this way because the Gospel came to them with the supernatural power of inner “joy” that accompanies all true conversions. “Joy” is the sweet fruit of the Spirit which seasons our new life with satisfaction and delight in our blessed Lord to such a degree that we are willing to follow Him no matter the cost, even if it is to a martyr’s death! They had become the children of God to their great delight and they were so happy and fulfilled that they couldn’t keep quiet about it. But as is many times the case, Christian “joy” over the good news of the Gospel is met with much persecution and suffering. Evangelical Christians have long been the objects of suffering because people do not like being told that they are at enmity with Almighty God and in danger of His coming judgment, and they don’t like being told that their false religion is worthless in the sight of a holy God who has provided the only and exclusive way to be saved through the death of a Jew, namely Jesus Christ. This bad news of the Gospel engenders much opposition and vehement hatred at times which has spilled the blood of the martyrs for centuries and made Christians the subjects of “much affliction,” and slander and reviling.

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John 15:18-20 - 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 'If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 'Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. NASB

1 Peter 3:13-16 - 13 And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. NASB

But consider without the bad news, (that is the coming judgment of God because of personal sins), there is no reason for the good news of the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross for sins, and the forgiveness which God now gives for personal sins to all who trust in what Christ has done to save them. If people don’t understand sin and judgment, they will not understand the need for salvation from God’s wrath because of sin. This is where we desperately need the help of the Holy Spirit as we tell people the Gospel. He must open their eyes to sin and righteousness and judgment or they simply will not see in their natural state.

John 16:7-12 - 7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. NASB

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 - 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. NASB

And consider that without the death of the Son of God, there is no proof of the resurrection either. And without the resurrection of Christ we have no sure hope of eternal life. But Jesus is in fact raised from the dead, and He promises to give eternal life to all who trust in Him and His saving work.

John 5:24 - 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. NASB

And so it is these Thessalonians showed another supernatural evidence of their election, that is, they were faithfully imitating their teachers even receiving the message of the Gospel in the midst of much affliction and with the joy of the Holy Spirit. As Calvin points out, “the Gospel cannot be properly, or sincerely received, unless it be with a joyful heart. Nothing however is more at variance with our natural disposition, than to rejoice in afflictions!” Even though the Thessalonians were persecuted for their faith, in a very hostile climate, they not only held their faith privately, but practiced it publically, and this they did with great joy.

1 Thessalonians 1:7-8 - 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. NASU

A. so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia – The words “so that,” point us back to verse 6, they “became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,” and by this they “became an example to all the believers.” It is no small thing that Paul says of this church, that they were a pattern for all believers. This commendation Paul does not give to any other church! Note then, the high quality of the Thessalonians’ faith, that it is regarded as an example. And the specific Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org
characteristics of their faith are given as to why they are an “example.” It is the fact that they “became imitators” of both the Lord and the Apostles, and “received the word in much tribulation with joy.” And this “imitating,” mimetes in the Greek, from which we get our English word mimic, resulted in “the word of the Lord has sounded forth” v-8 from them, in all of Greece. These specific qualities of their faith are pointed out;

- They were imitators of the Lord and the Apostles
- Receiving the word with joy, even in the midst of much tribulation and opposition
- They were very Evangelical, (that is Gospel-centered) sounding forth the Gospel in every part of their world

Learn here, that the way these Thessalonians lived their Christian life is an “example to all believers,” that we must seek to imitate. When the Scripture points to this activity as a model church, we ought to seek to pattern our church after it.

B. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. – The way that Paul describes their evangelical efforts is quite remarkable. He says that it has “sounded forth from you not only” in the entire provinces of “Macedonia and Achaia,” but even beyond those places. Now this is no small feat. Paul is saying that the Thessalonians had received the word with so much joy, that they told the world about it and did it with such force that Paul didn’t need to publish it at all because they had done it on their own. The terms “in every place” is an obvious hyperbole, but nevertheless the idea is that they had given testimony of their faith in Christ to much of the Greco-Roman world, and the nature of this testimony is reported in verse 9, “how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.” The Thessalonians were not ashamed of the Gospel or of their faith in Christ, even telling the hostility provoking message of repentance from the pluralistic worship of pagan idolatry to engendering themselves in the service of the true God. He says that “in every place your faith toward God has gone forth” which does not necessarily mean that all these places were evangelized, but at a very minimum, they had given testimony of their own personal faith in Christ. They certainly were by this evidence, seeking to evangelize their world. Paul mentions this again in 2 Thessalonians and notice here how he describes it.

2 Thessalonians 3:1 - Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you: NASB

The Thessalonians were so excited about their faith, they had told much of the Greco-Roman world about it. It is because of this activity that they were identified by Paul as a model church.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 - 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, NASU

A. For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you – Here Paul points out that he didn’t need to tell people in other places that the Thessalonians had been saved, for they had published the news on their own. He describes the fact that others had been so moved by the Thessalonians witness that, “they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you.” The Thessalonians had made a profound impact on the world around them.

B. and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God - Not only had they told others the Gospel, but they gave the specific information that they had “turned to God from idols” the common religion of the Greco-Roman world, that of pagan idolatry, “to serve a living and true God.” Here we see what engendered so much opposition. In this message is two very important points. First, that their “idols” are not “God,” but rather false gods in contrast to the
And second, that their false “idols” are dead, in contrast to the “true God” who is living. Now imagine going into a tolerant, pluralistic culture, steeped in the worship of hundreds of gods, who endorse and practice all manner of immoral behavior as a part of their religion, and telling them that what they worship are false and dead lifeless idols, and that how they worship is an offense against the true and living God who calls them to turn from their worthless vain religion in order to serve and worship Him. Furthermore, that for this activity the true God will judge and condemn them to everlasting punishment because their false worship is an abomination in the sight of the true God who is filled with indignation because of it. Here see what arouses the hostility of Greco-Roman people. And not only this, but the Christian message also excludes the Jews from whom it originated. The sacrificial system of Judaism has now been fulfilled in Christ and the form of worship practiced in Judaism is now an abomination in the site of God, who gave His only Son in sacrifice to fulfill all that Judaism represented for some 1500 years. This message is one that invokes much hostility and rage from devout Jews because being very proud and self-righteous about the own ability to please God through the Law, the Christian Gospel explains that all their self-righteous efforts are an abomination before God, and that the only means for them to be saved from God’s wrath is to “believe” in Jesus the crucified Jewish rabbi, who was murdered at the hands of their own religious leaders. In this matter, devout Jews sinfully reject their own Messiah who came to save them from sins and reconcile them to God. See here then what it is that summons such hostility from both Jews and Greeks, and also what courage the Thessalonians had in publishing their faith in much of the Greco-Roman world. Further, note that this type of pluralistic and immorally tolerant culture is very much like the culture of modern day America. The American moral decline of our day thrusts us deeper and deeper into a kind of pluralistic and pagan idolatry that moves us further and further from our once predominantly Christian culture. As this happens, our culture becomes increasingly hostile to the Christian Gospel as pluralism is always very tolerant of everything except that which restricts personal autonomy, especially in regard to moral issues. The banners that fly over the false gods of pluralism pronounce the message that personal freedom means that every person can do whatever is right in their own eyes, and no one can define right and wrong for us except ourselves or whatever the culture defines as acceptable. When you begin to tell a culture that is [steeped in the worship of Hollywood icons, sexual immorality and divorce, drug addiction and drunkenness, murder and violence, and all the hedonistic pursuits of pleasure that engulf our country] that what they worship and how they worship is an offense against the true and living God who calls them to turn from their worthless vain religion in order to serve and worship Him, you will indeed invoke much hostility and opposition in what you seek to do. So then has the blood of martyrs been spilled, since our Lord and the Apostles first led us to this cross bearing duty of preaching the Gospel. These Thessalonians then were also an example to all believers of preaching the Gospel in every place, (being imitators of both the Lord and the Apostles), regardless of the opposition that it engendered. But consider their testimony of being saved from idolatry. They had turned from their own “idols” that are not God, but rather false gods in contrast to the “true God.”

Galatians 4:8 - 8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. NASB

1 Corinthians 12:2 - 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. NASB

1 Corinthians 10:20-22 - 20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons: you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we? NASB

Moreover, their false “idols” are dead, in contrast to the “true God” who is living. Consider
how the Bible describes what an idol actually is and what a worthless and futile enterprise it is to worship and value such a thing.

Psalm 135:15-18
15 The idols of the nations are but silver and gold, The work of man's hands. 16 They have mouths, but they do not speak; They have eyes, but they do not see; 17 They have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths. 18 Those who make them will be like them. Yes, everyone who trusts in them. NASB

In the end those who worship these dead things will become like them, dead things. The Bible portraits this idolatry as a “stupid” activity which brings “no profit,” but rather in the end they will be “put to shame” before the God whom they have denied and replaced with a dumb and lifeless block of wood which is no god at all.

Isaiah 44:9-11
9 Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame. 10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit? 11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame. NASB

These Thessalonians “turned to God” from this religion of futility and began “to serve a living and true God.” They not only turned their back on idolatry, but they began to “serve” God. Consider how they had published their new faith to all the surrounding provinces and what work must have been involved in such an enterprise. This would have required a great sacrifice of time, money and effort in order to accomplish. Therefore, mark their service to God as an “example” to us all of how a model church serves the living and true God. They had “lost their lives” for the sake of following Christ and in so doing they had found eternal life!

Matthew 16:24-27
24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. 26 "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. NASB

1 Thessalonians 1:10
10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. NASU

A. and to wait for His Son from heaven – Notice that the Thessalonian conversion not only included a wholehearted repentance and a working faith, but also a sincere and genuine hope in the soon coming of Jesus the “Son” of God. They were as Paul instructed them, “to wait for His Son from heaven.” See here it is Jesus who is coming and it is Christians who are “waiting.” More than this, Jesus is coming “from heaven.” He is now ruling at the right hand of God in heaven, with all power and authority, awaiting the timing of God’s perfect plan in history to come to fruition, and the majesty of His power to be displayed to all the nations of mankind.

Ephesians 1:19-23
These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. NASB

It is no secret that Jesus will come again both “to deliver us from the wrath to come” and also to establish His righteous Kingdom upon the earth and bring judgment on the wicked and ungodly people of the earth who have rejected His mercy and provoked His wrath by troubling His people and by millennia of sins and rebellion against Him.

Revelation - 1:7
7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. NASB

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10
6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed
from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. NASB

Matthew 25:31-32 - 31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 "And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; NASB

For this day of rescue and mighty deliverance we eagerly “wait” and long for as this is the “blessed hope” of the church, “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” On that day we shall be transformed from mortal to immortal beings, never again being subject to the affects of sin and death, and so shall we live forever in the good presence of God.

Titus 2:11-13 - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; NASB

Hebrews 9:27-28 - 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. NASB

Philippians 3:20-21 - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

B. whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, - Paul is ever mindful to remind us of the great victory over death that our Lord did achieve which was proved positive by His resurrection from the dead. This central tenant of the Christian faith is the very ground of our hope that Jesus Christ has in fact conquered sin and death and can in fact give us immortality and eternal life! Of the facts of this resurrection Paul testifies and Peter reminds us that because of it our faith and hope are in God, who has “caused us to be born again into this living hope.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-9 - 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. NASB

1 Peter 1:3-5 - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. NASB

1 Peter 1:20-21 - 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. NASB

C. who rescues us from the wrath to come – There are two things of import here. First, we get “rescued,” and second, it is from “the wrath to come.” This rescue in this verse is not from the affliction and tribulation that Christians endure from their persecutors, but specifically from the eschatological wrath of God, His judgment of eternal destruction which will be poured out on those who “do not know God and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus”(2 Thes 1:8). Wrath in Paul’s eschatology is always that which proceeds from God, and it is of this wrath that the Gospel warns all mankind to come and find refuge in the atonement of Christ. Specifically that the sacrifice of Christ has propitiated God’s wrath as He took the place of those who believe in Him to pay the penalty of God’s wrath for them as a substitute. This is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, and it is the primary work of Christ that “rescues us” from God’s eternal wrath which we also call death or in the book of Revelation, the “second death.” (Rev
2:11, 20:6, 14, 21:8) Thus when we are “rescued,” it is from the hands of and angry God of judgment and wrath. Notice the “us” here is those who have repented of sin, placed their faith in Jesus and who are “waiting for Him” and “serving the living and true God.” Those who are not included in this number will indeed find themselves as sinners in the hands of an angry God.

Isaiah 63:3-6 - 3 "I have trodden the wine trough alone, And from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger, And trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, And I stained all My raiment. 4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come. 5 "And I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me; And My wrath upheld Me. 6 "And I trod down the peoples in My anger, And made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth." NASB

Revelation 14:9-12 - 9 And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. NASB

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1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 – For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. NASU

A. For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain – Paul now begins a discourse on the integrity of his ministry and message, and an explanation of how the Thessalonians themselves are living proof of the effectiveness of his ministry there. In this, Paul appeals to his calling by God as the Gospel minister, and in so doing points out that they were therefore not called by a mortal man but by God Himself. He further points to the stellar integrity and example that the Apostles were to the young church, and in this discourse shows us many keys to effective discipleship. In fact the section in verses 2:1-12 is one of the richest sections of Holy Writ regarding the character and nature of Christian Discipleship. Here are the blueprints for a healthy church leaders. Notice here the outline of such characteristics;

- v-1,2 – **Powerful bold evangelism even in the face of opposition**
- v - 3,4 – **The divine origin of the message, from God and not men**
- v - 5,6 – **Pure motives of Christian leaders**
- v - 7 – **Gentle and nurturing care for young believers**
- v - 8 – **The loving sacrifice of Christian leaders**
- v - 9 – **The hard work of discipling**
- v - 10 – **The genuine and upright example of Christian leaders**
- v - 11 – **The firm discipline and guidance of Christian leaders**
- v - 12 – **The goal of Christian discipleship, a holy life that glorifies God**

Paul begins his discourse by calling them to account of their own personal knowledge of Paul and his companions, and all that took place while they were there stating “for you yourselves know, brethren.” In this discourse Paul repeats these terms 6 times in v-1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, making there own testimony crystal clear. Whether there were naysayers and critics of Paul’s integrity is not known, but what was known was the Thessalonians own first hand testimony of Paul’s powerful and effective ministry and his personal integrity, as he explains that “our coming to you was not in vain.” They were all eyewitnesses of the meaningful and lasting changes that had been wrought upon these new Christians and how their lives had been powerfully changed by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. This Gospel ministry was not a “vain” and meaningless failure, but rather a display of God’s divine power and majesty, graciously saving and transforming hopeless sinners.

B. 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition – A key element in Paul’s integrity was how he persevered through much “suffering” and opposition to come to them. Paul and Silas had been shamefully “mistreated in Philippi” in no small way, just prior to arriving in Thessalonica. The Greek word for “mistreated” means to be publically shamed. Acts 16:16-24 records the incident for us.

Acts 16:16-24 - 16 And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling. 17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.” 18 And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, 20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, 21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." 22 And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their...
robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. NASB

In spite of this painful and brutal persecution, Paul and Silas gathered much “boldness in our God” and were determined “to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.” This heroic and courageous act was one that came from men of pure motives and much confidence.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4 – 3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. NASU

A. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit – Paul proves the sincerity of his ministry to them because of his loving service to them in spite of much opposition. It certainly was not the work of charleton or a deciever, one who would seek to exploit people through false means. No false prophet would endure such a scourging to bring his deceiving lies to anyone. The Apostles were not seeking money so as to decieve their hearers with some “error.” Verse 9 tells us they worked to support themselves.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 - 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. Nor were they after sexual favors so that they would be accused of “impurity.” These Apostles set forth the truth of the Gospel plainly so that people could be saved, and they did nothing “by way of deceit.” See here then the Apostles sincere and loving motive toward their ministry to Thessalonians.

B. but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts – Here Paul appeals to the highest authority. The Apostles had been “approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel” and this was the most compelling reason for him to preach in such circumstances. They were sent from the God of Truth, with the message of truth, how then could they deceieve or be in error? They sought to please God and not men, because God had commissioned and sent them and God was the one “who examines their hearts.”

Galatians 1:10 - 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. NASB

And “so we speak” says Paul, “not as pleasing men, but God.” Paul’s motive and aim was to carry out the Masters orders, not tickle people’s ears. Would that all Christian preachers would learn in this school and stop seeking to “please men” and get down to the business of setting forth the truth plainly so that people can be saved.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-6 – 5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed — God is witness — 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. NASU

A. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed — God is witness — 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority – Paul did not seek to flatter his hearers, but to warn them of impending judgment. To flatter here is to exploit or deceive others with insincere praise. There was nothing insincere about Paul’s speech and so he says, “we never came with flattering speech,” and to this they were witnesses so he writes “as you know.” Christians should be suspect of flattering preachers, by this they expose their insincerity. Paul did not seek to take their money because he was greedy, but instead to hand out the riches of God’s grace. And for this he was willing to risk his life again and again. To this he says, “God is
witness.” Paul knows that ultimately he will give an account to God and that is what matters when all is said and done. We did not “seek glory from men, either from you or from others” he asserts. Paul was not on a power trip looking for the akalaid and submission of men, “even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.” Paul knows that his charge is from God, his message is from God and his praise is to come from God at the judgment. Therefore, he gives his life in service to Christ, regardless of the responses of men. This characterized the life of Paul.

Galatians 2:20-21 - I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. NASB

Acts 20:22-25 - 22 "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. 24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. NASB

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 – 7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 8 Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. NASU

A. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children – Not only had they come to Thessalonica in the face of much opposition, with a message and commission from God, with intentions and motives of the purest form, he now describes that in so doing there was a great humility and loving care on their part. They had served the Thessalonians in such a humble and “gentle” way as to be compared to a “nursing mother.” And to this they were witnesses, even as the Apostles “proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother cares for her own children,” their gentleness was evident to all. Paul, the master disciplermaker, was very gentle with the new believers, so much so that he employed a very caring and nurturing way of discipling that looked much like motherhood. This tender nurture and gentleness also characterized Paul’s ministry, as was evident in his instructions to those he trained. It is a dominant characteristic of biblical leadership.

2 Timothy 2:24-25 - 24 And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, NASB

Titus 3:1-2 - remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. NASB

He took great pains to see to it that these baby Christians had everything they needed for Christian life as effective and productive members of the church. And this goal he achieved, by the power and grace of God, who made no small display of His power in the Thessalonian church, and this God did through the diligent leadership of the Apostles. See here the glorious beauty of divine sovereignty and human responsibility working hand in hand to accomplish God’s eternal plan. God had chosen the Thessalonians from before the beginning of time (2 Thess 2:13) for salvation, and had decided that He should carry out a massive evangelical work through them in the Greco-Roman world (1 Thess 1:5-9). This was His sovereign will and His eternal decree. However, He carried it out by His wonderful providence through the hands of men and their diligent service, whom He called to the task, by the Word of the Gospel and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. This example brings new meaning to Ephesians 2:10.

Ephesians 2:10 - 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. NASB

B. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us - See here the Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org
sincere and genuine love that motivated Paul’s work. He deeply loved the church and as he saw God call them out, he tenderly received them into the fold. In fact because he had “so fond and affection for you,” he was “well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives.” Being willing to preach the Gospel in spite of much hardship was proof enough of their love for the church, but that is not all they did. They had made a great sacrifice of time and resources to visit the Thessalonians as they poured their very lives into them day by day, for as long as they could. Paul’s ministry was not only one of many words but it was accompanied by a lifestyle of loving service and kind affection as he states, “because you had become very dear to us.” See here the love of God to be what characterizes Christian leadership which is also seasoned with fond affection for those whom it serves.

1 Thessalonians 2:9-10 – 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; NASU
A. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you – See here yet another characteristic of Paul’s ministry, one of selfless sacrifice and hard work. He says here that they worked “night and day” and this was “labor and hardship” most probably in Paul’s industry of tent-making.

Acts 18:1-4 - 1 After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, 3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers. 4 And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. NASB

Paul describes the motive of his working night and day “so as not to be a burden to any of you.” See again the integrity and sincerity of their discipling efforts, and to this he calls them to account, being eyewitnesses of his labor, he says “for you recall brethren.” He wanted them to recount his example among them and how they could not be open to the charge of being idle, nor of seeking the wealth of others, but rather an example working hard, with their own hands to support themselves. He will use this example of his to call idle people in the church to account and to correct them in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12.

B. we proclaimed to you the gospel of God – Here we see the origin of Paul’s Gospel. It is the “gospel of God,” not the Gospel of men. It is the good news of the Person of Jesus Christ and the Work that He has already accomplished to reconcile rebel sinners to the Holy God, and restore them to loving relations with Him. Concerning this statement Leon Morris comments, “In 1:5 it is “our gospel,” for the preachers were proclaiming something they knew for themselves and had made their very own. Here what is singled out for attention is that the Gospel is not of human origin. It is nothing less than God’s plan for man’s salvation. The Christian faith is not the accumulated wisdom of pious souls, nor the insight of men of religious genius, but the divine plan for dealing with our sin.” Consider that when a Christian shares the Gospel of God’s grace they share an eternal message that never changes, of an eternal God who has completed a finished work of reconciliation to man, to which nothing can be added. It is the proclamation that God has entered time and space in the Person of Jesus Christ, to sacrifice Himself in order to buy His people back from sin and death, and that this work was completed once, proved powerful by His resurrection from the dead, and that all that is left to is to receive the free gift of God’s grace by repentance and faith. Repentance and faith is to turn from sins daily to follow Christ, and to trust Him only for our righteousness before God the Father, to whom the believing sinner has been reconciled. And this we Christians do with much confidence knowing that He will accomplish what He desires with it for it is the “Gospel of God.”

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C. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; - Here Paul again calls them to account saying “you are witnesses,” but more than this he calls them to account before God stating “and so is God.” Paul is ever mindful to tell us that we will give an account to God for everything that we do and say. This is fundamental to understanding the Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 4:13 - And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. NASB

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 - The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. NASB

We are not exactly sure Paul’s motivation is reminding them of the power and example of the Apostles’ ministry to them, but nevertheless he recounts their excellent behavior among them stating “how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers.” Not only this but he rightly identifies who the real Christians are. They are “believers” in contrast to those who do not have faith in Christ, or only a mere profession of it, not accompanied with fruit. See yet another characteristic of good Christian leaders. It is one of “devout, upright and blameless” behavior. Christian missionaries, pastors and deacons are to be men of upright character and moral purity. They are not to open to any charge of sin or blame, but rather blameless and beyond reproach. (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9.)

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 – 11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploping each one of you as a father would his own children, 12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. NASU

A. just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploping each one of you as a father would his own children – Paul, being very zealous for their growth and seeking to have them rooted and grounded in the Christian faith, was given to “exhorting and encouraging and imploring” them just “as a father would his own children.” But notice here he says he did this with “each one of you,” which shows he not only taught publically but also from house to house. See here that discipleship cannot happen by impersonal means but must happen at the personal level, as was exemplified with Jesus and the twelve. Paul had close relations with these Christians, so much so that he was able to “implore” them “as a father would his own children.” Christianity does not come without commandments and accountability that are to be fully obeyed. Proper Christian discipling comes with serious discipline and effort to see that disciples learn obedience to God’s holy Word, and this obedience is to be motivated by intense devotion and love for God and for His Son, Jesus Christ. This is essential to Christian life.

John 14:21 - 21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.” NASB

Christian leaders are not offering nice suggestions for people to improve their quality of life or offering therapy for their darkened sinful hearts. They are not to coddle the selfish pride of men or to entertain them by cleverly invented stories, tickling their ears. They are instead proclaiming divine imperatives which are to be fully obeyed, and this with strong exhortation and encouragements, accompanied with much warning of serious consequences for disobedience.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-6 - 4 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. NASB

These exhortations they offer with careful instruction, with much patience and gentleness, in the Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org
sincere love of God that looks much like that of a “father for his own children.” This has always been the standard for Christian leaders, and Christians should mark their leaders by these qualities, or disqualify them by the same. Paul explains in writing to his intern, 2 Timothy 4:2-5.

2 Timothy 4:1-5 - 4 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. NASB

B. so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory – All of this “exhorting and encouraging and imploring” has an intended goal. And this goal is “so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God.” The idea is that you would live a life that is reflective of God, who in every manner is the epitomy of virtue, and Christians are to reflect this character in their own lives. That is, to live a life of moral purity and and upright integrity and virtue that is equal to or according to the worth of God. This standard is very high, yet it is our aim and constant goal to become like Christ in every way. Not only this but it was Paul’s goal, and should be the goal of every pastor for his people. And this is the reason for the “exhorting and encouraging and imploring” that we would live in “a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” We are not to be hypocrites who profess one thing and live another. But rather we are to be imitators of and followers of Christ. There could not be a higher calling.

Ephesians 4:1-3 - 4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love. 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. NASB

1 Peter 1:14-16 - 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” NASB

1 John 2:4-6 - 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. NASB

Looking even closer, consider, “the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Here Paul speaks of our own personal calling by God. The idea of “the God who calls” really speaks to His electing grace by which we, who deserved death and destruction, instead received mercy and free grace because God has chosen to set His love upon us. By this should our hearts be glad to “walk in a manner worthy of Him.” But consider what it is that He has called us into, “His own Kingdom and Glory.” Now here is an expression of the massive ramifications involved in Christian salvation. We have been called out of the darkened world of sin and death and “into” God’s own “kingdom” of light and life. We have been delivered from the dominion of darkness, so that we are no longer bound as a slave in a kingdom of darkness but rather have come under the dominion of a new King in His kingdom of light.

Colossians 1:12-14 - 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. NASB

We have become subjects of a new authority, into a new reign with a new sovereign. Our obedience now is not sin unto death, but rather mercy and lovingkindness unto life. Not only this, but to receive and to see the “glory” of God’s beauty and experience the joy and gladness of His new creation forever and ever in a place never again to be tainted by sin or death. “Into” this kingdom we have been “called,” and it is the experience of God’s own “glory.”
1 Thessalonians 2:13 – 13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. NASU

A. For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us – Paul now shifts his attention from his own ministry to the Thessalonians themselves and how they received it. “For this reason” he says, “we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us.” Notice here that Paul is “constantly” thanking “God” for how the Thessalonians received “the Word of God.” This shows the nature of divine calling even further, for Paul certainly does not pat them on the back for such wisdom as they possessed of their own to believe, or for being such clever folks as to listen to God. No indeed, He thanks God for powerfully working in them conviction concerning His own “word.” Further, see here, the saving message of the Gospel that Paul preached to them was “the word of God.” How important it is for us to understand the divine and supernatural origin of the Christian Gospel. It is not man’s cleverly invented story but rather the very “word of God” Himself, who alone can supernaturally save us by a supernatural work of regeneration. Christian salvation is not simply a mental assent to certain ideas or historical facts, but rather being born again by the power of God’s Spirit which is a supernatural miracle of God’s doing.

John 3:3-5 - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. NASB

1 Corinthians 2:14 - 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. NASB

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 - 17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, NASB

B. you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God – The point here could not be more clear. The message of Christianity is a supernatural message, “the word of God,” from outside of the earthly dimension that comes from God Himself and from eternity where God dwells. It is not just some human wisdom made up by some self-righteous soul, but it is God’s heavenly plan to deal with man’s sin. It is a saving enterprise which issues forth from God Himself and accomplishes exactly what God sent it forth for. This is how Isaiah describes it.

Isaiah 55:11 - 11 So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. NASB

Paul is here commending the Thessalonians for accepting it as such, he states, “you accepted it not as the word of men.” This indicates a fundamental issue about the Christian Faith, that being, we understand the message of Christianity to be of divine and supernatural origin, and all true Christians accept it as such, “the word of God.” This why the Bible is ever and always under attack from the secular culture. If they can discredit the message as somehow being less than divine, they are also free from the curses that are written therein for those who reject it. See here one definite mark that distinguishes a true Christian from a mere professor, they hold the Bible in such high esteem that they see it “for what it really is, the word of God.” Further, those who see it as “it really is the word of God,” are also persuaded then that it is to be fully obeyed. If it truly is a message from God, it ought to be heeded, lest God be found in contempt toward us for our belittling of His holy Word.

C. which also performs its work in you who believe – It is because God had so moved in their hearts as to give them a witness of the divine origin of the message, that the powerful work of the Spirit had begun in their midst. God’s Word is of such wonder working power that it “performs its work in you who believe.” This is to say, the word “works” in those who “receive” and
“accept” it, giving proof that they “believe” what it says. Consider that the Word “performs its work,” that is the work of the Word “in you who believe.” When the Word is combined with faith, it powerfully “works.” MacArthur comments, “God’s Word always performs His purposes in the lives of all who believe (Isa 55:11). Scripture works on behalf of believers in a multitude of ways; it saves them (James 1:18, 1 Pet 1:23); it sanctifies them (John 17:17); it matures them (1 Pet 1:22); it frees them (John 8:31-32); it perfects them (2 Tim 3:16-17); it counsels them (Ps 119:24); it builds them up (Acts 20:32); it ensures their spiritual success (Josh 1:8-9, Ps 1:2-3); and it gives them hope (Ps 119:147, Acts 20:32).” Consider how profound this thought really is. That God Himself is powerfully working in those who believe His supernatural Word which came from His mouth. Here see the reason for the tenacity of Christian believers holding to the profession of their faith even at great peril or fiery testing. Christians are so persuaded that God has spoken, and their hearts have been so powerfully changed, that they won’t let go of their faith, even if it means certain death. They realize that they ought to obey God rather than men, for He holds their eternal soul in His hand. And here in this context, Paul goes on to discuss how they “endured sufferings” from their countrymen. Yet, because God’s Word had so powerfully worked in them, they would not be discouraged or detracted from not only believing, but also “sounding forth” the message in “every place,” v-1:8.

1 Thessalonians 2:14 – 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, NASU

A. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea – Here see that they look like the genuine Christians who were first powerfully transformed by the Gospel when it was first preached in Jerusalem by the Apostles. In the face of severe persecution, they held tenaciously to their faith, even if it meant “enduring sufferings.” Consider the exhortation in the book of Hebrews to the Judean Christians and how remarkably similar their situation was to the Thessalonians.

Hebrews 10:32-39 - 32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, 33 partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. 34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. 38 But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. NASB

Nevertheless, these Thessalonians, “became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea.” They were willing no matter the cost to hold on to their faith, even if they were to face severe persecution for it. They, just like the Jerusalem church, instead of being stamped out by religious persecution, thrived in the midst of it. This has long been the case in point, that whenever the church is persecuted, it thrives and spreads in strong degree. So came that famous quote from Tertullian, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

B. for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen. Here Paul states that they faced the “same sufferings” in Macedonia even as the Jerusalem church “did from the Jews.” We see the suffering of the “churches of Judea” was severe from the record of Acts and of the passage in Hebrews we just looked at. But notice here that this suffering came from “your own countrymen,” whereas theirs was “from the Jews.” See Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org 26
here the hostility of both Jews and Gentiles to the Gospel. We know from the account in Acts 17 that their persecutors where both Jew and Gentiles, who were also residents of Thessalonica. But consider for what reason mankind should be so hostile to the good news of salvation and eternal life. Why should men so vehemently oppose that which can save their souls from death and fill them with glorious peace and joy? See here the desperate state of sinful rebellion and darkness that all unregenerate people are in, whether they be Jew or Gentile, they are under the dominion of darkness and zealously reject the light which can lead them to freedom. They oppose the very medicine that can cure their dreadful disease.

John 3:19-21 - 19 "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." NASB

1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 – 15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost. NASU

A. who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out – The Jews have a long history of opposing God and His messengers. So much so that they would frequently be enraged with the men God had sent to give them His messages, to the point that they would kill them. For this deadly persecution, Jesus sternly rebuked them and even pronounced upon them a final woe of judgment for this behavior.

Matthew 23:31-39 - 31 "Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 "Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? 34 Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city. 35 that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 "Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. 37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! NASB

Of this killing the prophets, Steven condemned them with a fiery rebuke…..

Acts 7:52-53 - 52 "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become: 53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it." NASB

Not only did they “kill the prophets,” but they killed God Himself, who had come in the form of a man to save them. They “killed the Lord Jesus,” their own promised Messiah whom God had sent.

Acts 3:14-16 - 14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. NASB

See here the Jews killed their own Messiah, the Lord Himself, and they “killed the prophets” as well, and to heap sin upon sin Paul records, they “drove us out.”

B. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins – The Jews referred to here in this passage by Paul are the general populous of religious Jews who uphold the religion of Judaism through all of its traditions and rites. These are the religious Jews who meet regularly on the Sabbath in the synagogues. And these are the synagogues that Paul would enter to begin to try and convince them that their Messiah had come

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in the person of the Lord Jesus and that they could be saved through faith in Him. These Jews had become so steeped in their own tradition that it blinded them to the true worship of God. So much was this the case that, when their promised Messiah finally came, they did not recognize Him and receive Him, but instead they “killed” Him. This reflects the same religious spirit which was always among them when they would kill the prophets and those God would send to speak His Word to them, the very Word they held in such high esteem. Now it is these Jews that Paul speaks of when he says “they are not pleasing to God,” a fact which is manifested in the rejection of God’s messengers. But moreover he says they are “hostile to all men,” because they are “hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.” This was true at the establishment of the church in Jerusalem and characterized the Jews response to the Gospel in every place. They persecuted the Apostles and prophets in Jerusalem and had them beaten and killed.

Acts 4:1-4 - 4 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. NASB

Acts 5:40 - 40 And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them. NASB

And so even now, the Jews oppose the true message of God, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And even though God’s ultimate purpose has now been completed through Christ, they utterly reject the very thing God had designed to do through them for long ages past. Of this rejection and killing of the Messiah and the prophets, it has culminated in them “hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.” The idea here is that they pile up their sins to the limit before God or that the judgment for their sins is finally ripe. Consider that not only had they “killed the prophets,” but even their own Messiah, sent by God to save them. In order to pile up sins even more, they not only persecuted and killed Christians in the first church in Judea, but even in Thessalonica they were opposing God’s Gospel of salvation to the Gentile world and continuing to persecute God’s people. This piling up of sins causes Paul to speak about them as if their judgment was finally ripe.

C. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost - This is to say that as the Jews have reached that place of judgment where they are beyond hope, having rejected the final fulfillment of the Word of God, for whom and through whom did they exist as God’s people. The very purpose for which God called them, to manifest His great name and salvation, they have come to utterly and finally reject. This was a heartbreaking situation for Paul, a devout Jew himself. Consider his words from Romans 9.

Romans 9:1-5 - 9 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. NASB

All that the Jews stood for, their election by God, their calling to be His servant and bear His Word down through the ages, to be God’s covenant people, to be the chosen race of the Messiah Himself, all of these they have rejected to the utmost, even now continuing in their opposition and stiff-necked rebellion against God’s Gospel. This causes Paul to make this woeful statement, “But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.” What more could be said of this Jewish rejection of the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Their sins had piled up and reached their limit. Paul knew their religious system and the age of their glory had passed. Even though
this statement was prior to the judgment of 70 AD when the Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people annihilated, one must wonder if Paul had some prophetic knowledge of this soon coming event. Know for sure that just a few short years from the time of Paul’s writing this, the destruction that came upon the Jews at the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in 70 AD was indeed a terrible one. Not only did Titus the Roman general kill some 1.1 million Jews, but the nation was literally scattered to the wind and their Temple and entire system of sacrifice and offering came to an end. Of this end and judgment from God’s hand, the Jewish religion has never recovered and to this day some 2000 years later they still have no Temple sacrifice. This begs the question, what about the modern religion of Judaism? How should we view it, in light of the Gospel and the Christian age? One should consider that from a religious perspective, they still remain under the terrible wrath of judgment and blindness from God, so much so that they teach their people to abhor the Christian Messiah and to reject Him and His Gospel utterly. This religious teaching could not be more demonic. It is in direct opposition to God’s way of salvation, which salvation modern Judaism rejects and opposes, so as to be without hope and without God in the world. Clearly stated, the modern Jewish religion stands in the same place that it stood in the 1st Century, opposing the Gospel and hindering the Gentiles from being saved, teaching that Jesus is not the Christ. Even today Jews can become angrily provoked at the mention and discussion about Jesus being the Christ. Because of this rejection of Him, they remain under the wrath of God. It is important to note however that although the religious Jews throughout history have persecuted the true messengers of God, as they do today, there has always been a faithful remnant among God chosen people who love Him and faithfully follow Him. Of this Paul writes in Romans 11….

Romans 11:1-6 - 11 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." 4 But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. NASB

Paul goes on to speak about the glorious restoration of the Jews when God’s purposes have reached their fulfillment. At that time they will be reconciled to God through a massive conversion that God has promised through the prophet Zechariah(chapters 12-14) and others, wherein the entire surviving ethnic population of Israel will be saved at the revelation of Jesus Christ at His second coming.

Romans 11:25-26 - 25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob." NASB

God has a yet glorious plan for Israel in future days, but not until He lifts the blindness from their eyes to see the glory of Messiah and receive Him as their king and savior.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 – 17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while — in person, not in spirit — were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. 18 For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan hindered us. NASU A. But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while — in person, not in spirit — were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. 18 For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan hindered us. - Paul again acknowledges his great love for the Thessalonians and his longing to see them stating, “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while.” From this we know it had not been too long since Paul was run out of Thessalonica. But he speaks as if to say that his heart was ever with them saying,
“in person, not in spirit — were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.” Paul’s great desire was to be united with them once again, and he had obviously tried to come saying, “For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan hindered us.” However he had tried to come and visit, he was unsuccessful and he wanted them to know that he had tried. This is what prompted his sending of Timothy back to see the fledgling church, a visit which he goes onto record in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10. Nevertheless, he tells them of his great desire and longing to see them again, of which he mentions again in chapter 3.

1 Thessalonians 3:10-11 - 10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? 11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you. NASB

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 – 19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy. NASU

A. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy. - Here Paul expresses the reasons for his great love for the Thessalonians. They are the fruits of his Gospel labor. They reflect his success in service to God and are evidence of his great reward before God for his service. In this sense they are his “hope or joy or crown of exultation” so as to present to Jesus a gift of Paul’s labor so he states, “Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy.” Consider what joy it must have brought the Apostle to have whole communities of believers that were the fruits of his hard work and sacrifice. Surely when he had a group of faithful and excited believers, he was thrilled at the thought of it. Here see the reasons for his statement here and in chapter 3 verses 6-8.

1 Thessalonians 3:6-8 - 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. NASU

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3 - 1 Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. NASU

A. Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, - Paul’s statement is referring back to chapter verse 18, “For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan hindered us.” Wanting eagerly to return to Thessalonica and strengthen their faith, because of such opposition, Paul had come to understand that he could not actually go back any time soon so he states, “Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone.” He thought it best instead to send on Timothy and so “we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ.” See here the record of Timothy’s visit back to Thessalonica and the encouraging news he brought back which is reported in the following verses.

B. to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. – Paul’s intentions in wanting to return to the newly formed church was “to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.” This was always his goal with all the churches as he worked tirelessly to see them grow and flourish in the faith. To this Paul labored and strived.

Colossians 1:28-29 - 8 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. 29 For this purpose also I labor,
striving according to His power. which mightily works within me. NASU

He was greatly concerned about them being so strongly opposed and suffering persecution. Therefore he longed to return and encourage them and strengthen them against these Satanic attacks, and he states his motives in wanting to encourage them, “so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.” Through strengthening and encouragement he had hoped to keep them from being unduly discouraged and overly troubled by the common destiny of Christians to be persecuted. Again Paul calls them to account of their own knowledge “for you yourselves know” that in fact Christians inevitably endure persecution for their faith because “we have been destined for this.” This was a fact he had obviously taught them in the few short weeks he spent teaching them, as verse 4 makes clear. See here the Apostles pastoral heart, having a great struggle longing to be with them and being concerned for their well being, and yet being hindered and unable to return.

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5 - 4 For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. NASU

A. 4 For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. – Here Paul calls them to remember the things he taught them saying “indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance,” and so by to encourage them to stand firm in the midst of their great trial. Of this important teaching our Lord and the apostles often tell us.

John 15:18-21 - 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master:' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

2 Timothy 3:12 - 12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. NASB

1 Peter 4:14-16,19 - 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God. 19 Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

But notice his participation with them saying “we were going to suffer affliction.” They were in this thing together, and Paul wants to reassure them that not only they, but he and Silas and Timothy as well indeed were suffering “affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.”

B. 5 For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. – Because “it came to pass” and they were indeed suffering affliction Paul was greatly concerned about the stability of their faith. This was tormenting him being so far away as he states “when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith.” Here see the primary concern Paul had in sending Timothy to visit, his great concern about “your faith” and “for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.” To me it seems a strange statement, bearing in mind Paul’s statement about their sure election and divine calling. But it is his design to strengthen and encourage their faith against the Satanic attacks, not give some teaching on final perseverance. Of this statement, Calvin comments with keen insight, “By this term he teaches us that temptations are always to be dreaded, because it is the proper office of Satan to tempt. As, however, he never ceases to place ambushes for us on all sides, and to lay snares for us all around, so we must be on our watch, eagerly taking heed. And now he says...
openly what in the outset he had avoided saying, as being too harsh — that he had felt concerned lest his labors should be vain, if, peradventure, Satan should prevail. And this he does that they may be carefully upon their watch, and may stir themselves up the more vigorously to resistance.” See here Paul’s clever way of teaching the Thessalonians the origin of the afflictions they face, and to encourage their resistance to Satan’s deceptive efforts to discourage both new and old Christians alike.

1 Thessalonians 3:6-8 - 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. NASU

A. 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you. - Here we learn that Timothy did in fact make it to Thessalonica, and also successfully returned to both Paul and Silas as he states “But now that Timothy has come to us from you.” And here we see the wonderful news that caused the Apostles’ great rejoicing, the fact Timothy “has brought us good news of your faith.” God had kept these genuine Thessalonians converts firm in their faith and the Apostles get word that even persecutions have not deterred them from their trust in Christ. More than this, the Apostles were overjoyed at their “love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you.” Now this was even better news yet, that not only had they remained true to the faith with love, but they remembered the Apostles fondly and with warm affection “longing to see us just as we also long to see you.” Now this was a tremendous testimony of the faithfulness and power of God, having kept this young church both strong in faith toward God and sound in love toward men.

B. 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord – Now this was an occasion of great encouragement for Paul and Silas and Timothy. Having zealously prayed for them in much love and anguish wondering how they had faired in the face of “much affliction,” the Apostle speaks of their emotions, “for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith.” Even though the Apostles themselves had been enduring much “distress and affliction” from their ongoing ministry in southern Greece, their hearts remained ever concerned about the Thessalonians and if they had stood the test of persecution. When they heard “the good news of your faith and love,” they rejoiced saying “we were comforted about you through your faith.” Paul and the Apostles were comforted knowing the Thessalonians had passed the test and their great concern here had turned to comfort from God, having the wonderful news. So much were they rejoicing with thanksgiving to God Paul uses the figure of speech, “for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.” Here Paul means to say that the knowledge of the Thessalonians faith and love, causes them much joy as if it were the most encouraging thing they could hear. Not only were they longing to see Paul with warm affection, but they were standing firm “in the Lord.” This is to say that their faith had faired well and they were persevering in trusting Christ for their righteousness and following Him as their Lord. They were “in the Lord” and He was in them, and this was a testimony to the fact that God had chosen these converts out of the darkness of this world and caused them to “stand firm” in the faith, even in the midst of much affliction.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-11 - 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, 10 as we night and day keep praying
most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? 11
Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; NASU
A. 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice
before our God on your account, - Paul is overjoyed to the point that he can find no words or
way to express the greatness of his happiness over this news stating “For what thanks can we
render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your
account.” He has no words of gratitude to God that are equal to the joy that is in his heart, he is
simply overjoyed. See here the Apostles heart toward these his spiritual children, his true sons in
the faith. What encouragement for Paul to continue on in ministry this must have been to him? In
this he must have pondered how all the distress and affliction must have been worth it. Surely he
was gladly giving his life to see people come to Christ, and this was the greatest news of
encouragement he could have received.
B. 10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may
complete what is lacking in your faith? – Here he expresses his strong desire again to go and to
visit them and once again share the strong affection and love with which he longed to see them.
So much was this the case that they “night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may
see your face,” hoping that God would soon give them opportunity to visit once again. And here
see the purpose of their desire to visit, to “complete what is lacking in your faith.” Paul was so
zealous to teach them and give them everything they needed for life and for godliness, he wanted
them to have the complete assurance of full understanding.

Colossians 2:1-3 - 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining
to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge
of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and
knowledge. NASB

And though they had stood firm until this day, he realized they had much to learn and much to be
taught, as all Christians do. No matter how far we have come in the faith, we are still many miles
from the goal of Christ-likeness. And because of this we need to always keep in mind what is
lacking in our faith and persevere onto the end, when we shall be united to the Lord at His
coming.
C. 11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; - Here
see Paul’s knowledge of who gives us such privileges as to where we go and when, and who is
responsible for guiding and directing the steps of the wicked and the godly. The knowledge of
God’s providence in our lives should be the constant backdrop of our daily affairs, being always
and ever mindful of His guiding power and gracious love, sustaining our very lives. Of this
providence Paul wanted to make it clear to the Thessalonians who was governing his ability to
come and visit and seeks their understanding that he wouldn’t be coming until “our God and
Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you.” Paul seeks by this statement for the
young church to understand who is in control even of such a simple things as to where and when
we travel to conduct our daily affairs. In the words of James the Lord’s brother, a failure to
acknowledge this providence is boasting of an evil sort.

James 4:13-16 - 13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city,
and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." 14 Yet you do not know what your
life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15
Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." 16 But as it is, you
boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. NASB

Learn here, you live and move and have your being at the mere pleasure of God who gives you
your life and breath and all things that you have. Failure to acknowledge this great truth is to
misunderstand one of the most basic elements of your life and existence on earth, that God is the
one who determines the number of your days, the prosperity of your pursuits, and the very
circumstances that grip your life from day to day. (1 Chron 29:11-13, Ex 4:11, Deut 32:29, 1 Sam 2:7-9,
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Acts 17:24-27 - 24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temple made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things. 26 and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation. NASB

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 - 12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; 13 so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. NASU

A. 12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you: - As Paul was longing to return to Thessalonica and “complete what was lacking in their faith v-10,” here he prays for the same. But in so doing he touches on the essential nature of Christian sanctification, that is, the increase of God’s love in the life of the believer. This desire of Paul for them to complete what lacks, would be surely fulfilled if in fact they would “increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people.” The idea here is that the agape “love” which is in their hearts by the Holy Spirit would grow and enlarge and overflow. That they would “increase” in selfless sacrifice, and “abound” in the patience and kindness and all the other fruits and habits in which true Christian love consists. This is the great goal and pursuit of the Christian’s life and the sum of the whole Bible, as our Lord commanded us to fulfill.

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." NASB

Of this love William Burkitt comments, “Still our apostle perseveres in prayer, on the behalf of his beloved Thessalonians; and the particular mercy he prays for, is, their abundant increase in the grace and duty of love, first amongst themselves and their fellow-brethren in Christ, all Christians far and near; next towards all men, heathens and infidels, their bitter and bloody persecutors not excepted. Where note, The true property of Christian love; it is, 1. A brotherly affection, which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ, for grace sake; 2. A gracious propensity of heart, which a Christian bears for God's sake to all mankind, whereby he wills, and to his power procures, all good for them.” Here we see how much room we have to grow in love, not only for “one another,” but also “for all people,” a task which would be impossible for them and us without the aid of God’s Spirit. Consider that they were under much affliction and severe persecution from their fellow countrymen, who Paul here commands them to increase and abound in love towards. This is not a new teaching, but an essential teaching for all Christians, first intimated by our Lord in His sermon on the mount.

Matthew 5:43-48 - 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you 45 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? 47 "And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. NASB

The supreme example of this love was our Lord Himself as He hung on the cross at the hands of His deadly persecutors and prayed for their forgiveness, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do,”(Luke 23:34). Further, it is by this evidence that “all men know that we are Christ’s disciples”(John 13:35) and also without this agape love abounding in our life, all our
spiritual gifts and service are nothing and meaningless (1 Cor 13:1-3).

**John 13:34-35** - 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." NASB

**1 Corinthians 13:1-3** - 13 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. NASB

In fact this love says Paul, is a debt we owe to all men and the fulfillment of the Law.

**Romans 13:8-10** - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. NASB

**James 2:8** - If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. NASB

**Galatians 5:13-15** - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. NASB

Indeed the love of God is our chief pursuit and will not yet become full and abounding in us until we have died to our own self-will and self-love, but rather it is a focus of benevolence toward others. Of this passage Calvin comments… "He would have the Thessalonians abound in love and be filled with it, because in so far as we make progress in acquaintance with God, the love of the brethren must at the same time increase in us, until it take possession of our whole heart, the corrupt love of self being extirpated." Would that our life were seasoned with good fruits of the Spirit as this is the true substance of the Christian faith and the rule by which we judge ourselves and measure the reality of our own true faith.

**Colossians 3:12-14** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. NASB

Here then is the simple golden rule by which our Lord has told us to govern and judge our own hearts and motives.

**Matthew 7:12** - 12 "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. NASB

But also notice that the chief agent in this abounding love is “God.” He is the One who fires love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit so Paul states “may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love.” Love is in fact the fruit of the Spirit and is the true evidence of a Christian’s profession of Christ as Lord, and that one has been truly born again by God’s Spirit of love which lives within. This then is why the Apostle prays, God would cause the abounding increase of love in these dear saints. Not only this but Paul also here sets forth himself as their example saying “just as we also do for you,” an abounding and sacrificial love that they were all witnesses to. This was manifested before them as Paul made great sacrifices for the people as having not previously known them, risked his life and sacrificed his own skin to bring them the Gospel in the midst of much affliction and deadly persecution.

B. 13 so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. – When Paul says, “so that,” he looks to what he previously said about the Thessalonians abounding in love. If indeed the Lord causes them to “abound in love for one another and for all people,” this provides the basis for Him to “establish your hearts without blame in holiness.” Paul here is praying for their continued
growth the Christian faith and maturity, particularly here that their inner man would be purified, asking that “He may establish your hearts.” His focus here is on the heart, asking God that their hearts would be “established...without blame in holiness.” Consider what a heart is like that is “without blame in holiness before our God and Father.” Paul is here praying for their complete sanctification, abounding love (v-12) and pure hearts without blame in holiness (v-13), expressions of what completed sanctification looks like in the Christians life. Here then is expressed the goal and objective of our growth and maturity as Christians. We are pressing on to “abounding love and pure and holy hearts.” Know for sure that true religion is that which is pure in heart, where no one sees but God. If your heart and thoughts be pure, then you are pure in deed. Here also, see that people’s hearts are “before our God and Father,” who searches hearts and minds, in order to test the moral purity of our hearts, which moral purity pleases Him and the opposite wickedness does both repel and disgust Him. God is frequently seen in the Bible as the One who searches the heart and tests the mind seeking for purity of heart, in order to render judgment according to deeds, deeds being the overflow of what is in the heart. Even Christ Himself is said to do this in the New Testament.

1 Chronicles 28:9 - 9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind: for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever. NASB

Jeremiah 17:10 - 10 "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind. Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds. NASB

Revelation 2:23-24 - 23 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. NASB

Know this, that everything you think in your heart and everything you do in your life is open and laid bare “before our God and Father.”

Hebrews 4:12-13 - 12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. NASB

But Paul’s thought of them having pure and holy hearts and abounding love is seen in view of the Lord’s second coming. He states, “at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints,” implying that our abounding love and holiness ought to be rightly established “before our God and Father” when He comes. Now the “coming” referred to here is the Greek, parousia, which Paul mentions at the end of every chapter in 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:15-17, 5:23). He has constantly kept them apprised that everything they do is focused on the hope of “the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.” Here the Apostle’s prayer is that they are morally pure at the soon coming of Christ, who is in fact coming with “all His saints.” The term here for saints is the Greek haggios, meaning “holy ones.” Christ is coming with “all His holy ones” and the church is to be prepared by being holy for His arrival. It is disputed whether these “holy ones” are actually men or angels. Christ is said to come “with His saints,” but also for His saints, a tension which is relieved because saints simply means “holy ones” and can refer to either men or angels. Notwithstanding, the second coming of Christ is said to be attended by angels in many places (Matt 13:41, 25:41, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26, 2 Thes 1:7, Jude 14).

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire. 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. NASB

See here then that we ought to be preparing our hearts before God, for He is coming soon to judge and to reward. Note well the goal here for the Christian church, abounding love and morally pure hearts. It is for this great end that the Apostle here interceded on their behalf.

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1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 - 1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. NASU

A. 1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more – The terms “Finally then,” clearly show Paul transitioning from the main instruction of the letter to concluding remarks. In the first 3 chapters Paul had commended them for their excellent obedience, reminded them of his integrity and example in ministry, and exhorted them by way of commendation to continue and excel in their faith and love. In all of this Paul was careful to acknowledge that their calling and success was a gracious gift from God, whom He thanked more than once, who chose them and powerfully worked within them all the joy and abundant life they were experiencing, even in the midst of severe affliction. Theirs was a remarkable example of God’s mercy and power working in them which caused them to become a fruitful illustration of what true Christianity looks like when it flourishes. But however remarkable an example they had become, neither God nor Paul were satisfied with their progress and so Paul goes on to exhort them to further progress stating, “brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.” Paul was not overbearing or reprovingly correcting them but rather kindly and gently imploring them as “brethren,” lovingly stating “we request and exhort you.” In this he reminds them of their union with Christ, “in the Lord Jesus,” as to refer to the priority of his reminder “that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God,” something they were in fact doing, (just as you actually do walk), but even further “that you excel still more.” Here learn the great priority of Christian life, the doctrine of sanctification, that no matter how far we may have come in the faith, we must press on to the holiness and perfection which is “in the Lord Jesus.” This was a constant theme in the instruction and prayers of the Apostle.

Philippians 3:12-15 - 12 Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. NASB

1 Timothy 6:11-12 - 11 But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. NASB

Philippians 1:9-11 - 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. NASB

Colossians 1:9-12 - 9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. NASB

Paul eagerly desires for these Thessalonians to “excel still more” and not to be content with their own current state of holiness. He reminded them of how he had taught them. “you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God.” In his commentary on 1 Thessalonians MacArthur provides a helpful list of instructions on “how you ought to walk and please God.” He writes, “So the saints already knew the fundamentals of Christian living. They
knew what they needed to do to please God, (literally to strive to please God) and glorify Him in everything, they needed to:

- confess their sins regularly (Ps 32:5, Isa 1:18-19, Matt 6:12, 1 John 1:9)
- to pray continually and trust Him (Ps 27:8, Phil 4:6, 1 Thes 5:17, 1 Tim 2:8, Heb 4:16, 10:22, Jam 1:6)
- to pursue humility (Matt 20:26-28, Eph 4:1-2, Phil 2:3-4, Col 3:12, Jam 4:6)
- to be content with God’s will (Ps 37:16, 1 Tim 6:6, 8, Heb 13:5), as revealed in His Word (Ps 119:105, Prov 6:23, 2 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:19)
- to be willing to suffer for His name (Matt 5:10-12, John 15:20, Acts 5:41, 2 Tim 3:12)
- to evangelize the lost (Matt 4:19, 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, 2 Cor 5:20, 2 Tim 4:5)
- to celebrate the Lord’s table (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:23-28)
- to care for one another (Acts 2:44-46, Gal 6:2, Phil 2:3-4, 1 Thes 5:11, 14, Heb 13:1-3, Jam 1:27, 2:15-17)
- to honor God in their marriages and families (Eph 5:22-6:4, Col 3:18-21, 1 Tim 5:3-16, Tit 2:1-8, Heb 13:4)
- to be diligent and fruitful in all avenues of service (Matt 3:8, Eph 2:10, Col 1:10, 2 Tim 3:16-17, Tit 3:8, 14, Heb 10:24, 13:21)

Now obviously this is not an exhaustive list but it surely is a good snapshot of general Christian living. Here ask yourself, have I attained to the practice and habit of all these things in order to “please God” in my life? In fact “you ought to walk and please God” in this way. These then are the things in which we and we are to “excel still more” as we seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Let us be careful therefore not to lose sight of these things and to pursue this life that pleases God and continue to “excel still more.” May I suggest a few more for the list that I believe will be the catalyst to your further spiritual growth in the above exhortations.

- to love God and delight in Him sincerely from your heart (Jos 22:5, Ps 97:10, Matt 22:36-40, 1 Cor 16:22)
- to regularly worship and praise God both corporately and privately (Ps 96:1-9, 111:1, 113:1-5, 135:1-3, 149:1, 150, Isa 12:5-6, John 4:24, Rev 14:7, 15:3-4)
- to treasure, delight in and regularly feed on God’s Word (Ps 112:1, 119:127-128, 165-169, 1 Pet 2:2)
- to commune with God regularly in prayer and meditation on His Word (Jos 1:8, Ps 1:1-3, 119:47-50, 119:91-99)

B. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus – Paul again brings them to remembrance of the things he said, stating “for you know.” It wasn’t Paul’s word that he came preaching, but God’s, and he did it “by the authority of the Lord Jesus.” This he says so that they will not take his gentle exhortations for granted, but understand that what he says here come from the highest authority, even the “Lord Jesus” Himself. God has indeed commanded us to live in a manner worthy of Him, and the Christian faith indeed holds forth divine imperatives that are to be fully obeyed. We don’t keep the commandments in order to be saved, we keep them because we are saved. They are our delight and pursuit.

1 Corinthians 7:19-20 - 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. 20 Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called. NASB
In fact, the keeping of God’s commandments is the assurance that we have that we both love Christ and that our faith is real and genuine.

1 John 5:3 - 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

John 14:15,21 - 15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me: and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." NASB

1 John 2:4-6 - 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. NASB

It should be pointed out that God’s commandments are not unclear. They are contained in both the Old and New Testaments. God has given us imperatives and we are to obey them. Every Christian should be able to make clear distinctions between the Law and the Gospel, and understand the context in which the commandments apply to their life.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 - 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. NASU

A. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification – This statement is Paul’s unequivocal affirmation that God’s desire for Christians is that they be holy and in a state of blameless holiness. In fact he had just finished praying in 3:13 and asking that God would “establish your hearts without blame in holiness.” In order to clarify and instruct further, he says in no uncertain terms that “this is the will of God, your sanctification.” Your “sanctification” is your holiness, your continued growth in His perfection, your abstaining from sin and living and walking in continual repentance and righteousness before Him. The word for “sanctification” is the Greek hagiasmos, meaning the state of purification or purity, holiness. Paul here makes it crystal clear that the “will of God” or His commanded and moral will of desire is that we be pure, without sin, and live in a state of purity and blameless holiness. This is no foreign idea to the teaching of Jesus or the Apostles.

Matthew 5:48 - 48 Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. NASB

2 Corinthians 7:1 - 7 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. NASB

Philippians 2:15 - 15 that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, NASB

Titus 2:11-13 - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, NASB

1 Peter 1:14-16 - 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." NASB

1 John 3:6-10 - 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. NASB

In fact, it is clear that it is because of the sin and impurity that is in the world that God’s wrath is coming upon the world, and it is from this sin and impurity that we turn to Christ when we...
repent, the first step we took in trusting Christ for salvation. The wrath of God is coming upon the world because of its sin and impurity.

Romans 1:18 - 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, NASB

Ephesians 5:5-8 - 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. NASB

Colossians 3:5-7 - 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. NASB

In fact God will destroy all people who live in the practice of all such sins and willfully belittle Him by their sinful rebellion against Him. No one who lives in the practice of sin shall enter Heaven or God’s presence at any time.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NASB

Revelation 21:8 - 8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." NASB

It is therefore “the will of God” that those whom He has called and chosen should live in a state of purity and holiness, continuing to grow in “sanctification.” Another way to state this is to say that the Christian’s life should demonstrate a pattern of decreasing frequency of sin and an increasing frequency of righteous and godly behavior accompanied by the worship and service of God.

B. that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God – Now Paul wants to make it really clear that “sexual immorality” is a grievous sin that is to be abstained from. This is because the pagan culture of the Greco Roman world was one that was steeped in “sexual immorality,” as it was not only the featured practice in many of the hundreds of pagan religions and worship of false gods there, but also a part of everyday life. Many Greco Roman men would have not only wives, but also mistresses and concubines as well. A quote from the 3rd century B.C. Greek Demosthenes states, “Mistresses we keep for our pleasure, concubines for our physical well-being, and wives to bear us legitimate children and to serve as trustworthy guardians over our households.” Note well the hardened heart toward sin and the calloused attitude that accompanied such blatant and brazen sinful behavior that permeated the culture in Thessalonica. This is not very much unlike the current culture in America which is even now in a moral freefall, becoming more and more like this ancient culture in its tolerance of sexual immorality. Despite the benefit of Christian morality that once governed our culture’s laws and practices, the public display and wanton promiscuity of our culture deepens and plunges further and further, almost exponentially, as the days go on. But the standard of God for His holy people has not changed, nor will it ever. His will is for our “sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.” This again was no foreign idea to Christians throughout the New Testament.

Ephesians 5:3-8 - 3 But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org
one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light NASB

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 - 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. NASB

Colossians 3:5-9 - 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices. NASB

Ephesians 4:17-20 - 17 This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. NASB

Hebrews 13:4 - 4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. NASB

See then that it is very clear that Christians “abstain from sexual immorality.” The word for sexual immorality in the Greek is porneia and means fornication, harlotry (including adultery and incest). The English word fornication means any kind of sex outside of marriage, which is explained as voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons. Of course, God does honor sex within the bonds of marriage, and in fact considers it an undefiled and holy thing. Hebrews 13:4. Paul’s contrast of “sexual immorality” with “sanctification and honor,” coupled with his command to “abstain,” make it very clear that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is sinful and entirely inappropriate for Christians. He therefore states that “each of you” Christians has a responsibility to “know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.” Christians do not commit the most intimate of relations with just any person, but only those to whom they have committed their life in a monogamous marriage. Unlike the Greco-Roman culture around them in which they all have participated they are no longer to have any sex outside of marriage, nor are their emotions and actions to be driven out of control. They are to be self-controlled when it comes to sexual activity, “not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.” The uncontrolled desire for sexual gratification, which is typical for unregenerate people, was not to be true for the Thessalonians or any other Christian. For the Gentiles of that culture live in “lustful passion.” Here “lustful” is with intense desire, and “passion” is overwhelming or overpowering desire. Coupled together these take on the clear idea of consuming desire for sexual gratification which reaches uncontrollable levels. This is how people live who “do not know God” for they are a God unto themselves and live for whatever drives their desires, regardless of what God says. Not so for the Christian who has surrendered their will to Christ, who commands them to live in purity and in repentance from sexual sin, which is impure in the sight of God and improper for His holy people.

C. 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you – Here Paul makes it clear that fornication, even among fellow Christians is improper. He clearly states “that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter” so that we understand that when we selfishly use another Christian and take for our own personal pleasure what does not rightfully belong to us, we transgress and defraud them. Whenever believers seek to satisfy their physical desires and gain sexual pleasure at the expense of another believer, they have violated this command, sinning against God, their own body and their fellow believer. This makes the compound nature of this sin very severe indeed, and “because the Lord is the avenger in all
these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you,” they must understand that this behavior is certainly a violation of God’s will. Another way to state this is that it is entirely inappropriate for Christians to have sex outside of marriage for we know that this is the kind of behavior for which the wrath of God is coming upon the heathen world and we therefore know that God does not approve of such behavior. Sexual immorality by professing Christians is usually evidence that they are not truly born again, and therefore not true believers but mere professors. Those who live in the practice of continual sin show by this evidence that they do not know God.

1 John 3:6-11 - 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. NASB

This is not to say that true Christians never sin, or commit sexual immorality, surely they do. It is to say that if they do, God will certainly deal with their sin. God will see to it that there be serious consequences for believers who engage in sexual immorality. Sin always has destructive consequences for those who choose it, as “God is the avenger of these things,” and this is something the Apostle has previously warned the Thessalonians about stating “just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.”

1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 - 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. NASU

A. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification – Here then is the fundamental truth which governs our Christian lives, “God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.” We are not to violate God’s holiness or His purity by living in a way that denies His essential nature, but rather in a way that exalts and glorifies His nature. But this calling is not just one of pure actions, but pure hearts, pure thoughts and pure motives. Paul’s standard for Christian living extends beyond just abstaining from improper sexual practice, but also from improper sexual thoughts and motives. God does not only want our actions pure, but the very thoughts and intentions that drive those actions to be pure, first and foremost. This is clearly reflected from the teaching of Jesus Himself.

Matthew 5:27-31 - 27 “You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; 28 but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29 "And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 "And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell. NASB

People not only sin with their hands, but with their mouths and also with the eyes and with their hearts and minds. The Lord here clearly shows that even though the Law declared that adultery was sinful, but that even the intent of adultery was as serious as the act. Here the Lord calls Christians to pure motives and thoughts, as we are to be pure in reality in our hearts, not only in our actions. It is out of the overflow of the heart that we commit sin, because in our heart we crave it, therefore we are to have pure hearts so that we will be in reality pure people.

Matthew 15:18-20 - 18 "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.” NASB

How much more important is this in today’s affluent and media driven American culture. We are
constantly bombarded with every kind of luring advertisement for all kinds of worldly goods and worldly vice. Pounded with images daily, our consciences are continually put on trial, as we must stand firm in the strong wind of worldly pleasures and vices which assault our sensitivities and desires, constantly pushing us and luring us to find our satisfaction in worldly goods and pleasures, rather than in Christ alone. This is seen most clearly in the decline of morality in the broadcast airwaves of radio, television, internet and movies. As the sense of public morality declines further and further, we are bombarded with more and more wickedness and are desensitized by the continual bombardment of immoral images and sound bites, and our innate desire for pleasure and materialism is tried to the maximum by the lure of affluence and worldly pleasures which are seemingly within our reach. Worse yet, we can live in the fantasy of these things by way of experience on the screen, and our hearts and minds are drug through the dirt of worldly vice, all while we sit in the comfort of our own home. Pornography is within the reach of every man and woman so that sexual desire can be inflamed without actually engaging in the physical sin, but the wretched sin of intent kills the inner man like cancer. Movies and television portray sin in a glorified manner that causes even the most discerning of Christians to be led astray for the moment into thoughts of wickedness, and our consciences become desensitized and numbed to the serious offense that sin should be to us. All manner of sin is portrayed in such a luring and enticing way as to entertain us with all the special effects and sound quality and drama of storyline that has been pushed to the seeming limits of emotional experience. Therefore as the decline of morality in our culture descends further and further, we must abstain ourselves from the indulgence into the world’s lusts and desires, in an effort to keep our hearts pure and our consciences sensitive to God’s purity for “God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.” Let us therefore be very careful how we live, using wisdom in the things we engage in and let us with the Psalmist long for God’s holiness in all our ways.

Psalm 101:2-4 - 2 I will give heed to the blameless way. When wilt Thou come to me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart. 3 I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me. 4 A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil. NASB

B. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you - Here Paul makes it clear again that the prohibition of sexual immorality comes from God. It is “God’s will that you abstain.” Therefore if you reject that command, you are rejecting God. Here see that disobedience to God’s commands is a sin against Him, not just some Law as Paul states “he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God.” Not only this but you sin against the God who is abiding in you by His Spirit, who’s presence continues in your soul. This is a grievous matter indeed. Elsewhere in the New Testament Paul teaches us that we are one with the Lord and sexual immorality is like joining God to those with whom we engage in sexual sin with. We are to consider our bodies as the sacred temple where God’s Spirit dwells and it is therefore to be a place of purity and sanctification.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 - 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! 16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 - 9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel

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still more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need. NASU

A. 9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more – The word here translated “love of the brethren” is in fact the one Greek word philadelphia meaning brotherly love. It is that special love that exists between Christians and it is this love that Paul tells the Thessalonians that “you have no need for anyone to write to you.” By this Paul means to say that as he has written and instructed them on many things, but on this matter, he need not do so “for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” His point is that they are already accomplished in this area of Christian life and he points this out when he says, “for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.” Obviously, they were actively meeting the needs of others in the surrounding province and exercising love to such degree that it was well known. So they have learned from God in this matter of brotherly love and are now practicing it, yet Paul exhorts them to further growth stating, “But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more.” As it is with all virtue, Christians are to always and continually be striving to excel so that their life becomes one of a constant display of Christ’s character and virtue. This is the second time in this chapter (see verse 1), that Paul has commended them for their godliness and yet on both accounts says “we urge you, brethren, to excel still more.” Let us mark this idea well, that no matter how far we come as Christians, let us continue to pursue that upward call of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

B. 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need – Here Paul instructs them as to their conduct in daily life and interaction with others, including unbelievers. When he says “to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business” he refers to that good conduct of a Christian whereby they avoid meddling in the affairs of others and submissively follow the laws of society, being at peace with all men. Barnes comments “Orderly, peaceful; living in the practice of the calm virtues of life. The duty to which he would exhort them was that of being subordinate to the laws; of avoiding all tumult and disorder; of calmly pursuing their regular avocations, and of keeping themselves from all the assemblages of the idle, the restless, and the dissatisfied. No Christian should be engaged in a mob; none should be identified with the popular excitements which lead to disorder and to the disregard of the laws.” To this “quiet life” Paul adds that they should “work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.” Here he reminds them of a command he had earlier given, that they should “work with their hands.” By this he means work in gainful employment so that they are able to provide for themselves and not be a burden on others who are so dutifully employed. This has long been a Christian standard. Christians are not to be bums, living off the hard work of others, but rather those who work hard and earn their own living and provide for the needs of others as well.

Ephesians 4:28 - 28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. NASB

Christians are to live a disciplined life of hard work that produces an abundance. They are not to go about life meddling in the affairs of others, as gossips or busybodies, but rather to “mind their own business and work with their hands” in order to have something to share with the needy.

2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 - 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. NASB
Moreover, this work ethic is one that shows properly God’s gracious character to the fallen world of unbelievers around us who are here called “outsiders.” When a Christian works hard, minds his or her own business, and leads a quiet orderly life, he glorifies God and by this activity “behaves properly toward outsiders” by “not being in any need.”

Proverbs 21:25-26 - 25 The desire of the sluggard puts him to death. For his hands refuse to work; 26 All day long he is craving, While the righteous gives and does not hold back. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 - 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. NASU

A. 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. – Here Paul shifts his argument to obviously instruct them in area of doctrine of which they were either confused or had received insufficient instruction, thus his statement, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren.” The Thessalonians no doubt had many theological questions for Timothy upon his visit, many of which were obviously relayed to Paul which he addresses in these Thessalonians letters. It is clear from this verse and others like it, that Paul is answering questions or giving more complete framework to doctrinal issues that were of interest to them. At the top of this list were the eschatological issues of the state of believers who die, and the second coming of Christ, issues which Paul answers in detail from here to the end of the letter. Now of those Christians who have died he comments, “about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” We know for sure that these are Christians who have died because verse 15 contrasts these with “those who are alive.” It is interesting to note that this is very common in the New Testament which often speaks of Christians who die as those who have “fallen asleep.”

Moreover, these are held in this verse in contrast to “the rest who have no hope.” The contrast is that Christians who die will certainly be reunited with their Christian loved ones at Christ’s second coming (v-14), therefore we do not “grieve” with unending sorrow “as the rest who have no hope,” a reference no doubt to unbelievers who do not posses the Christian hope of the resurrection of the dead. Instead we living Christians do have the hope that we will surely be reunited with Christians “who are asleep,” and this hope reassures us “so that you will not grieve as do the rest.” Dear Christian take hope from this verse, that every Christian friend or relative that you have ever had or will have who dies, will certainly see you again at the second coming of Christ, and you shall never again be cutoff from fellowship forever and ever, world without end.

1 Corinthians 15:20-24 - 20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. NASB

2 Corinthians 4:14-15 - 14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. NASB

2 Corinthians 5:1-4 - 1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. NASB

This is not only repeated in many New Testament passages, but is the main focus of Paul’s detailed explanation of the second coming in verses 15-17, where in verse 17 he speaks explicitly of the reuniting, “we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the

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clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

B. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. – Note well the reason for our hope. “Jesus died and rose again.” We Christians in fact “believe that Jesus died and rose again,” and this is our great assurance that He has conquered the grave. Paul’s point is this, if we “believe that Jesus died and rose again,” then “even so,” in the same manner we believe that “God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” This is Paul’s instruction to the young Christians about a vital Christian truth concerning the resurrection of the dead. Notice, it is the Father’s plan or decree, “God” will bring “with Him,” (that is Christ), “those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” The reuniting of Christian believers of all ages is the eternal decree of God, which has been His plan for us from before the beginning of time, a fact clear from His omniscience. This was also a key issue of Jesus’ teaching concerning His second coming.

Matthew 24:31 - 31 “And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. NASB
Mark 13:27 - 27 “And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:15 - 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. NASU
A. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord – Now Paul is about to make a statement of incredible magnitude, “for this we say to you,” and he wants to assure his readers that this pronouncement is not his own, but in fact the Lord is the author of it. Calvin points out that what is about to be said is “incredible to the human mind and also promises what is above the power and choice of men, he premises that he does not bring forward anything that is his own, or that proceeds from men, but that the Lord is the author of it. It is probable, however, that the ‘word of the Lord’ means what was taken from His discourses.” Consider the supernatural nature of such an event as the Second Coming of Christ coming to resurrect those who are “asleep” in Him and to gather them with His living saints in the sky by an amazing appearance in the clouds. This is in fact an incredible statement. Here Paul makes specific reference to “the word of the Lord.” Some argue that Paul is giving an authoritative prophetic utterance of knowledge here while others maintain he is simply quoting a saying of Jesus, either from one of Jesus sermons or from an actual Gospel account such as Mark or Matthew’s record of the Olivet Discourse. Regardless of which of these may be true, the Lord Himself did give extensive teaching about His coming ‘parousia’ in the Olivet Discourse and in many other places as well which are recorded for us in the Gospels. In fact several commentators believe this is a direct reference to the Olivet Discourse, specifically the passage in Mark 13:24-27 and Matthew 24:30-31. I certainly do believe this myself. An analysis of this passage alongside of the Olivet Discourse reveals remarkable similarities (see attached chart on Text Comparison 1 Thess 4 and Matt 24).

Mark 13:24-27 - 24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. 26 “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB
Matthew 24:29-31 - 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. NASB

Not only this but it is very apparent that resurrection of dead saints along with translation of living saints is a key feature in the Second Coming, one must acknowledge that this feature.
exists as a key component of the Second Coming in every passage that speaks of it, whether or not it gives further details about this feature or not. In one context the writer may have in view a specific feature of the Second Coming such as the destruction of the wicked and unbelieving (2 Thes 1:7-10), or of the establishment of the Kingdom on earth (Rev 20:1-10), but that does mean then that the Second Coming does not include key features which are spoken of in other passages where the writer has that feature in view. Rather, we get a much clearer picture in our minds of all of the events which culminate at the Second Coming, and the order in which they do, as we piece together all the different passages which refer to it. And even though there are many passages which give many features and chronological order of events, the Second Coming is an event of such magnanimous proportions and supernatural intervention into the natural order of events that it we cannot get a perfect picture nor can we comprehend the whole nature and sense of what will happen, but will instead “marvel at” His glorious appearing with much wonder and awe (2 Thes 1:10). In summary, Paul’s specific reference to “the word of the Lord” in my view is a reference to the Olivet Discourse, either a direct quotation from Paul’s memory or his paraphrase of an Olivet passage. Regardless of the validity of my position on this, we understand that Paul is making the point that what he is about to say, he says as a direct quotation of God’s Word and by God’s authority, whether that be a previously recorded quote or not.

B. that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep – This statement by Paul actually continues into verse 16-17, where Paul further clarifies his meaning. It is clear from this verse however that Paul expects that Lord to return during his lifetime, or at the very least expects living believers to live in light of that expectation. This is clear from the words that “we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord.” This clearly shows that the Lord is coming and that there will be those who are “alive and remain until the coming of the Lord.” But Paul’s main point in this verse is to show that the believers who have “fallen asleep in Jesus, v-14,” are going to precede those who are “alive and remain.” The meaning here is, that they who would be alive at “the coming of the Lord” Jesus, would not be ‘changed’ and received up into glory before those who were in their graves were raised up. This is his design in the words “will not precede those who have fallen asleep.” This point is very clear therefore, that is, at the Second Coming of Christ He will gather together His elect, and there will be a resurrection of dead believers which will precede the translation of living believers into the air to meet Christ when He comes. This is also clear from other passages.

John 11:25-26 - 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? ” NASB
1 Corinthians 6:14 - 14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us through His power. NASB
Romans 8:11 - 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. NASB
1 Corinthians 15:50-54 - 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. NASB
2 Corinthians 4:14 - 14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. NASB
Mark 13:26-27 - 26 “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 “And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 - 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17
Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. NASU

A. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God – Now Paul begins to describe the *parousia* or coming of the Lord he mentioned in verse 1:10, 2:19, 3:13 and the preceding verse 4:15, as the term “For” connotes. As he has expectantly told them, “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven.” His meaning here is plain, this will not be some spiritual appearance or some esoteric revealing in the minds of enlightened people but rather a powerful inbreaking of the King of Heaven into the physical realm of time and space. “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven,” and He will do so “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God.” Here notice He comes “with a shout,” or in the Greek a *command*. One cannot dismiss the account of Lazarus being raised from the dead, or the Lord’s words speaking of the resurrection of the dead in John 5:25-29, in regard to this resurrection as His powerful voice does in fact raise those who are “in Him” from the dead.

John 5:25-29 - 25 “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. 26 “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, 29 and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. NASB

The loud command of the Lord will be accompanied by “the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God.” The scene here is one of a general commanding his troops into the heat of battle. The Second Coming of Christ is often seen in Scripture as the triumphant conquering King coming to take what is rightfully His and to destroy those who oppose Him. Further, the **Second Coming is in many places accompanied with angels and trumpets**, the trumpets being a common feature in ancient middle eastern battle scenes. Note here then that the Lord is coming with His powerful angels, including “the archangel” himself. The word archangel is the Greek *archaggelos*, meaning a chief angel. Note the angel’s role in many end times passages.

Mark 13:26-27 - 26 “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 “And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB

Matthew 16:27 - 27 “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. NASB

2 Thessalonians 1:7 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire. NASB

This trumpet however is “the trumpet of God” and this term gives it the utmost significance, relating it to the most significant trumpets in Scripture. The trumpet in the Bible is usually used for the gathering of God’s people for a significant event, feast, battle or otherwise. Here Christ’s first order of business at His coming is the gathering of His people, together with His powerful angels and a loud trumpet call.

1 Corinthians 15:50-52 - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. NASB

Matthew 24:30-31 - 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 “And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. NASB

Notice in the above two passages, key passages on the Second Coming and resurrection, the accompaniment of both angels and trumpets.
Moreover, it should be noted that as many orthodox doctrinal statements testify, the Second Coming of Christ will be **personal, bodily and visible**. These facts are important because up until the Second Coming Christ’s presence is only spiritual, and non-visible. Therefore in many places the Bible speaks of the **reveling or appearing** of Christ as He shall appear **personally** and in the **body**. This is most clearly indicated by our text, “*The Lord Himself will descend from heaven.*”

**Hebrews 9:27-28** - 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. NASB

**1 Timothy 6:1-15** - 14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which He will bring about at the proper time — He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; NASB

**2 Timothy 4:1-2** - 4 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: NASB

**1 Peter 1:7** - 7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; NASB

Not only will He come personally and bodily, but He will come **visibly** so that His coming is witnessed by the entire world. This coming is said to be with power and great glory as He will be feared and marveled at by both the unbelieving world and those who have eagerly awaited His coming.

**Revelation 1:7** - 7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. NASB

**Mark 14:62** - 62 And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” NASB

**Matthew 24:30** - 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. NASB

B. and the dead in Christ will rise first. – Here Christ’s first order of business at His coming is the gathering of His people, and this is done through the resurrection of dead saints and the translation of living saints to meet together in the air. Here is what Paul was describing in verse 15, “**the dead in Christ will rise first,**” and not “**precede we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, v-15.**” Note the order of events, “**the dead in Christ will rise first,**” THEN, “**we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them.**” But don’t miss these very key words and the significance of them, “**the dead in Christ will rise.**” It is very significant here that the **resurrection of the dead takes place at the Second Coming.** This resurrection must be understood in light of the whole context of Scripture in its teaching on the resurrection of the dead, for the resurrection of dead people is mentioned in many places in Scripture. There were miraculous healings of dead people who were raised by prophets in the Old Testament, Apostles in the New Testament, and also by our Lord Himself (1 Kings 17:20-24, 2 Kings 4:32-37, 13:21, Mark 5:41-43, John 11:43-44, Acts 9:40-41, Acts 20:9-12). Of course the most significant resurrection is that of our Lord Himself after His crucifixion, death and burial.

**1 Corinthians 15:2-8** - 2 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep: 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. NASB
The Two Resurrections

There are many resurrections of dead people in Scripture, but the hope of a general resurrection of all people is a clear teaching in Scripture. This appears in the Old Testament.

Job 19:26-27 - 26 "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes shall see and not another. My heart faints within me. NASB

Isaiah 26:19-21 - 19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. 20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms, And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while, Until indignation runs its course. 21 For behold, the Lord is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed, And will no longer cover her slain. NASB

Ezekiel 37:12-13 - 12 "Therefore prophesy, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God," Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves. My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 "Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves. My people. NASB

And it also appears in the New Testament.

Mark 12:24-27 - 24 Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God? 25 "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 "But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken." NASB

1 Corinthians 15:20-24 - 20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. NASB

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. NASB

Hebrews 6:1-2 – 1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. NASB

Revelation 20:4-6 - 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. NASB

In fact, there are two resurrections that are spoken of in Scripture which have yet to happen in the course of history and are clearly taught as separate events. They are referred to as the resurrection unto life for the righteous AND the resurrection unto judgment or contempt for the wicked.

Daniel 12:1-3 - 12 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. 3 "And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. NASB

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John 5:28-29 - 28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, 29 and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. NASB

Acts 24:14-15 - 14 "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; 15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. NASB

But these resurrections are separated by a period of 1000 years and clearly taught as separate events. Notice Revelation 20 verse 5.

Revelation 20:4-6 - 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. NASB

Revelation 20:11-15 - 11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. NASB

Notice in these two passages the contrast behind the statements in 20:5 about “the first resurrection,” over whom “the second death has no power v-20:6,” and “the second death,” of verse 20:14. Those who are raised in the first resurrection shall become immortal and never again be subject to death. They will live forever from that point forward.

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Now when considering the resurrection mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 it is important to realize that this resurrection must of course be the resurrection of the righteous unto life, as these are God’s people, the church who have been promised eternal life and in fact those who do not have to “grieve like the rest who have no hope,” because the Christian hope is that we will be raised again to eternal life and forever be with the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, the “first resurrection” is the first order of business at Jesus Second Coming as the passage tells us, as the living saints join “the dead in Christ” who have risen first.

C. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord – The word “then” in this context explains that the event which is described happens after the prior event he just mentioned, “the dead in Christ will rise first.” This of course was Paul’s point in verse 4:15 when he said “we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.” After the dead in Christ are raised, “we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” Now of this spectacular event there is much said in Scripture, it is in fact the event referred to as the rapture. The Greek word for “caught up,” harpazo, is the Latin rapio from which we get the English word rapture. It is the translation of living saints from the earth, to the sky, by a powerful act of God which will also transform the bodies of those living saints into glorious immortal bodies. This is in fact the blessed hope of the church, the Second Coming of Christ and the transformation of our bodies to be like His glorious body.

Titus 2:13 - 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. NASB

Colossians 3:4 - 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. NASB

At this time, there will be a powerful transformation of the bodies of living saints, from mortal to immortal and never again to be subject to death.

1 John 3:2 - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. NASB

Philippians 3:20-21 - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. NASB

Notice also, that the translation of living saints united them to both the “dead in Christ” who were just raised, and the Lord Himself, “together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” The raptured saints will meet “together with them,” and also “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” Notice that the common picture of the Second Coming of Christ is “in the clouds,” and this is where the raptured saints meet the resurrected saints in 1 Thess 4:15-17. This is a key indicator that these events (the rapture and the Second Coming), happen at the same time (post-tribulationism) and are not separated by a period of seven years (pre-tribulationism).

Acts 1:9-11 - 9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazng intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; 11 and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." NASB

Revelation 1:7 - 7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. NASB
Nevertheless, Christ will be coming again in the clouds and will raise His people from the dead and gather them together with His living saints “and so we shall always be with the Lord.” Don’t miss this last phrase, and very important part of the text. When Jesus returns for His Church and gathers us together, we shall never be separated from Christ again, but rather, “and so we shall always be with the Lord.” This is the primary reason why verse 13 explains that Christians “do not grieve as those who have no hope,” and the main support of that statement. Why should we not grieve without hope? Because we have the hope that we will ultimately be rejoined with our deceased loved ones and better yet, united with them and Christ and never again separated henceforth.

D. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words – I suppose of all the comforting words that we Christians possess, none are so profound as these, verses 15-17, which tell us of our ultimate future beyond the grave and describe our eternal destiny with closure and finality. Not only do we “not grieve as them who have no hope,” but on the contrary, we have great hope that our future lies in the hands of the powerful and sovereign God who has purposed to save us from sin and death, and cause us to stand in His presence without fault and with great joy, when He comes again to finally deliver His people from this sin cursed and fallen world which we now live in. Moreover, it is at this point in history that His people will be eternally united to Him, as we are glorified together with Him on that day. There could be no greater hope then to have a sure victory over that great enemy death which has plagued us with its woes since we have fallen into sin. On this basis then, Paul states, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” These promises are in fact a very comforting and reassuring truth that can give us hope and encouragement, even in our darkest trials and our bleakest day. We are therefore to actually speak this truth to grieving and downcast Christians when so needed, that things will not always suffer and grieve, but that a brighter and everlasting Day is soon approaching, and this Day will come with power from the God who is all-powerful and has promised to bring it to pass with glory, might and finality. Even our Lord Himself, on the night before He was crucified, encouraged with this truth.

John 14:1-3 - 14 "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. NASB

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 – 1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. NASU

A. Concerning the timing of these great events mentioned in 4:15-17, Paul explains that they had ample knowledge. He states, “Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.” The words here for “times and epochs” clearly speak of the timing and order of these events. Paul again employs that tactic he had used with several times earlier in this letter where he calls them to account of their own knowledge saying “you yourselves know full well.” He wants them to recall the truths he had formerly taught them, and here specifically, “that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.” Even Paul himself did not know the day or the hour of Christ’s return, and he points out here that this truth is plain. It was surely taught by Jesus Himself.

Matthew 24:36 - 36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. NASB

Acts 1:6-8 - 6 And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; NASB

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This should cancel any fancy notions by people setting dates of Christ’s return, which is usually a ploy to garner a following and the financial benefits derived thereof. On the contrary Paul explains, that God has designed the Second Coming of Christ to overtake the unbelieving world unawares stating, “that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.” He goes on to explain however in verses 3-5 that Christ’s coming will not overtake Christians in this way because, although we do not know the exact day or hour, the season of His coming will be very apparent to those discerning Christians who know full well the signs of His coming and of the end of the age. The main focus of Jesus telling us this was to cause us to be on the alert and be ready for His return, expectantly waiting and busy about His business with the treasure and talents He has entrusted to us. See comments on verse 4-5 for a more extensive explanation.

Matthew 24:36 - 36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. NASB
Matthew 24:42-44 - 42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. NASB

It is significant that Paul equates the parousia or coming of Christ with the Old Testament terms “the day of the Lord.” By doing this Paul makes it clear that the events spoken of in the Old Testament concerning the Day of the Lord will happen at the Second Coming.

Isaiah 13:9-13 - 9 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light. 11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. 12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold, And mankind than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger. NASB

Joel 2:1-2 - Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near, 2 A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations. NASB

Joel 2:30-32 - 30 "And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. 31 "The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 32 "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the Lord has said, Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls. NASB

Obadiah 15 - 15 "For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head. NASB

Zephaniah 1:14-18 - 4 Near is the great day of the Lord, Near and coming very quickly: Listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of trumpet and battle cry, Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. 17 And I will bring distress on men. So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the Lord; And their blood will be poured out like dust, And their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the Lord's wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth. NASB

Note well here the severity of the full scope of events described in these passages. It is obvious that the full scope of these events cannot all happen immediately upon the Second Coming of Christ, for the whole earth will be destroyed and this will not take place until the end of the Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org 54
Millennial Kingdom. This is made clear in the chronology of events given in Revelation 20:1-15. Therefore the Day of the Lord actually has its *inauguration* at the Second Coming, but its full *consummation* is not completed until the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father having subdued all His enemies, including death, the last enemy to be destroyed according to 1 Corinthians 15:26.

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 - 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. NASB

The chart below depicts this concept by viewing a chronology of events spanning from before the Second Coming of Christ until after the consummation of the ages and the Eternal State have begun. Notice the boxes in the upper right explaining the *inauguration* and *consummation* of the “Day of the Lord.”

Therefore the “*day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night*” to the unbelieving world and they will be swept away in judgment and Christ will destroy the earthly authorities and establish His righteous rule in Jerusalem. In fact, they will be so unaware, that they will think all is well the world’s economic problems have been finally solved by the Antichrist’s wicked and idolatrous system of supposed economic stability.

1 Thessalonians 5:3-4 – 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. NASU

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A. Notice then, as the unbelieving world is caught in the web of Antichrist’s deception, they actually think of it as “Peace and safety.” Note the terms, “While they are saying,” seems to indicate that right at the time of the parousia they will be saying this, then the Lord appears “suddenly.” This happens as they do not realize that the looming judgment of Christ which has been brewing for some 6000 years of man’s rebellion against God, is finally upon them. Paul describes what happens next as… “then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.” This is exactly how Jesus described His coming. On the very day He rescues the righteous, then sudden destruction comes upon the wicked and unbelieving.

**Luke 17:25-37** - 26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; 29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back. 32 "Remember Lot’s wife. 33 whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it. 34 "I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed: one will be taken, and the other will be left. 35 "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 36 ["Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.”] NASB

Not only is the Second Coming of Christ inevitable, but when it comes, there will be no way of escape for anyone who is not ready (being a born again Christian, living in Christ). Notice, “then destruction will come upon them suddenly” and the end of the world as we know it will be upon mankind, and with utter finality and fierce judgment the wrath of God will come down upon the kingdoms of this world, and upon all the ungodly and unbelieving sinners who have ignored God’s warnings and rebelled against His authority and “they will not escape.” Paul gives a more comprehensive and vivid description of what happens here in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

**2 Thessalonians 1:7-11** – 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. NASB

**Isaiah 13:9-13** - 9 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light. 11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. 12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold, And mankind than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger. NASB

God has warned of this looming judgment from even before the flood, as far back as 5000 years ago God’s prophets were warning of His coming global judgment upon all mankind.

**Jude 14-15** - 14 And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” NASB

**1 Thessalonians 5:4-6** – 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. NASU
A. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief - This important truth needs to be held in correct balance. On one hand Jesus taught us that we do not know the day or hour, but at the same time was saying that we should be aware of the events surrounding His coming so that we would not be caught unaware. Jesus made explicit statements about the fact that we were to “be on the alert” and to pay attention to the signs of His coming so that we would not be caught unaware and that this day would not overtake us as a thief.

Mark 13:23 - 23 "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. NASB
Mark 13:28-29 - 28 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. NASB
Matthew 24:24-25 - 24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance, NASB
Luke 21:27-36 - 27 "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." 29 And He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 "Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. 33 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. 34 "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36 "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." NASB

In fact the parable of the Ten Virgins was designed to explain this truth very clearly.

Matthew 25:10-13 - 10 "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 "And later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' 12 "But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. NASB

Other Apostles made it very clear that this knowledge was to cause us to be alert and on our guard.

2 Peter 3:17-18 - 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. NASB

On this basis then, Christians are to be well aware of the signs of Christ coming and not be deceived by date setters or false teachers, or to fall into a lifestyle of complacency or drunkenness and be caught in a state not ready for the Lord’s return but in fact busy about the Master’s business. Notice here, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief.” Paul’s point couldn’t be clearer, the parousia will not “overtake” Christians “like a thief,” but rather we will be well aware that the day is upon us and expectantly waiting for it. This is because “you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness,” and have our hearts and minds illumined by the knowledge of these things. Christ has brightly shown us these things and we are not “in darkness” and unaware, but rather “sons of light” and know full well that these things are coming upon the world. In response to this then, Christians are not to be slumbering or complacently getting drunk and living in dissipation, “so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.” Paul gives an apt description of what our lifestyle should be like in light of these truths in Romans chapter 13.

Romans 13:11-14 - 11 And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. NASB
B. 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober – Here the great contrast between the believer and the unbeliever is seen. The unbeliever is “in darkness,” the believer has been transformed, “for you are all sons of light and sons of day.” Of course here “light” and “darkness” have to do with our illumination to the soon coming of Christ and destruction upon the wicked. Those who are “sons of light all sons of light and sons of day” are able to clearly see what is coming upon the world, the “sudden destruction” of verse 3, to which unbelievers are “in darkness” and cannot see. The contrast here is between those who can see and will not be “overtaken by the sudden destruction like a thief;” and those who are “of night and of darkness” who will in fact be “overtaken” by the sudden coming of Christ, the great day of the Lord. Paul goes on here, “We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.” His point here is, since we are “sons of light and sons of day” and can see clearly the looming judgment of the great day, and because we are “not of night nor of darkness,” that we should NOT behave like sons of darkness but rather like “sons of light.” This teaching is very clear in other places in Scripture.

Ephesians 5:5-14 - 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth). 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. NASB

Jesus warned in the Olivet Discourse concerning His Second Coming that His people should not be “weighted down” by vain things or worries of life or in “drunkenness.” But in contrast to that, we should be “alert at all times” eagerly looking for our “escape” from these things.

Luke 21:34-36 - 34 “Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36 “But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” NASB

Matthew 24:45-51 - 45 “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 47 "Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 "But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ 49 and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, 51 and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth. NASB

The contrast between the “sons of light” and those “in darkness” is one that can be clearly discerned by our lifestyle. True Christians honor God by the way they live, both in their abstaining from sinful activities like drunkenness and immorality, and live holy lives of purity and sobriety before the Lord.

2 Peter 3:11-13 - 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. NASB

On this basis Paul tells the Christians to live “alert and sober,” like people of the day, not to be asleep and unaware, like people sleeping at night. We are not to “sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.” His point is clear, in regard to the Second Coming of Christ, we are not to be...
asleep, but awake and alert, paying attention to the events of day, being sure to not be overtaken suddenly by His coming, but living in holiness and eagerly awaiting our deliverance.

1 Thessalonians 5:7-8 – 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. NASU

A. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night – His point again is clear, in regard to the looming judgment of Christ’s Second Coming, we shouldn’t be unaware like we were sleeping, or morally uncontrolled as if we were drunk, “For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.”

B. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation - Instead, “since we are of the day,” we should be aware and “sober.” Then he uses yet another analogy of the Christian life stating “having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.” Here he is describing that our Christian faith is like being prepared for battle with all the gear needed for warfare. The emphasis here is on being prepared, as if for warfare. This he describes as faith, love and hope, that beautiful triad of Christian virtue which is the possession of all who trust in Christ. This kind of armor imagery is common in Paul’s writings. See Eph 6:11-18, Rom 13:12-14

Romans 13:12-14 - 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. NASB

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 – 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. NASU

A. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. - Here Paul is saying, “God has not destined us,” that is, the sovereign God is the One who holds our destiny. And that destiny is absolutely clear, it is not “for wrath, but instead for obtaining salvation.” God did not save us to destroy us, but instead to set His love upon us, deliver us and set us apart from sin, and to glorify His greatness by a mighty salvation which has come to us by His grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Here Paul is continuing his thought from verse 5:1-2, describing what it will be like at the coming “day of the Lord.” The unbelieving world will be unaware of His coming and “suddenly destroyed…..like a thief in the night.” But the Christians will not be “overtaken by that day as a thief,” but instead being “alert and sober” will in fact be delivered from the coming wrath, as verses 4:15-17 so clearly portray.

First comes the deliverance and rescue, THEN comes the wrath and destruction. I repeat here that this is abundantly clear in the teaching of our Lord.

Matthew 24:37-42 - 37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 "For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. 41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. 42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. NASB

Noah was eagerly awaiting the coming judgment of God. He didn’t know the day or the hour, but He knew that God had said he would judge, and it would be in his lifetime. Therefore he was about the master’s business of building an ark, all the while the mocking rebels of the world looked on with amazement while he built the great ark in the middle of a place where it had

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never rained. But when the judgment came, Matt 24:38 says, “Noah entered the ark.” But the people of the world “did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.” First came Noah’s deliverance, then came the sudden destruction of God’s “wrath,” of which the world was unaware, likely thinking it was a time of “peace and safety,” or at a minimum, another day as usual, eating, drinking, marrying, etc… B. who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing – Can we have a greater proof that God will not destroy us than the fact that He sacrificed His Son so that we could live? Can He say in greater terms that He intends for our good and that our salvation is of such importance to Him that He would sacrifice the most valuable thing in the world to Him, even His only begotten Son? Indeed the Christ “who died for us” is proof of God’s love toward His called and chosen people, and sufficient means to save us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 - 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. NASB

Paul now refers all the way back to 4:13-15 when he says, “so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.” His point here is, whether we Christians are alive now, or have passed away in death, “we will live together with Him.” Christian believers are now in Christ and shall never be separated from Him. Nothing in life, nor even death, can separate us from Him.

Romans 8:38-39 - 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. NASB

Colossians 3:3-4 - 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. NASB

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 – 12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. NASU

A. Here Paul has ended his discourse on the parousia (verses 4:13-5:11), and moves onto a yet different theme. In this closing section he will give various greetings and statements on church life, as is his custom at the close of a letter. As he shifts his thinking to matters of church life, he respectfully addresses the matter of church leadership stating, “But we request of you, brethren.” Here Paul will address both the members of the church in regard to their disposition before the leadership (verse 12-13), and also the leadership themselves in regard to carrying out their duties (verse 14-15). He first exhorts the church members in two ways about how they relate to their leaders. He tells them that they should both “appreciate” them and also “esteem them very highly in love.” The Christian duty here is that they both honor and “love” their leaders. Of this honor Paul describes it as “appreciate,” meaning to be both grateful to God and to consider them valuable. To further amplify this duty of “appreciate” he says they should “esteem them very highly,” esteem meaning to place value upon, and this he says they should do “very highly in love.” The degree of this honor and esteem to church leaders is not just high, but held in the agape love of God. This is to say that you regard you church leaders so highly that you are committed to them with much affection and in the self-sacrificing love of God. This was Paul’s common teaching referred to in many places.

Philippians 2:29-30 - 29 Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me. NASB
Hebrews 13:17 - 17 Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. NASB

Now as to who these leaders are Paul describes them as, “those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.” Here see the office of an pastor-elder plainly referred to. It not just those who work hard among you, but those who “diligently labor” and also “have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.” These are the basic duties of a Christian elder, and describe in general terms the ministry of a pastor or shepherd. It was Paul’s custom to appoint elders in every church (Titus 1:5), including on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). He would frequently instruct the church about honoring, obeying and compensating these men. His emphasis was on those who “diligently labor” and “work hard” for the spiritual benefit of the church.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 - 7 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." NASB

Now the reason he gives for this honor and respect toward elders is because of their work in serving the spiritual life of the church. And so he tells them, “you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.” Not only does he want them to honor and love them, but also to “Live in peace” with them as well as everyone in the church, stating “with one another.” Christians are to submit to their leaders and by so doing, promote an atmosphere of peace among the family of God. (see Rom 14:17-19, 2 Cor 13:11, Eph 4:3, Col 3:15, 2 Tim 2:22)

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 – 14 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. NASU

A. Here Paul exhorts leaders in the church in regard to shepherding the flock. See his stronger exhortation, “we urge you brethren,” impressing upon them a series of important practical exhortations for their ministry and for all Christians in all churches as well. Verse 14 brings four exhortations, “admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” Notice how the remedy is fit for the infirmity. The “unruly” need to be admonished as to correct their rebel heart, but those who are “fainthearted” need to be encouraged. The “weak” need “help” carrying their load, and we must “be patient with everyone,” for God knows our growth in godliness is at times moving rather slowly. As is common in Christian teaching, we are not to take revenge, and Paul makes that clear here stating, “See that no one repays another with evil for evil.” Surely these persecuted Thessalonians had many occasions to repay with evil so Paul exhorts them not to. In contrast to being vengeful he gives them that wonderful exhortation to Christian love, “but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.” What a wonderful world this would be if men only practiced this one rule. Is this not in fact the golden rule of our Lord?

Matthew 7:12 - 12 "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. NASB

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 – 16 Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. NASU

A. To “rejoice always” can be difficult to do, but when accompanied by prayer “without ceasing,” the command is carried out more easily. When these two, constant “rejoicing” and constant prayer are accompanied with “giving thanks in everything,” the sweet temperament of
Christian life is obtained. For who can bear the burdens of this weary life without the constant strength that the Lord gives through prayer, and how we are reminded in it to “rejoice always” and to “give thanks in everything” as well. This is Paul’s teaching elsewhere.

Philippians 4:4-6 - 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. NASB

Dear Christian pay close attention here, for Paul gives the key to living a profoundly joyful life here. It is only through our faith in the Sovereign God, that He apportions to us those circumstances that are best to work for our good, and being reminded of His Providence through prayer and thanksgiving, that we can ascend to that wonderful virtue of life in Christ whereby we can “rejoice always.” Moreover Paul tells us that this in not optional but rather, “for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Here Paul refers to God’s moral will of desire for us to be constantly in prayer with thanksgiving, so that we can always rejoice before Him. Dear Christian, learn here, the Kingdom of God abides in us with such power that we can live in constant joy. Of this section of text John Calvin comments; “He observes, here, almost the same order, though in fewer words. For, in the first place, he would have us hold God’s benefits in such esteem, that the recognition of them and meditation upon them shall overcome all sorrow. And, unquestionably, if we consider what Christ has conferred upon us, there will be no bitterness of grief so intense as may not be alleviated, and give way to spiritual joy. For if this joy does not reign in us, the kingdom of God is at the same time banished from us, or we from it. And very ungrateful is that man to God, who does not set so high a value on the righteousness of Christ and the hope of eternal life, as to rejoice in the midst of sorrow. As, however, our minds are easily dispirited, until they give way to impatience, we must observe the remedy that he subjoins immediately afterwards. For on being cast down and laid low we are raised up again by prayers, because we lay upon God what burdened us. As, however, there are every day, nay, every moment, many things that may disturb our peace, and mar our joy, he for this reason bids us pray without ceasing…..that God has such a disposition towards us in Christ, that even in our afflictions we have large occasion of thanksgiving. For what is fitter or more suitable for pacifying us, than when we learn that God embraces us in Christ so tenderly, that he turns to our advantage and welfare everything that befalls us? Let us, therefore, bear in mind, that this is a special remedy for correcting our impatience — to turn away our eyes from beholding present evils that torment us, and to direct our views to a consideration of a different nature — how God stands affected towards us in Christ.” May it be that we ascend above this depressing world of grief and pain into that heavenly place where Jesus reigns, and His people live in joyful assembly before Him, “for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 – 19 Do not quench the Spirit; 20 do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil. NASU

A. 19 Do not quench the Spirit; - Here Paul transitions from the practical exhortations toward our Christian attitudes, to some that pertain to the corporate practice of the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. Whether one connects verse 19 to the preceding verses, or to the verses that follow, it is clear that we are to allow the motivating power of the Spirit to enable us to remain faithful in the practice of Christian life. He says, “do not quench the Spirit,” as to say that we by our stubborn wills can indeed “quench” the motivating activity of the Spirit. Therefore let us abide in a lively exercise of our faith and not allow our Christian life to become lifeless or weak, but let the motivation power of the Spirit forge us on as if a great wind in a sail.

B. do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; - There is much controversy concerning this passage of which the context of this
lesson does not allow us time to indulge. In summary, some see the gift of prophecy as giving an infallible spontaneous revelation from the Spirit of God, whereas others see it as giving a spontaneous yet fallible revelation from the Spirit. Joined to these two opposing views is the view that it is simply preaching from an inspired text and giving comforting, encouraging, or corrective exhortations from the already infallible and inspired (God-breathed) text. These three views are most widely held concerning the gift of prophecy, and each has its exegetical issues.

1. infallible spontaneous revelation from the Spirit of God
2. spontaneous yet fallible revelation from the Spirit
3. preaching from an inspired text and giving comforting, encouraging, or corrective exhortations from the already infallible and inspired (God-breathed) text

Without entering the fray here I will offer what I think is the most important application of these verses to our modern context. Being that most Christian churches hold and practice one the three views above listed, let us therefore apply these verses in subjection to the pastoral leadership in our local church. Therefore, whichever position your church practices, when the Word is preached, “do not despise prophetic utterances,” for it would be very dangerous for you to “despise” the Word of God. The Word of God is to be cherished, believed and obeyed with all diligence and with a focused and intense commitment. Our attitude toward the Word is to be much like the Psalmist;

Psalm 119:111-115 - 111 I have inherited Thy testimonies forever, For they are the joy of my heart. 112 I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes, even to the end. 113 I hate those who are double-minded. But I love Thy law. 114 Thou art my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Thy word. 115 Depart from me, evildoers, That I may observe the commandments of my God. NASB

The Word of God is not to be “despised.” Instead you should “examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.” The command here is plain and evident, that is, to exercise “careful” discernment to see if the nature and application of the teaching is in fact according to what God has said in Scripture. To say it another way, listen and carefully make an assessment of what is being taught and preached, and inasmuch as it accords with God’s Spirit and His Word, accept it as the very Word of God. Much like the Bereans under Paul’s ministry.

Acts 17:10-11 - 10 And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. NASB

After it has been accepted one should therefore be careful to obey it quickly and in a manner fitting of the One who spoke it. Paul says, “hold fast to that which is good,” meaning to cling tightly to it, as if to value and esteem it highly. It also goes without saying that if one finds what has been said to clearly contradict God’s Word, it should be rejected. Being that most Christian churches hold and practice one the three views above listed, let us therefore apply these verses in subjection to the pastoral leadership in our local church. If the issue becomes one of such annoyance and distress upon one’s conscience, I would exhort you to humbly and prayerfully engage the pastoral leadership in your church, and this only after you have very diligently studied the matter and made some very credible and defendable conclusions from the text of Scripture. When engaging the leadership, much respect and patience must be exercised. Do not gossip, stir up anxious hearts, or speak disrespectfully about others during this time, or anytime for that matter. After, much prayer, discussion and efforts to both keep the peace and bless and benefit all who are involved, you cannot continue to worship with a clear conscience, than it may be time to find another church where you can worship in an unhindered manner. James’ words are fitting for one in this situation.

James 3:17-18 - 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. NASB
C. abstain from every form of evil – It is important here to see how this phrase is tied into the idea which precedes it, that of examining everything carefully, and to “hold fast to that which is good.” In this context then, the idea is to examine prophetic utterances, and if they come in any “form” to be evil, or lead you to evil, they are to be rejected thus, “abstain from every form of evil.” Another way to say this is, be careful to examine everything you are taught, listen to and obey that which is good, but reject and do not obey any teaching which presents or promotes evil in any form. Surely this is a rule of great practical importance in Christian life. It is important for a Christian’s maturity for them to learn how to discern good from evil, not only in the practice of daily life, but also in hearing and listening to Bible teachers. Now, with the accessibility of media, this is especially important considering how much error there is in modern Bible teaching, seeing that so many Christian pastors have a such a low view of the Word of God, and that the design of so many is to tickle the ears with cleverly invented stories rather than a well studied and clear exposition of biblical text. Paul’s warning to Timothy sheds light on this valuable rule.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 - 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. NASB

Therefore, let all Christians be careful to examine what they are being taught and be full of care to make sure it is in accord with the truth of God’s Word.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 – 23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. NASU

A. Now may the God of peace - These now are Paul’s final remarks in light of all that has been said. Here, as is often the case in Paul’s closing of a letter, he refers to God as “the God of peace.” Consider, the very nature of God which is “peace,” that blessed virtue and fruit of the Spirit which is sound tranquility and calmness of conscience, which only God can impart, where all is at rest with nothing to hinder, trouble or harm. This “peace” can only come through Jesus Christ, for no other remedy can quiet the conviction of sin except that one honestly and openly confess their personal sins and repent, and trust Christ’s atonement to be the sufficient means by which they can be wiped away. When someone acknowledges that God has forgiven them because of Christ’s glorious work, true and lasting “peace” is at hand, but not until.

B. Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ – Here now see Paul’s prayer for these Thessalonians, for the completion of their sanctification. You may recall he had prayed something very similar in chapter 3:13, and then mentioned in chapter 4:3 that it was “sanctification” was “God’s will” for them.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 - 13 so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. NASB

Here again notice Paul’s emphasis on God “Himself” performing this work of making us holy, and this He will do “entirely,” that is to say completely and in every way. So much is this the case that he refers to our whole nature as mankind, “may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete,” so as to say that his desire is that we become completely and totally sanctified and “without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Some try to use this passage to make a distinction between the “spirit” and the “soul,” and thereby to make an argument for the trichotomists (three part nature) view of man, as opposes to a dichotomists view (two part nature). It is obvious that this text is not Paul’s attempt to define the nature of man here, but rather to speak of his desire to see Christians entirely and completely sanctified. Here Paul is concluding all that has been said in this glorious letter with a prayer for the completed
and sanctified process of Christian maturity, which he is so zealously trying to carry out through His ministry and service to the churches. That God Himself would “entirely” and “completely” finish the work of sanctification in His people, so that when the Lord Jesus comes again He might receive a spotless bride, “without blame.”

C. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass – Here Paul emphatically states that the work of sanctification is an act of God. Because God is “faithful” and the One “who calls you,” He is also the One who will complete the process of sanctification on earth, before you meet the Lord in the heavens at His return, when you shall be finally glorified. God is “faithful,” Paul reasons, He began the good work of salvation in you and “He also will bring it to pass,” that is, He will sanctify you “entirely” and completely so that when Jesus returns again, you will be established “without blame” before Him. This glorious promise is repeated elsewhere in Scripture.

Jude 24-25 - 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. NASB

Colossians 1:22 - 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach NASB

1 Corinthians 1:7-9 - 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, 9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

Take heart Christian, although it may seem your war with sin be ever at hand and so many times to dominate us, know for sure that He who began the good work will be faithful to complete it. Your final salvation is not in your hand to complete, but in the strong hand of God!

Philippians 1:6 - 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. NASB

John 6:39 - 39 "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." NASB

John 10:27-30 - 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. NASB

1 Thessalonians 5:25-28 - 25 Brethren, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27 I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. NASU

A. 25 Brethren, pray for us – See here Paul’s affection and sincere desire for these Christians to not only embrace Paul, but to join Him in the toil by praying for his prosperity in ministry. Paul is frequently seen in Scripture coveting the prayers of his hearers. (Rom 15:30, 2 Cor 1:11, Eph 6:18-20, Phil 1:19, Col 4:3, 2 Thess 3:1-3, Philem 22, Heb 13:18-19)

B. 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss – Paul here exhorts the church to express their sincere affection to one another when greeting. The kiss was in that day, much like a handshake in ours.

C. 27 I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. – Here Paul’s desire to have everyone in the church informed by all that has been said here. The phrase “I adjure you” is a strong exhortation for them to see to it that everyone has a chance to hear what Paul has said to his newly found church.

D. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. – Here is a glorious and wonderful benediction. If we all but had “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” with us, we would in fact be the most content and fulfilled people of all. In fact, all Christians have this blessing, and in the end shall prove to be eternally and gloriously content and fulfilled, evermore to live in God’s presence, in the Savior happy and blest, world without end!
2 THESALONIANS

Date: The obvious similarities between 1 & 2 Thessalonians make it rather easy to place the date of 2 Thessalonians. It was obviously written not long after 1 Thessalonians and probably in response to information given after the delivery of 1 Thessalonians.

Purpose: It is clear from the content of 2 Thessalonians that Paul is further developing thoughts and ideas from 1 Thessalonians. Therefore the letter is named 2 Thessalonians. Paul writes with some very clear intent here.

- To encourage the Thessalonians in their persecution
- To answer key questions and address obvious misunderstandings about eschatological topics
- To give instruction about the Christian work ethic and church discipline

Review of Purpose and Themes present in 1 & 2 Thessalonians: The content of things covered in 1 & 2 Thessalonians is really quite remarkable. Because Paul had spent such little time with them, he writes to give both instruction and encouragement to them. Therefore his writing is uniquely suited for their difficult situation being such a young church and facing the difficult task of growing and learning with few mature leaders and persecution from other hostile religious peoples. Therefore Paul’s general purpose was one of encouragement and instruction, but he writes with several themes and topics in view in order to address important matters needed in their theological development. His topics include;

- Joy, Thanksgiving and Encouragement for a healthy new church
- Responsibilities of a Healthy Church
- Instructions for Godly Living
- Eschatological Topics of grave importance

Joy, Thanksgiving and Encouragement for a healthy new church
Paul spends the entire first chapter of 1 Thessalonians thanking God and commending the Thessalonians for their great faith.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 - We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, NASB

He was sure they were God’s very elect and chosen people because of the fruits of their lives. Paul was greatly endeared and encouraged by the Thessalonians, especially the way in which they enthusiastically received the Gospel and the Word of God.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 - knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you: 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. NASB

1 Thessalonians 2:13 - And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. NASB

In 2 Thessalonians, Paul continues his encouragement to them, expressing his gratitude for both their great faith and abounding love, as well as their perseverance in the serious persecutions they were enduring.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 - 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. NASU

This was indeed a model church of faith, hope, love and holy lives who were both evangelical and steadfast even in the face of persecution.

Responsibilities of a Healthy Church
MacArthur writes, “The Thessalonian epistles catalog the marks of a healthy growing church. They give the responsibilities of the leaders to the congregation (1 Thess 5:12, 14-15); the congregation to the leaders (1 Thess 5:13, 25-28, 2 Thess 3”1-2); of believers to grow spiritually (1 Thess 5:16-22); stand firm in the midst of persecution (1 Thess 2:14-16); an live orderly lives (2 Thess 3:6-13); and the church’s responsibility to discipline sinning members(2 Thess 3:6-13). They also emphasize the church’s responsibility to reach the lost world with the saving truth of the Gospel (1 Thess 1:8-10).” This letter gives such clear and concise instructions on church life its message can hardly be mistaken.

Instructions for Godly Living and corporate church practice
In 1 Thessalonians chapters 4 and 5, Paul gives very practical instructions about godly living, even as he is commending the Thessalonians as already doing so.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-5 - Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

He commands them to avoid sexual immorality, which was so prevalent in their culture.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 - For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; NASB

He also commends and exhorts them to love and to be growing in love and also to work hard, lead quiet lives and not to be in any need.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 - 9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; 12 so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need. NASB

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5:12-21 is some of the most concise instructions on godly living and corporate church behavior in all of Paul’s letters. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 3:6-14, Paul writes a lengthy section explaining the process of church discipline and commanding them to carry it out, specifically how it relates to the problem of the Christian work ethic which was being disregarded by some in the Thessalonians church.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 - 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. NASB

Eschatological Topics of grave importance
Of all of the Pauline writings, 1 & 2 Thessalonians deal most profoundly with Eschatology. By Eschatology we mean the study of “last things” or, of the “end times” if you will. In fact, the issues that Paul deals with here have absolutely massive implications for the whole world of mankind, whereas Paul actually speaks in great detail about the end of the world as we know it, the eagerly expected Second Coming of Christ Himself, to deliver His people and to bring judgment on a world full of rebellious sinners. The things which are here spoken of are some

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of the most profoundly important writings in all of the Word of God. Truly these warnings from God prove the very divine character of the Bible. What book in all of human history has spoken with such majesty and authoritative imperative as the Bible when it speaks to us about the end of the world at the powerful hand of God, and of the coming judgment of mankind. Here in Thessalonians we get a sneak peak at these most important and crucial issues of Bible Prophecy. And it comes to us in the form of instruction and practical explanation for us to understand very clearly and concisely.

- **Deliverance of God’s people at the first resurrection** – Here in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4:13-18 is the famous passage on the rapture of the church which even deals with the death of Christians and their future hope. Here is pictured one very important event called the First Resurrection (see pgs 49-53 above). We also learn in 1 Thessalonians that we are not destined for God’s wrath like the wicked, but more than twice are given promises of deliverance from God’s wrath.
  
  1 Thessalonians 1:10 - 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. NASB
  
  1 Thessalonians 5:9 - 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, NASB

- **The Second Coming of Christ** – In the book of 1 Thessalonians there is a reference to the Second Coming in every chapter (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:16-17, 5:23). In 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:2 this coming is referred to as “the day of the Lord.” In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1:7-10 we have not only a reference to the Second Coming but also the destruction of the ungodly and judgment of those who have rejected the Gospel.

  2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. NASB

Later in chapter 2:8 we have a reference to the Lord Jesus Himself personally destroying the Anti-Christ at His coming.

  2 Thessalonians 2:8 - 8 And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming. NASB

- **Explanation of the coming day of wrath and judgment including instructions about the Antichrist and Great Tribulation** – Both 1 & 2 Thessalonians deal with God’s judgment and destruction of the wicked and rebellious world. Paul explains in 1 Thessalonians that “the day of the Lord will come like a thief” to the unbelieving world, and when it comes, it will bring “sudden destruction” down upon them who believe themselves to be safe from harm.

  1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 - 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

However Paul instructs the Christians that this day will not “overtake them like a thief” because they walk in the “light of day,” enlightened by the knowledge of the signs of His coming.

  1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 - 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. NASB

After the passage in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 (quoted above), where Paul describes the destruction of the Gospel rejecting sinners, he then goes into a lengthy discourse on
the revelation of the Anti-Christ and the Great Tribulation period in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Although Paul does not expressly call this the Great Tribulation as Jesus does in Matthew 24:15-21, Mark 13:14-20, we know clearly from other texts in Scripture that the events of the Anti-Christ’s rise to power and reign of terror are the very events that make up the Great Tribulation period, which are included in the Seventieth Week of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27, 11:29-12:3). Paul does in fact give many very clear indications of the nature and character of this dreadful time in human history. These events are also cataloged in such passages as Revelation 13-14, Daniel 7, 8 and 9-12, as well as the Olivet Discourse of our Lord as described above. Understand that 1 & 2 Thessalonians are the only letters wherein Paul gives such extensive instruction about eschatological events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ, barring a few brief references in various other letters.

I might add that much of this Pauline Eschatology very closely parallels the teaching of our Lord in His Olivet Discourse which is recorded in Mathew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The similarities are striking, but more than this, follow very distinct patterns and themes. Even though our Lord’s discourse follows a chronological timeline more than Paul’s, nevertheless they expose the same topics with much clarity and force, as we will see in the course of our study.

**Similarities and differences between 1 & 2 Thessalonians**

**Tension between 1 & 2 Thessalonians concerning imminency.** See Beale pg 29…. While 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 affirms that Christ’s coming will occur at an unexpected time, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 says that definite signs will appear before Christ returns. Note also, that this tension between unexpectedness and signs preceding Christ return exists in the Gospels, including in the Olivet Discourse of our Lord. Throughout Scripture we are told of the certain and imminent return of Christ, and yet we are given signs that will precede His coming in vivid detail and accompanying order of events leading up to His return. This tension however is easily resolved by an examination of these passages and a clear understanding of the intent and scope of the doctrine of Imminency. In short, no one knows the exact day or hour that Christ will return (Matthew 24:36, 44, Mark 13:32), but Christians are told the season of His coming will be something they can clearly identify by the signs and events leading up to it (Matthew 24:14-15, 21-22, 25, 29-31, Mark 13:10, 14, 19-20, 23-27), signs and events that will be deceptively unclear to an unbelieving world (Matt 24:37-44, Luke 21:34-36, 1 Thess 5:2-4).

**Parousia (Coming) in 1 & 2 Thessalonians.** It is important to note as we embark on a look at 2 Thessalonians how Paul used the term “coming;” (parousia - Gk), in 1 Thessalonians. This is because in 2 Thessalonians Paul is building on the theological framework he built in 1 Thessalonians in order to further clarify and instruct on the topics at hand. Of course, a major theme in both letters is the “coming of the Lord,” which Paul is further clarifying details about in chapters 1 and 2 of 2 Thessalonians. One could argue that this is the main point of the letter, that is the clarifications regarding the “coming of the Lord.”

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 - 19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy. NASB

1 Thessalonians 3:13 - 13 so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 - 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. NASB
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 - 23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

In 1 Thessalonians Paul established much detail regarding the “coming of the Lord” and what exactly happened at that time. In fact, he mentioned it in every chapter of 1 Thessalonians. He established key points about it.

- The Coming would be personal and bodily – 1 Thess 4:16
- The Coming would visible by the entire world – 1 Thess 4:15-5:9
- The Coming was the partial fulfillment of the Old Testament “Day of the Lord” – 1 Thess 5:1-2
- This Coming would surprise the unbelieving world, but the Christians would not be surprised by this as the season of His return was very clear to them – 1 Thess 5:3-5
- It would bring deliverance to God’s people where who where alive by sudden rapture – 1 Thess 4:16-17
- It would bring sudden destruction on the unbelieving world - 1 Thess 5:2-3
- It would be accompanied by the First Resurrection of the “dead in Christ” – 1 Thess 4:15-16
- The Coming included both His glorious appearing with angels and trumpets, as well as the rapture and resurrection, these happen at the same time - 1 Thess 4:16-17

Therefore when Paul speaks of the “coming of the Lord” in 2 Thessalonians, we must understand that he has already laid this groundwork. Notice the similarities, but also the added details given in 2 Thessalonians, when he is giving further clarification to what he had written in 1 Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. NASB

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 - Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, NASB

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 - 8 And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; NASB

Consider then, key details concerning the coming of the Lord which Paul reaffirms in 2 Thessalonians, as well as all details he adds.

- The Coming is seen as the glorious return with angels and the destruction of sinners as a partial fulfillment of the Old Testament “Day of the Lord” – 2 Thess 1:7-9
- The Coming is considered by Paul as the same event as the rapture and also the “Day of the Lord” – 2 Thess 2:1-2
- The Coming (Rapture and Day of the Lord) is preceded by the apostasy and revelation of the Antichrist which equates these events in the chronology of the Olivet Discourse Matt 24:10-22, 29-31 – 2 Thess 2:1-8
- The Coming is when Jesus will destroy the Antichrist which equates all these references in 1 & 2 Thess with Revelation 19-20 and also the Olivet Discourse – 2 Thess 2:8
- The Coming of the Lord is seen as bringing the final eschatological wrath of God (eternal judgment), on those who reject the Gospel – 2 Thess 1:7-9

With these things in mind, remember that 2 Thessalonians is found having the context of 1 Thessalonians in the background. This is important to remember as we dig into 2 Thessalonians.
SECOND THESSALONIANS: A Teaching Outline

I. Paul's Encouragement in Persecution
   A. Thanksgiving for Their Growth 1:1-4
   B. Encouragement in Their Persecution 1:5-10
   C. Prayer for God’s Blessing 1:11-12

II. Paul's Explanation of the Day of the Lord 2
   A. The Events Preceding the Day of the Lord 2:1-12
      1. First a Falling Away 2:1-3
      2. The Man of Sin Is Revealed 2:4-5
      3. The Restrainer Is Taken Out of the Way 2:6-7
      4. The Second Coming of Christ 2:8-12

III. Paul's Exhortation to the Church 3
   A. Wait Patiently for Christ 3:1-5
   B. Withdraw from the Disorderly 3:6-15
   C. Conclusion 3:16-18

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

A. 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy – See pg 6 above in notes… Even though both Silas (Silvanus), and Timothy are included in the greeting, this is simply a consolation of grace on Paul’s part to include them as they were fellow workers with him in the church’s conversion and ongoing health. This was a frequent practice by Paul, who’s authorship of the Thessalonians letters is rarely questioned noting the use of the personal pronoun “I” in 2:18, 3:5, 5:27. Paul the Apostle is the author of both 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

B. To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: – It is notable that this is an exact quote from the intro to 1 Thessalonians. Paul again refers to the Thessalonians as the “church” and also as possessing a union with both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul here reminds us that we are “in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” I would remind us of this Union with Christ. This union with Christ and with the Father is a great mystery of what it means to be a Christian. In fact all three members of the Godhead are said to live in us and us in them as we share in and experience the divine and eternal life of God Himself. Consider the wonderful and powerful love and affection for God and Christ that wells up within our hearts. What amazing love is this that dominates our soul with such strong affection? It is in fact the experience of the very life of God within our souls which comes from our union with Him! We are in Christ and He is in us! This wonderful Union with Christ is seen in many places in the NT, here are just a few. (Rom 8:1-2, 39, 2 Cor 5:17, Eph 1:3-4, 2:10, Col 1:27, Phil 4:19, 1 Thess 4:14,16, 2 Tim 2:10, 1 Peter 5:10)

C. 2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ – Paul is always so filled with favor towards his people. Even when he writes to correct, he still reminds them of his warm love for them and his wishes for their well being. This is not just a formality, but it should mark the desire that every Christian has for all other Christians, that their lives would abound with God’s “grace and peace.” May our hearts be ever filled with warm affection for the saints.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 - 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. NASU

A. 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting – Here Paul gives God the glory for the progress of the Thessalonians faith. It “is only fitting,” if Paul is to commend them that He recognize the source of the blessing and privilege, and so he affirms “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren.” Notice it is “we,” that Paul, as well as Timothy and Silas are thankful together for what God has worked among them. When we see the good graces of God abounding in others, we should always give the glory to God for the great thing He has done, even as we rejoice with and commend others for the diligence in the faith.

B. because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure – Notice here the specific things that Paul is both commending them and thanking God for, that “your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater,” and also “your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.” See here the daily goal we strive for as Christians, that we may have “enlarged faith” and “abounding love.” It is remarkable to note, that after the visit of Timothy and the delivery of the 1st Thessalonian letter, that Paul is still greatly encouraged by the “faith” and “love” of the Thessalonians. Whereas Paul had commended them for their faith and love in 1st Thessalonians, now he says that both have increased. So much so, that he is still making a boast of them, “we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God.” It is remarkable that Paul mentions this in both letters as a distinguishing mark of this young church.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 - 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, NASB

In these statements, Paul both properly honors God for His grace and power at work in them, and commends and encourages them. See here that the Thessalonian church, at the time of the writing of the 2nd letter, is still a model church of diligent faith and abounding love. Paul rejoices at their progress saying, “your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater,” the very things Paul had been praying for them (1 Thes 1:2). Notice he commends each and every believer for the way the love “one another.” Moreover, their great faith is abounding during a time of severe persecution, so Paul adds, “your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.” Paul had mentioned this suffering in the 1st letter as well.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 - 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, NASU

1 Thessalonians 2:14 - 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, NASB

It is remarkable that now at the time of writing the 2nd letter, they are still undergoing serious persecution, as the following verses tells us. Nevertheless, not only do they endure, but these Thessalonians thrive in the midst of this severe treatment, described here as “persecutions and afflictions.” Remember that this young church had been an “example” to all the other churches of their great commitment to evangelism, in which they had “sounded forth the word of the
“Lord” in their entire region of the world. And this they did in spite of the fact that they were under “much affliction,” and many “persecutions.”

1 Thessalonians 1:7-8 - 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

See here the mighty power of Christ to transform lives, and even when the devil wages serious war against His work, the church only thrives all the more abounding in faith, love and persevering through the worst of affliction.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-6 - 5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, NASU

A. 5 This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering – The “plain indication” here is what directly precedes in context, “your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.” That is, at “the righteous judgment of God,” the “persecutions and afflictions” that the Thessalonians are enduring, will be both the evidence of their “perseverance and faith,” as well as the evidence for condemnation for their persecutors. No one will wonder at or question, either the wicked or the faithful, if God’s judgment is righteous at the great Day, because the evidence will be so “plain” that the Christians were so unjustly treated. These “persecutions” will be serious evidence implicating the wicked of their unbelief and rejection of Christ, and the “perseverance and faith” of the Christians will be the “plain indication” of their genuine belief in Christ, for they did not shrink back even under great pressure. It is on account of their enduring “perseverance and faith” that they will “be considered worthy of the kingdom of God,” the very thing “for which indeed you are suffering.” Paul makes a similar statement and puts forth the same principle in Philippians.

Philippians 1:27-30 - 27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 in no way alarmed by your opponents — which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. 29 For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. NASB

Why is it that these Thessalonians are suffering persecution? The simple answer is they believe and preach Christ and Him crucified as God’s only way of salvation for a world of rebellious sinners, and because of this, many unbelieving people so strongly oppose the message that they reject, ridicule and even physically harm those who preach it. It seems evident to me, that because the Thessalonians were so vocal about their faith, that they were the objects of much affliction from the unbelievers. Most people in the world are perfectly accepting if you believe such a thing, but it is when you preach the message that they become inflamed. Learn here, the suffering and persecutions that Christians endure because they believe and preach Christ and Him crucified, is genuine evidence of their real faith AND genuine evidence of the unbelieving rejection of their persecutors.

B. 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you – Here Paul speaks of the fundamental realities about sin, righteousness and God’s judgment, and so he says “is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you.” Leon Morris says, “in a moral universe sin cannot go unpunished,” and, “because God is just we must expect the ultimate righting of wrongs, that God will repay seems an essential constituent of any teaching about God’s judgment.” Paul says, “For after all,” that is, when it is all said and done in the end when God brings His judgment, it will be “just,” equitable, righteous, according to the perfect
lawful standard of what is good and upright, which can only be defined by the Almighty God who Himself is the only Judge of the living and the dead, and altogether the standard of what is good, right, and perfectly just. It is a matter of justice for Christ to “repay with affliction those who afflict you,” for they were surely being treated unjustly by their persecutors. One thing is for sure in view here, Christ is coming and when He comes, He will settle the millennia long disputes that have brought so many to persecute Christians throughout the ages. If you think this is only an ancient problem, consider that more Christians died for their faith in the 20th Century than in all other centuries combined.

2 Thessalonians 1:7 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, NASU A. and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well – Here Paul clearly teaches that Christ’s return is to be viewed as imminent. That is, that the Thessalonians were told by Paul to expect Christ to come and “give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well” so that they are to eagerly await this deliverance from the persecutors. Of course one major rule in Bible interpretation is to understand the historical context of the writing to grasp who the recipients of the writing are, and what was the historical situation they find themselves in, including cultural influence and cultural thoughts and expressions. It is clear from this passage that Paul was telling them that Christ’s coming was imminent, and that they should expect Him to come and deliver them. Imminency was a theme in the words of Jesus Himself (and also the other NT writers), especially for example in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, but also a main theme in Matthew 25 in the parable of the Ten Virgins.

Matthew 24:21-31 - 21 for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. 22 "And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short…… 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance…..29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. NASB

Matthew 24:42-44 - 42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. NASB

Matthew 25:1-13 - “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 ”And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent….. 13 "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. NASB

Eagerly awaiting the Lord’s return was a fundamental part of Christian life in the teaching of the Apostles as well, and they frequently tied our Christian hope to the day of His appearing.

Titus 2:11-13 - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; NASB

Hebrews 9:28 - 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. NASB

1 Peter 1:13 - 13 Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. NASB

1 John 3:2 - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. NASB

Therefore we Christians are to be eagerly awaiting Christ’s return, as they were, being watchful of the signs of the times as His return draws ever nearer. See here that Paul was comforting these
Christians telling them that they would receive relief and vindication personally from Christ Himself, “when He is revealed from heaven in flaming fire.”

But what of the question of **Preterism**, whereas these texts are read as to say that because imminency was taught to that generation, that that generation was in fact going to see the fulfillment of these things. To that I answer, that surely some of the things in the Olivet Discourse did have some fulfillment, but the full scope of events spoken of by Jesus did NOT in fact come to pass yet. For example, the Great Tribulation has not yet come to pass (Matt 24:21-22), the Gospel has not been preached to the whole world (Matt 24:14), and Christ has not come in the clouds with power and great glory with all of His angels and raptured the church (Matt 24:29-31). To be fair, Preterists do think these events are analogous to actual events that happened before or during the end of the age of the Old Covenant and the destruction of the Temple and Jewish system in 70 A.D., reading these texts in an allegorical manner. It is my firm conviction however, that these are not allegories, and I read these texts in a historical grammatical sense, fully expecting the literal fulfillment of these events at the future Second Coming of Christ. That makes me a **Futurist**, (under which Amill, Postmill, and Premillennialism are classified), seeing the imminent return of Christ as a yet future event. On this topic I would say that our text here in 2 Thessalonians is bright shining evidence that the coming Christ is yet future because of the simple fact that Christ did not come to the generation of Thessalonians who received this letter and delivered them from their persecutors. In fact, Christians have been undergoing persecution for some 2000 years now, and this deliverance by a glorious appearing of Christ coming from heaven has yet to occur. That however does not mean that we are to dismiss Jesus and the Apostles teaching about imminency, but ARE in fact to be eagerly awaiting His return and deliverance. We simply believe that the texts on imminency will directly apply to that generation that is alive at the Second Coming of Christ.

B. when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire – Here now Paul continues to comfort the persecuted Thessalonians by reminding them that Christ is coming in power to give deliverance to His people and to vindicate them be a terrible vengeance poured out on their enemies. This then is another text wherein Paul gives us more details of the coming (parousia Gk) of Christ, here now in the context of what He will do to the wicked unbelievers at His return. You remember that Paul had previously taught them that “sudden destruction” would come upon the unbelievers, and that “they will not escape” the fierce judgment of Christ at the “Day of the Lord,” when He will return to deliver His people AND destroy the unbelieving world.

**1 Thessalonians 5:2-3** - 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Paul specifically says that the Christians deliverance will come “when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.” He speaks then of the Second Coming of Christ, which He had given them some teaching about already, but here more specifically is addressing the fact that He is coming to destroy their enemies, who are persecuting them severely. And so the emphasis is placed on Christ coming in power to destroy these enemies and the events that will unfold for their enemies. In speaking of this coming He calls it “**when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven.**” Consider several things here. First he is the “Lord Jesus,” emphasizing His sovereign lordship, who will put an end to these unbelievers who are troubling and persecuting His people. Second, He will be “**revealed from Heaven in flaming fire.**” Notice here the word for “revealed” is the Gk *apokalupsis*, meaning “revelation, unveiling, uncovering.” The idea is that He is not evident to eyes in plain sight, but there will come a day, yes even the Second Coming, when He will be “**revealed from heaven.**” This

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Second Coming of Christ is a major theme in the Bible and seen as the climatic event of world history, which begins the last stage of God’s plan for the nations of mankind, and the culmination of His purposes upon planet earth. Third, this “revealing” is said to be “from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.” Now this language of the Second Coming of Christ is very similar to other passages which speak of “His coming,” (parousia Gk). He is said to come “on the clouds of heaven,” and “with great glory” and with “angels and trumpets.” The scene is of a mighty conqueror coming to take His enemies by force and bring their rebel kingdom under His domain. This brings us then into the context of several other Bible Passages, but most importantly, the language is consistent with the Olivet Discourse and Jesus teaching on His Second Coming.

Matthew 24:29-31 - 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. NASB

Mark 13:24-27 - 24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. 26 "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB

Matthew 13:40-43 - 40 "Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. 41 "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. NASB

In fact the Old Testament image of the conquering Messiah, pictures Him in this way, coming in the "clouds of Heaven" which culminates in His established kingdom, which is seen to be an “everlasting dominion which will not pass away.”

Daniel 7:13-14 - 13 "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming. And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; NASB

This coming is said to be seen by the entire world of nations.

Matthew 24:30 - 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. NASB

Revelation 1:7 - 7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. NASB

In this context, Paul immediately follows this announcement of His return to say that He will be bringing recompense to their persecutors, those who were troubling the Thessalonians believers. This language of the Second Coming is frequently seen in the Bible as Christ is coming to bring judgment on all mankind, which is seen as divine vengeance upon a rebel and sinful world.

Isaiah 66:15-16 - 15 For behold, the Lord will come in fire And His chariots like the whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For the Lord will execute judgment by fire And by His sword on all flesh, And those slain by the Lord will be many. NASB

Matthew 16:27 - 27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. NASB

Jude 14-15 - 14 And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." NASB

Isaiah 2:17-19 - 17 And the pride of man will be humbled, And the loftiness of men will be abased, And
the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. 18 But the idols will completely vanish. 19 And men will go into caves of the rocks, and into holes of the ground Before the terror of the Lord. And before the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble. NASB

Revelation 6:15-17 - 15 And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?" NASB

In fact, Jesus likens His Coming to the great flood of Noah and also the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In this imagery Christ is seen to deliver His people on the SAME day that He destroys the wicked. This how Paul described the “coming” (parousia GK) in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:3, where He calls it “the day of the Lord.”

Luke 17:24-37 - 24 "For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. 25 ”But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man. 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; 29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back. 32 "Remember Lot's wife. 33 "Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it. 34 "I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. 35 "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 36 ['"Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.']" NASB

This Second Coming of Christ is seen in all its imagery of warfare in the climatic chapters of Revelation, notably in chapter 19, where the Second Coming is pictured along with the subsequent victory of Christ over His enemies, and the establishment of His physical Millennial Kingdom on earth (Rev 20:1-10).

Revelation 19:11-21 - 11 And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God; 18 in order that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army. 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. NASB

The Bible has much to say about the Second Coming of Christ, of which we have mentioned a few things. But note that for these Thessalonian Christians, it was to be fixed firmly in the hearts and minds as their blessed hope, the day of deliverance, when they would be reunited to their loved ones who had died (1 Thess 4:13-16), and “caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be with the Lord forever.” Paul writes to encourage them that Christ would “give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well,” on this great day, “when the Lord Jesus

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will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.” Their suffering persecution would end, and their enemies are going to be destroyed, verses 8-9, when Christ returns in glory. In light of this we can also understand his statement in verse 6, “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you.” The coming vengeance on their enemies was a matter of God’s justice, and a fierce and awful “affliction” it will be, for “those who afflict you,” as verse 8 and 9 portray rather vividly.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 - 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, NASU

A. 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. – Here Paul vividly describes the personal vengeance that Christ pours out on the unbelieving world at His coming when he says, “dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” Christ Himself will lead His “mighty angels in flaming fire” as they deal out serious “retribution” on the world of unbelievers. The fact that these are unbelievers is clear from the statement, “those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” Some commentators suggest that these are two distinct groups of people. Those “who do not know God” represent the Gentiles, and, “those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” represent the Jews. Whether this is true or not is not explicit in the text, however what is plain is that this includes everyone in the world that is outside of God’s Kingdom, whom only have entered by repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way to escape this fierce judgment which is coming upon the whole world. See here in the Bible that the Second Coming of Christ brings with it fierce judgment on all people who “do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

Luke 21:25-28 - 25 “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” NASB

Here in Luke, even Jesus encouraged His hearers that they would be delivered when He came “in a cloud with power and great glory.” Learn from the above explanation that both the final deliverance of the church from its persecutors, and the Second Coming of Christ are an event that take place at the same time. Paul does the same here in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, explaining that their deliverance is also the “day of vengeance” of our God, as Isaiah the prophet so clearly portrayed! Jesus will come and deal out retribution to His enemies in fulfillment of God’s Word.

Isaiah 63:4-6 - 4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come. 5 "And I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me; And My wrath upheld Me. 6 "And I trod down the peoples in My anger, And made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.” NASB

Isaiah 34:1-4,8-10 - 34 Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it. 2 For the Lord's indignation is against all the nations, And His wrath against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter. 3 So their slain will be thrown out. And their corpses will give off their stench. And the mountains will be drenched with their blood. 4 And all the host of heaven will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as one withers from the fig tree…… 8 For the Lord has a day of vengeance, A year of recompense for the cause of Zion. 9 And its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its loose earth into brimstone, And its land shall become burning pitch. 10 It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall go up forever; From generation to generation it shall be desolate; None shall pass through it forever and ever. NASB
B. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power – Now here see the specific fate of those who are the objects of Christ’s “retribution.” The severity of this statement could not be overstated, “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction.” Here Paul indicates that not only will they be destroyed, but that this destruction is “eternal.” The horror of such a predicament is beyond grasp as here is expounded the final end of all who “do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” This is how Jesus Himself described the end of those among the nations who did not obey Him.

Matthew 25:46 - 46 "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Throughout scripture God has warned of this coming wrath and destruction of the ungodly.

Romans 2:5-6 - 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. 6 who will render to every man according to his deeds: NASB

2 Peter 3:10-11 - 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, NASB

In fact, when we call someone to be saved by believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is from this coming wrath that they are being saved from. This wrath of “eternal destruction” is the very wages of sin. The fact that it is “eternal” speaks of the nature of the offense of sin. Note that sin is of such offense to God and His holiness, that the righteous and just penalty for it is “eternal destruction.” This should help us to calculate the great danger that people are in, being culpable for their sins without a substitute to die in their place. Also notice that this destruction is “away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” Here Paul is describing that in the state of eternal judgment, people are “away from the presence of the Lord.” This is not to say that God is not omnipresent and somehow not able to go where this place of torment is, for the simple truth that God created this place of eternal torment(Matt 25:41) speaks to the fact that God’s presence transcends the boundaries of that place. Paul’s point is that these will be outside of God’s goodness and blessing, the idea is to be outside of His favor completely. Jesus described this state in a very serious way, and using the language of Isaiah 66:24 calls it the “furnace of fire,” where “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, where the worm does not die and the fire is never quenched.”

Matthew 13:41-42 - 41 "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. NASB

Mark 9:43-45 - 43 "And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44 [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] NASB

It is very obvious that in this place of “eternal destruction” that the goodness of God, His grace and mercy, love and kindness, patience and forbearance, have no place but have run there course seeking to bring mankind to repentance while he does live. Having spurned the gracious hand of God’s kindness through their lives, their rejection of God and His Son has now come full circle at the day of judgment, and they will be shut out “from His presence.” Paul further describes that place as “away…from the glory of His power.” His point here is that they will be completely outside of the good presence of God, in fact, in the language of Jesus that place is “outer darkness.” There will be no light in that place forever and ever, in contrast to eternal life on the New Earth in God’s home of righteousness, where God Himself is the very light that illumines that place, forever and ever, and there will be no night there (Rev 21:25). Suffice to say that this final end of the unbeliever is as terrible as one could imagine. This shows the utter ruin of the second death, and the awful state of the coming wrath that we warn people to flee from in Questions? shaansloan@att.net

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the gospel.

In this text there is a difficulty for Premillennialism which I shall here undertake to explain. The judgment pictured here seems to be final in its scope for the entire world of unbelievers. This would favor an Amill or PostMill view, as Christ would simply culminate the ages at this time by the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20:11-15. However, a plain reading of Revelation 19:11 thru 20:10 shows a 1000 year period of Christ reign upon the earth with His "priests," those who had part in the first resurrection (see pgs 50-52 above). During this final 1000 year reign is also depicted a final rebellion of the nations of mankind when "Satan will be released from his prison" (Rev 20:7-10). Several things are clearly implied from this text. First, there are unbelieving nations upon the earth during the Millennial Kingdom, for they will be gathered and deceived by Satan for the final rebellion (Rev 20:8). Second, this means that all the nations of unbelievers cannot be totally destroyed at the Second Coming, for they would cease to exist therefore in the Millennial Kingdom. Third, it is clear from these matters therefore that some amount of unbelievers must be survivors of the awful events of the Second Coming upon the unbelieving world, and enter into the Millennial Kingdom to populate the earth. Fourth, it is over these nations whom Christ and His priests "reign with Christ for 1000 years" (Rev 20:4-6).

On this basis then, the difficulty of the judgment pictured in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 apparently being final in its scope for the entire world of unbelievers, is resolved by the idea that the "day of the Lord" is only inaugurated at the Second Coming, but the full scope of the events of it cannot take place (see notes below from pgs 54-55) until the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, when the judgment pictured in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 shall be fully consummated. There is then a conflation (see Grudem pg 1129 for an explanation of conflation), of prophetic events pictured here in this passage where events spoken of have several stages of fulfillment in the course of history. In this case the judgment pictured in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 is inaugurated at the Second Coming, but not consummated until the Great White Throne judgment, when all the unbelieving world will be finally banished from God’s presence forever. Therefore, "when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire" He will indeed come and destroy all governmental powers (the kings of the earth…Rev 19:11-21) and the demonic rulers of the world at that time (Antichrist and false prophet…Rev 19:11-21), and all the wicked nations of unbelievers who persecute and oppress the saints will be EITHER destroyed in the trumpet and bowl judgments (Rev 8-18) OR subdued under Christ’s establishment of His Millennial Kingdom.

Notes from pgs 54-55…. It is obvious that the full scope of the events of the day of the Lord cannot all happen immediately upon the Second Coming of Christ, for the whole earth will be destroyed (Zeph 1:2-3, 14-18, 2 Pet 3:10) and this will not take place until the end of the Millennial Kingdom. This is made clear in the chronology of events given in Revelation 20:1-15. Therefore the Day of the Lord actually has its inauguration at the Second Coming, but its full consummation is not completed until the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father having subdued all His enemies, including death, the last enemy to be destroyed according to 1 Corinthians 15:26.

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 - 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. NASB
The chart below depicts this concept by viewing a chronology of events spanning from before the Second Coming of Christ until after the consummation of the ages and the Eternal State have begun. Notice the boxes in the upper right explaining the inauguration and consummation of the “Day of the Lord.”

Therefore when we read of the events concerning the Second Coming, it must be understood that there is yet still another stage to the unfolding of God’s eternal plan for the creation, according to Revelation 20:1-15, that will not be fully consummated until after the final rebellion of nations.

Revelation 20:7-10 - 7 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. NASB

It is after this final rebellion of the nations and destruction of Satan, that the world of unbelievers will stand in judgment before the great white throne, and the present heaven and earth will be destroyed for ever, and the New Heavens and Earth created by God which will in fact never again be tainted by sin, world without end.

Revelation 20:11-15 - 11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. NASB
Revelation 21:1 - 1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. NASB

2 Thessalonians 1:10-12 - 10 When He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. 11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. NASU

A. 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. – See here that for the “saints,” (here specifically the whole company of believing people), the Second Coming of Christ will be a day of glory and marvel. For those who do not know God or obey the Gospel, it will be a day of terror and tragedy. But for those who are eagerly awaiting His return, it will be a time “when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day.”

First notice, it is Christ who will be “glorified.” All through the Bible we see God telling us there will come a day when Christ will come “in glory” and “the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.” (see Psalm 2, 110, Daniel 7, Isaiah 2, 24, 66,

Isaiah 2:17-19 - 17 And the pride of man will be humbled, And the loftiness of men will be abased, And the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. 18 But the idols will completely vanish. 19 And men will go into caves of the rocks, And into holes of the ground Before the terror of the Lord, And before the splendor of His majesty. When He arises to make the earth tremble, NASB

Matthew 16:27 - 27 “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. NASB

Mark 13:26-27 - 26 “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 “And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB

Philippians 2:9-11 - 9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NASB

Notice however, in this text Paul mentions the way Christ will be glorified. This he describes as “be glorified in His saints on that day.” The phrase is loaded with meaning as the unique way in which Christ will be glorified will be “in His saints.” This is no doubt a reference to the humbling of the whole world of unbelievers before Christ when He stands apart from them, but with His “saints,” those who have faithfully trusted and obeyed Him during their lifetime in history, who will be gathered together “in the air” to be witnessed by all the nations.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 - 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. NASB

The saints will in fact be partakers in the glory of Christ, before all the nations as they are manifested to be His holy people, visibly for all the world to see. At this time, the Christians of all ages will be vindicated by God in full view of the world, and all their labor and efforts both to witness and to serve the Lord, will be manifested as genuine, for which they will be glorified “in Christ,” and He in them, but the unbelieving world in utter shame will seek to hide in the caves of the rocks, And into holes of the ground, Before the terror of the Lord, And before the splendor of His majesty” (Isaiah 2:18-19). At this time, the holy church will be “glorified” with and in Christ, and their hope shall be realized and rewarded before all eyes.

Colossians 3:4 - 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. NASB

Philippians 2:14-16 - 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 that you may prove yourselves...
to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse
generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the
day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. NASB

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 - 19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the
presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy. NASB

1 Thessalonians 3:13 - so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God
and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. NASB

1 Peter 2:12 - 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they
slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in
the day of visitation. NASB

Romans 8:18-19 - 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared
with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the
revealing of the sons of God. NASB

It is also at this time that the saints shall also be eternally glorified, having their bodies
transformed into the likeness of Christ, and for them, sin and death swallowed up forever.
Glorification has its fulfillment at the parousia of Christ for the church of all ages past.

Philippians 3:19-21 - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior,
the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the
body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

1 Corinthians 15:50-56 - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of
God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all
sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the
trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this
perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this
perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will
come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory, 55 "O death, where is your
victory? O death, where is your sting?" NASB

1 Peter 4:12-13 - 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you
for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share
the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice
with exultation. NASB

1 John 3:2 - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We
know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. NASB

Paul goes on from here saying that Christ will “be marveled at among all who have believed —
for our testimony to you was believed.” Imagine here, for “all who have believed,” their faith
will finally become sight as they will be united with Christ in His presence eternally, having a
full disclosure of His glory and power and Kingship, when He comes again to “make His
enemies His footstool” and put to flight all rebel forces of evil. At that time will come about the
saying,

Habakkuk 2:14 - 4 "For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. As the
waters cover the sea. NASB

Consider the rejoicing of God’s people on this great day of victory, as they “marvel at” Him and
glory in His greatness and power. What a day of rejoicing that will be! Never again to be plagued
by sin, but immortally free from all that is evil, eternally transformed into His perfect state, and
glorified by His power. Notice that Paul identifies these who will be marveling as those who
believed His Gospel when he says, “for our testimony to you was believed.”

B. To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your
calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power. - As usually
follows when speaking of Christ’s coming, the apostle now directs us to the goal of our faith
while we do live, that is that we might glorify God and Christ by the way we live. He refers to
this glory as the end or goal of our living when he says, “to this end.” Is it “to this end,” that
Paul mentions his unceasing prayers, “we pray for you always.” Here see Paul encouraging the
Thessalonians to see both their final assurance and the present fruitfulness as primarily God’s
work. He says, “*that our God will count you worthy of your calling,*” expressing his desire that their lives currently reflect their profession of faith in Christ, will surely show that God has counted them worthy. For all people whom God “counts worthy,” He also makes worthy by the imputation of Christ perfect righteousness through faith. The result of this justifying work of God is sanctification, the ongoing process of being conformed into Christ’s image, which will come to full fruition at glorification, when Christ comes again to receive us unto Himself. Paul is here encouraging them to remain steadfast in the faith, having consoled them over their persecution, that they will be vindicated by Christ at His coming. He is praying that they will “fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,” hoping that “God will” cause these things to happen, so that Christ will be glorified (v-12). The idea behind “fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,” is that God will bring to fruition all the desires for goodness which live in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is goodness Himself, along with all good works motivated by their faith. See here that God is not only the One who gives us the desires of our hearts for doing good, but also who brings them to pass by His sovereign Providence. This is one great purpose of our salvation is that we would fulfill good works which God has foreordained that we should walk in. Consider how Paul describes in Ephesians 2 that God has predisposed even our good works.

   Ephesians 2:10 - 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. NASB

C. 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ – And of course the goal of our goodness and works of faith is the very glory of the Lord Jesus Himself. This is why we live, the great purpose of our lives and all our good works of service unto the Lord is “so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him.” Why should Christians be so willing to help the poor, oppressed and defenseless in the world? Why is the great majority of organizations that rush to the aid of victims of tragedy and calamity Christian groups? Why do we have these innate desires to help people and to do good, and make sacrifices of our own time, talent and treasure for no benefit of our own? It is because we have had a supernatural transformation of our hearts by the Holy Spirit of God whereby God’s very nature has come to live inside of us by the Spirit. And these things we do seeking not that we would be glorified, for we do our deeds in secret whenever possible, but rather “so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him.” We desire for God and Christ to be glorified by our humble service to others. This is one great purpose of our lives.

   Matthew 5:16 - 16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. NASB

   1 Corinthians 10:31 - 31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. NASB

In this context of 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12, Paul is bringing his point to a conclusion. That is that, their suffering and all their service and good works are going to be vindicated in the end at the Second Coming of Christ, at which time their *union with Christ* will be plainly seen at the revelation of His glory. That Christ will be glorified “*in you,*” as all their good works and service of faith will be seen to be the genuine power of God at work in them, and the saints will be “glorified…. in Him,” as He is seen to be the One that called them and spurred them on to all their works of faith, which they performed by His power and for His glory. All of this will be “according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” All of the Christian life is a result of the blessing of God’s grace upon us, and not a result of any work we have done. We deserve God’s wrath, and instead we have been made partakers in His kingdom and glory.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 - 1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord
Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. NASU

A. 1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed. - Paul now goes on to further clarify matters of the Second Coming, the timing of the rapture, and also of the person of the Antichrist, his deceptive work and his destruction. This discussion is made up of the text of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

After having described the Second Coming in terms of Christ’s “retribution” on unbelievers and also the day of glorification of the saints (2 Thess 1:7-10), he will now describe the timing of the rapture, “the day of the Lord,” and the revelation of “the man of lawlessness.” When he says “Now we request of you brethren,” his request is directed toward the phrase “that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed.” (v-2). He is comforting them by correcting an obvious misunderstanding that they have. They were under the impression that “the day of the Lord has come.” It is assumed that someone had written a false letter, or at least had given a message of some sort, that was a counterfeit message from the apostles explaining that they were now in the “day of the Lord.” This is obvious from the statement “or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.” They obviously thought that their severe persecution was a result of the terrible events Paul had described to them as “the day of the Lord.” Here Paul writes to correct them and tell them that the “day of the Lord” has NOT come, and that it won’t come until “the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.” (v-3). So Paul clearly corrects them and in so doing also addresses some matters of the Second Coming, including the timing of the rapture, the great end time apostasy and also of the revelation of person of the Antichrist.

In Paul’s mind “the coming of our Lord Jesus” is an event which inaugurates the unfolding of a sequence of several events spoken of in scripture. The events include…

- the “gathering together with Him” we call the rapture spoken of by Paul in 1 Thess 4:16-17 and 2 Thess 2:1
- the “day of the Lord” spoken of by Paul both in 1 Thess 5:3 and 2 Thess 2:2
- the “retribution” of Christ upon the unbelievers and the Antichrist spoken of by Paul in 2 Thess 1:7-9 and 2 Thess 2:8

Additionally, Paul had instructed the Thessalonians to wait for and expect this event as….

- the great day of their deliverance and joy together with Paul and all the saints in 1Thess 1:9, 1 Thess 2:19, 1 Thess 3:13, and 2 Thess 1:10
- their reuniting with their loved ones who had “fallen asleep” (died) 1 Thess 4:15-18
- the destruction of their persecutors in 1 Thess 5:1-3, 2 Thess 1:6-10

All of these things are one and the same event, if you will, in Paul’s mind when speaking of the “coming” [parousia] of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we could say with Paul, when Jesus comes He will destroy His enemies, OR He will rapture the church, OR we will be reunited with our loved ones who have died, OR it will be a day of great joy together with all the saints, etc., etc. In fact there are several places in the text where Paul equates these events as being one in the same. Paul had equated these two events (day of the Lord and rapture) back in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-

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5:3, and does it again in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. The below chart depicts this well.

The Rapture & The Day of the Lord (Second Coming)
Same event according to
1 Thess 4:15-5:3 & 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

Our current text in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 is a definitive place where he does this. The below chart depicts this idea where he equates “the day of the Lord” together with “our being gathered together with Him,” which we call the rapture.

The Rapture & The Second Coming
Same event according to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 - 1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to [the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him], 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, [to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.] 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, [for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.] the son of destruction, NASU

But this brings with it a very specific understanding then in regard to the timing of the rapture, because Paul then describes “with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,” that this “will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.” If you will, Paul is explaining that the rapture then, (“our being gathered to Him”) is an event which takes place AFTER the Antichrist is revealed. Because we know from the text of the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:15-31), Daniel chapters 7-9,11-12, and also Revelation 13, that the Great Tribulation period IS those events which surround the coming of
the Antichrist to power and the destruction done by him. Therefore, the rapture is a **POST-Tribulation** event. This is very clear from an understanding of these texts. Further, all the events which make up the Second Coming, are summed up here by Paul as “*the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,*” and also, “*the day of the Lord,*” are spoken of as POST-Tribulation events. These things, says Paul, “*will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.*” John Piper comments on this in his morning sermon of 8-30-87. [http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/definitions-and-observations-concerning-the-second-coming-of-christ](http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/definitions-and-observations-concerning-the-second-coming-of-christ) “If Paul were a pre-tribulationist why did he not simply say in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 that the Christians don't need to worry that the day of the Lord is here because all the Christians are still here? Instead he talks just the way you would expect a post-tribulational person to do. He tells them that they should not think that the day of the Lord is here because the apostasy and the man of lawlessness have not appeared.” I would like to add at this point that Paul could have said many **PRE-tribulation** things that make **PRE-trib** doctrine very clear. An example would be in 1 Thess 5:4 Paul could have simply said, “*that day will not overtake you as thief*” because you will have been caught up (raptured) 7 years earlier. Or he could have said in reference to the rapture in 1 Thess 4:16-17 that this happens before the man of lawlessness is revealed OR 7 years before the Second Coming of Christ. But no such statement exists in the entire Bible, and surely not in Pauline eschatology.

But also note, Paul **sequence** of events outlined here in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. This is exactly the sequence of events outlined by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. In Matthew 24:9-31, Jesus shows this progression of events. There he says that persecution and apostasy will abound and many people will “*fall away.*”

Matthew 24:8-13 - 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. NASB

It is at this time that the Gospel testimony to the nations will reach its highest level in all of the church age.

Matthew 24:14 - 14 “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.*” NASB

Jesus then describes that during this time of persecution and apostasy, that the Antichrist will rise to power, with great deception and signs and wonders, and he describes this as a “**great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.**” Note, the wrath of God is not included in these events, but only Antichrist’s evil works.

Matthew 24:21 - 21 a **great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.** NASB

Jesus then tells us that that this “**great tribulation**” will be “*cut short for the sake of God’s elect*” people, who are under severe persecution, which is also pictured in Revelation chapter 13. Matthew 24:22 - 22 "*And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.*” NASB

He then describes this cutting short of the “**great tribulation**” by “*the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him,*” which he says is “*immediately after the tribulation.*”

Matthew 24:29-31 - 29 "But **immediately after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory,** 31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and **they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.**” NASB

Notice how consistent Jesus sequence is with Paul’s sequence in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. Paul

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says that “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,” won’t happen until 1) the apostasy comes and 2) the Antichrist is revealed. This is clear when he says, “will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed,” and that is the exact sequence Jesus describes above. The below chart depicts this sequence of events in the Olivet Discourse.

### Chronology of Events in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Beginning of Birth Pains</td>
<td>V- 4-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persecution of Martyrdom</td>
<td>V-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling Away of Apostasy</td>
<td>V-10-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Tribulation</td>
<td>Antichrist Revealed V-21-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs in the Heavens</td>
<td>V-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ’s Return</td>
<td>Power and Great Glory Rapture V-30-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wrath of God Day of the Lord</td>
<td>V-36-41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now concerning this timing of the rapture and second coming, Paul is very concerned that the Thessalonians not be deceived. This is the point of his text, to correct them on their understanding of this timing. “Let no one in any way deceive you,” about this important fact, “for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.” Paul considered it of utmost importance for them to know that their “gathering together with Him” would not happen “unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.” This was also a great concern to Jesus. When he was asked by his disciples about what would be the sign of His coming and the end of the age, He replied, “see to it that no one misleads you.” About what? About “when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and the end of the age.”

Matthew 24:3-4 - 3 And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.” NASB

### Tension between 1 & 2 Thessalonians concerning Imminency

At this point I should also like to deal with Imminency and the tension between 1 and 2 Thessalonians concerning Imminency. See Beale pg 29…. While 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 affirms that Christ’s coming will occur at an unexpected time, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 says that definite signs will appear before Christ returns. Note also, that this tension between unexpectedness and signs preceding Christ return exists in the Gospels, including in the Olivet Discourse of our Lord. Throughout Scripture we are told of the certain and imminent return of Christ, and yet we are given signs that will precede His coming in vivid detail and accompanying order of events leading up to His return. This tension however is easily resolved by an examination of these passages and a clear understanding of the intent and scope of the doctrine of Imminency. In short, no one knows the exact day or hour that Christ will return (Matthew 24:36, 44, Mark 13:32), but Christians are told the season of His coming will be something they can clearly identify by the signs and events leading up to it (Matthew 24:14-15, 21-22, 25, 29-31, Mark 13:10, 14, 19-20, 23-27), signs and events that will be deceptively unclear to an unbelieving world (Matt 24:37-44, Luke 21:34-36, 1 Thess 5:2-4). So when we speak about Imminency, it is not entirely accurate to say that Jesus can come at any moment, but rather that His coming is in fact certain and that when He comes it will be a time of great deception.
Matthew 24:24-25  
24 “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.  
25 “Behold, I have told you in advance. NASB

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12  
9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.  
11 And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false,  
12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. NASB

Because of this deception, we are to be keenly aware of the season of His coming, and pay close attention to the events leading up to His coming, so that we will not be taken unaware. This is how Jesus (Matt 24:37-44) and Paul (2 Thess 2:1-3) both spoke about our expectancy of Christ’s coming.

Matthew 24:37-44  
37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 “For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. 41 ”Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.  
42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 ”But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.  
44 "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. NASB

This of course was Paul’s point in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-6  
4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. NASU

This important truth of Imminency needs to be held in correct balance. On one hand Jesus taught us that we do not know the day or hour, but at the same time was saying that we should be aware of the events surrounding His coming so that we would not be caught unaware. Jesus made explicit statements about the fact that we were to “be on the alert” and to pay attention to the signs of His coming so that we would not be caught unaware and that this day would not “overtake us as a thief.”

Mark 13:23 - 23 "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. NASB

Mark 13:28-29 - 28 “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. NASB

Luke 21:27-31 - 27 "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” 29 And He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 "Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.

These exhortations also had the specific purpose of calling us to live in way which is pleasing to the Lord, in all purity and holiness and to glorify Him with our lives. Jesus and the Apostles used the doctrine of Imminency primarily to teach us to glorify God minute by minute in our lives, living in purity and expectancy and not to become lazy, drunken or distracted from our faith.

Luke 21:32-36 - 34 "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36 "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” NASB

In fact the parable of the Ten Virgins was designed to explain this truth very clearly.

Matthew 25:10-13 - 10 "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 "And later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ 12 "But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13 "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour; NASB

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Other Apostles made it very clear that this knowledge was to cause us to be alert, forsaking the ways of the world and growing in the faith.

2 Peter 3:17-18 - 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness. 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. NASB

1 John 3:2-3 - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. NASB

Therefore, we are to be “on the alert” and “ready” for the imminent return of our Lord in glory. With this in mind, we are to be keenly aware of the events that Jesus and the Apostles warned us would directly precede His coming. These things, says Paul, “will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.” This “apostasy” is in the Greek, apostasia meaning (revolt or rebellion), and in the biblical context refers to a rebellion from the true faith. Paul’s use of the definite article, “the rebellion,” shows clearly that it was a known event in the minds of the Thessalonians. This is clear from the fact that Paul gives no explanation of this “apostasy” as if they knew full well what he referred to. Commentators debate whether this “apostasy” is a falling away from the faith by a multitude, or the final “abomination of desolation” act by the Antichrist spoken of by Daniel (9:27), Jesus (Matt 24:15) and in the Revelation (13:14-15). Regardless of which event Paul had in mind, the meaning of the passage does not change, for when Antichrist has risen to power to deceive the nations, that will also be a time of tremendous deception, characterized by a falling away from the true faith (Matt 24:10-13). Paul speaks of this event in unison with the “revealing” of the “man of lawlessness.” Here he clearly has the Antichrist in view. The fact that he is “revealed” speaks of the fact that he is in existence before he is revealed, but not clearly visible as to who he is, until of course the time comes and he is “revealed.” Notice here he is “the man” of lawlessness, and he is distinguished from Satan himself in verses 8-9. In this context Paul says the “man of lawlessness” is now being restrained by some definite personality (verses 6-7), and will also be the one “whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.” This man is titled by Paul as THE man of lawlessness, as opposed to A man of lawlessness. This definite article indicates he is the one man spoken of in Scripture in many places who works a tremendous amount of destruction and evil in the days directly preceding the coming (parousia) of our Lord. This is in fact Paul’s main point in verses 1-3, that is, the single event of verse 1, “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,” is going to be preceded by this lawless one, “will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.”

B. the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. – Take note here that Paul gives this man two titles. He is called both the “man of lawlessness” and also “the son of destruction.” Notice he is characterized by “lawlessness” and also “destruction.” These things are the very things that the Bible elsewhere describes as the things that characterize this man and his evil works. And even though he is the chief human opponent of God and Christ in the world, he will fulfill all that God had planned and decreed for him, and he will perfectly fulfill God’s plan in culminating this current age. This is surely the one which Daniel spoke of.

Daniel 7:21-22, 25 - 21 "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom…… 25 'And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a
Daniel 8:23-25 - 23 "And in the latter period of their rule, When the transgressors have run their course, A king will arise Insolent and skilled in intrigue. 24 "And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people. 25 "And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart. And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency. NASB

Daniel 9:27 - 27 "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." NASB

Daniel 11:36-37 - 36 "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. NASB

And also Jesus speaks of him in the Olivet Discourse.

Matthew 24:15 - 15 "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), NASB

And also John speaks of him in the Revelation.

Revelation 13:5-9 - 5 And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. 8 And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. NASB

Revelation 19:20 - 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. NASB

Of this “man of lawlessness, the son of destruction,” Paul says that he is the one “who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship.” Consider, in the scope of who this man is, and his popularity among the people of the world, who will all follow him, that this opposition to God must be really severe. In this New Covenant age of Christianity, how does one “oppose God?” You “oppose God” by speaking lies and perverting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and seeking to silence those who preach the Gospel and work to evangelize the world. Daniel chapter 8 gives specific insight into this Antichrist as one who “flings the truth to the ground and tramples it,” and also one who “destroys the mighty men and the holy people.”

Daniel 8:11-13 - 11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. 12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" NASB

Daniel 8:24-25 - 24 "And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people. 25 "And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency. NASB

Notice what Daniel said in verse 8:11, which is explained in 8:25, that he “magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host,” and also “he will even oppose the Prince of princes.” This of course is how Paul identifies the Antichrist in our text 2 Thessalonians 2:4, “who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship.” Notice Paul describes Antichrist as not only “opposing God” but, “exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship.” This the Antichrist does with words, he is a liar sent to deceive and to

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mislead people into believing what is false (2 Thess 2:10-11). Antichrist is identified by his boastful mouth in several places in Scripture, and identified as one who “opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven” (Rev 13:6). He is a lying false prophet, a usurper of God’s authority, who blasphemes the name of God and does deceiving signs and wonders in order to deceive the people of the world. Note well; the end time deception of Antichrist is a war on the truth of the Gospel.

Daniel 7:25 - 25 'And he will speak against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law, and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. NASB

Daniel 11:36-37 - 36 Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. NASB

Revelation 13:5-9 - 5 And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. NASB

All of this, he does with tremendous success, because it is in the purposes of God for these very final days of the Gospel age to test the people of the earth to see where their allegiance lies. Is it with the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of the Christian Gospel, or is it with the false economic and religious system of Antichrist, who comes “with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Thess 2:9-10). He is so successful at his endeavors because God has purposed in His sovereign will for this deception to come upon the rebel world of sinners, and bring to a final end the kingdoms of this world. This is evident from the following verses.

Daniel 7:25 - they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. NASB

Daniel 8:11-13 - 11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. 12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. NASB

Daniel 11:37 - and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. NASB

Revelation 13:5-9 - 5 And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. NASB

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 - 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. NASU

We should note well how the sovereignty of God is in view in our text, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Paul describes the terrible end time deception of the “man of lawlessness,” but all the while gives indication that God is in control of these things and exactly HOW and WHEN they will unfold. Even the great boastful and blaspheming mouth of Antichrist will serve the purpose of God in the end, and Christ will come and finally defeat this evil worker, at the proper time (2 Thess 2:8). In fact God will even allow the unthinkable, as Paul writes, “so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.” The exact meaning of this text is in dispute as there has not been a “temple of God” since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This has caused many to say that they expect another temple to be built in Jerusalem, just prior to the Second Coming of Christ. To add to the validity of this view, much of the language of Antichrist in Daniel supports the idea that he will “put an end to sacrifice and offering,” (Dan 9:27). In fact, Jesus speaks of the “abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (Matt 24:15), which seems to indicate that this is in the “temple of God.” To make this even more plausible, Paul uses the word naos in the Greek, which is used to denote the inner sanctum or Holy of Holies, as opposed the word hieron which
denotes the whole temple precinct. Even history itself has shown a propensity of Antichrist type rulers who seek to desecrate the temple in their opposition to God such as Antiochus Epiphanes (who slaughtered a pig on the altar of the temple and erected an image of Zeus above the altar), or the emperor Caligula who sought to erect an image of Himself in the temple of God but died before he could bring it about. There is much evidence in Scripture that can be used in support of the rebuilding of a temple, including Ezekiel’s vision of an end time temple in the last days, (Ezekiel chapter 40-48), which must of course exist during a Millennial Kingdom, and its temple service only exists as a memorial to the true “lamb of God” (Jesus Christ), who died to take away the sin of the world. Surely in Paul’s day, and also in the language of the entire OT Scripture, God’s Temple stood as a great edifice to the name and presence of God in the world. It was seen as the very place where God dwelt, and was used in this sense, as the very habitation of God.

Nonetheless, that Temple was completely destroyed, in the providence of God, and the practice of biblical Judaism with it, and no longer stands for what it was, as the Old Covenant age has ended and the New Covenant age has dawned. One must give serious thought to what a rebuilt temple would be in God’s sight before the second coming of Christ. Would it not be a sacrilegious and abominable thing in the sight of God to have Jewish Priests offering blood sacrifices for the atonement of sins? Is this not the very thing which provoked God to destroy the last Temple? Would God’s blessing and presence dwell in that place, and is that the place where God would have His name associated as His very dwelling? Could we call that place “the temple of God” with a clear conscience, in light of the context of New Testament (Covenant)? If the Antichrist were to stand in that place and erect an image in the Holiest place, would that be a sacrilege against the true worship of God in a New Testament (Covenant) context?

There is another view of this “temple” and its meaning which seems to better fit the context of an Antichrist in the New Covenant age. This is derived from the idea that God’s Temple in Jerusalem has been destroyed, in fulfillment of Jesus prophecy, and seen as God’s divine commentary on the age of Judaism and the Old Covenant system. Coupled with the idea that the age of Judaism has ceased (with all its blood sacrifices, its priesthood and temple service), is the New Covenant idea that the presence and temple of God is no longer in a single place, but instead in the heart of every true believer (1 Cor 3:16-17, 6:19, 2 Cor 6:16, Eph 2:21-22) which is now the true “assembly” of God (or in the Gk ekklesia; church). Moreover, apostasy from the New Covenant now has to do with the denial of the person and work of Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord, a thing which modern Judaism already openly does (making it a destructive cult, until God is pleased to save the Jews by opening their eyes to Messiah). This changes the nature of what true “rebellion” or apostasy really is, which is now focused on the Christian Gospel, not on a Jewish Temple or its priests and sacrifices. The Antichrist and his rise to power and influence is characterized by a great deception of the world, which culminates in the “abomination of desolation,” and event which described in a New Testament context is the worship of an idol representing the Antichrist. This idolatry, where Antichrist is worshipped by the world, is how he “opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship.” Notice Paul describes Antichrist as not only “opposing God” but, “exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship.” This also speaks to the nature of his deceiving message, a message that opposes the true Christian Gospel (which is focused on the person and work of Christ), which obviously puts Antichrist himself up as a replacement of the true Messiah Jesus Christ. This brings new meaning to the terms “so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.” It could be that Paul is here using the term “temple”
here to speak in terms of the very locus of the true worship of God, which now in the New Testament shifted from the Temple in Jerusalem, to the assembly of the church.

**Ephesians 2:19-22** - 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. NASB

Further, the New Testament speaks of the work of Antichrist as a deceiving work characterized by false prophecies and false christs, who himself is obviously the ultimate false christ, as he will demand and garner the worship of the entire world, putting himself forward as he blasphemes God and Jesus Christ. Both Jesus and Paul warned of this great deception, both in the context of discussing the revealing of the Antichrist. They warned that the deception would be centered as it were on the very heart of the Christian Gospel, and that the focus of the deception would center on very elect of God, showing that is an attack on the essentials of the Christian Faith.

**Matthew 24:23-27** - 23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance. 26 "If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. NASB

This also sheds new light on the passages in Daniel (chapters 7, 8, 9, 11-12), when we read them with a New Testament perspective. Reading Daniel with the Christian Faith held up in the background, clarifies what meaning is behind some of the strange depictions in Daniel’s prophecy. In Daniel’s historical context of writing, the true worship of God had to do with the Temple (and its sacrifices and priestly service) as the center of God’s worship, even though we know that Daniel’s prophecy had both near and far fulfillments. In the context of the near fulfillment, Antiochus Epiphanes and his desecration of the Temple in 165 B.C. was clearly in view. But in the context of the far fulfillment, and the great apocalypse of the last days and the deception of the entire world under Antichrist’s deceiving power, the Christian Church is now the locus of the true worship of God, and apostasy and deception are now clearly a departure from the Christian Faith. More than this, “the holy people” (Dan 8:24, 12:7) and “the holy covenant” (Dan 11:28-37) surely do not comprise modern Judaism, for there is nothing “holy” or sanctified in the sight of God concerning the practice of modern Judaism, rather the “saints of the Highest One” (Dan 7:11-27) clearly parallel the saints of Revelation 13, and make up the invisible and universal Christian Church who are the target of much of Antichrists rage and spite, and are clearly identified as “those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:17, 13:7-8). There is also another clear an obvious parallel between Daniel’s “people” (Dan 12:1), “everyone who is found written in the book,” and the saints of Revelation 13:7-8.

**Daniel 12:1-3** - 1 “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to dis grace and everlasting contempt. 3 “And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. **Revelation 13:7-8** - 7 And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. 8 And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in...
the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. NASB

The saints of Daniel in this far fulfillment are not primarily Jews, but the entire invisible and universal Christian church, from every tribe and language and nation and people, including believing Jews (see the attachment – “Reasons why the saints in Daniel refer to the Church”).

Therefore to summarize this view in the language of our text 2 Thessalonians 2:4, where Paul describes Antichrist the one who “opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God,” it appears as though Paul is using the term “temple” here to speak in terms of the very locus of the true worship of God, which has now in the New Testament shifted from the Temple in Jerusalem, to the assembly of the Church. This is supported by the text in Daniel as the language describing Antichrist’s work is clearly focused on the “truth” and the “holy people,” and the New Testament language speaks of an attack on the Christian Faith and the Christian Church. The parallels are clear and obvious.

Daniel 8:11-13 - 11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. 12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" NASB

Daniel 8:24-25 - 24 "And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people. 25 "And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency. NASB

Matthew 24:8-13 - 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. NASB

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 - 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. NASU

In fact, the parallel between Daniel 7:21-25 and Revelation 13:5-7 is very striking and reveals the church as the primary target of His deceiving work.

Daniel 7:21-22, 25 - 21 "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom…… 25 'And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. NASB

Revelation 13:5-7 - 5 And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. 8 And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. NASB

This is plausible because in order to “oppose God” and “exalt” oneself “above God” in the New Covenant age, one must certainly focus their work against the person and work of Christ (the Christian Gospel), and seek to deceive concerning the true worship of God, which happens only.

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in the Christian Church, who are God’s only “holypeople,” made holy by the blood of Jesus Christ. Judaism and even a rebuilt Jewish Temple are not God’s holy worship, and surely a daily sacrifice of blood in a Jewish Temple would be an abomination to God in this New Covenant age, of which God has spoken in loud commentary in 70 A.D. concerning this matter. Further, this view that the “temple of God” is the church or more specifically the universal and visible Christian church, there is an overwhelming amount of commentators who hold this view. Of the over 20 commentators I read on this, as many as 13 of them hold this view and include, GK Beale, Calvin, Poole, Adam Clarke, Barnes, Matthew Henry, Thomas Scott, Doddridge, Burkitt, and Poole asserts that it was the position of Augustine, Jerome, Hilary, Chrysostom. Surely this is not proof of itself that the view is correct, but yet another item in consideration of the whole.

These are the reasons that I do not prefer the Dispensational view of this text about the “temple” of 2 Thessalonians 2:4. I do agree and affirm with Dispensationalism that Israel will be regenerated and saved at the Second Coming of Christ, and receive the promises of land, seed and blessing from God and enjoy them throughout the Millennium and beyond, but with all of this biblical evidence of the church in the Great Tribulation, I cannot hold a Pretribulational view of the rapture.

What then will it look like for the ultimate deceiver Antichrist to come and deceive? What will be the focus of his lies and deception? I would like to suggest that he will try to twist and pervert the essentials of Christian faith...... a new Gospel, an attack against Holy Scripture (the Bible), a new Christ (himsfelf), as he will successfully deceive “those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved,” (v-10) and “who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness” (v-12). In fact the deception will be so powerful because of his “power and signs and false wonders,” and “all the deception of wickedness,” that even the very “elect of God” would be deceived if it were “possible” (Matt 24:24). But of course it is NOT possible for the elect to be deceived, because God has elected them to salvation and applied this election by regeneration, which is an irreversible act of God which “seals them for the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30, 2 Cor 1:22). However, his deception will be successful against all the non elect, as “authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him” (Rev 13:7-8). Therefore acting as the ultimate false Christ, he will “set himself up” in the true Covenant (where the truth abides), and seek to cause apostasy from the true Faith and successfully mislead all the professors who are the apostates of the “rebellion” of 2 Thess 2:3 who follow his deception. All of this will end of course in his “sudden destruction,” when Jesus will “slay” him “with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming” (v-8), as He “cuts short” this “great Tribulation” (Matt 24:21-22) period at the parousia or Second Coming (Matt 24:29-31, 1 Thess 4:16-17, 2 Thess 1:7-10, 2 Thess 2:1).

2 Thessalonians 2:5-8 - 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; NASU A. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? – Paul is here reminding the Thessalonians of the fact that he discussed these eschatological events with them in the short 3-4 weeks that he discipled them. I do find it rather remarkable that Paul’s discipling in 3-4 weeks would be so comprehensive that it would include detailed items of
eschatology including a discussion of the aforementioned events and circumstances. This clarifies that the Apostle had the Second Coming as a central theme in his instruction in the church and that this included discussion of the rapture, the day of the Lord, and the person of the Antichrist. This we know as Paul directly states that this was the case, “Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”

B. 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; - When Paul makes the statement “And you know what restrains him now,” he asserts that it is clear to them what this restraining power is. The subject of this restraining power is obviously “the man of lawlessness” himself, and this accords with the fact that he is now hidden from sight but yet will be “revealed” at the proper time, as verse 3 states, and also here, “so that in his time he will be revealed.” Note well that Antichrist is restrained by some power until the proper time allotted by God’s sovereign Providence, so that at the right time in history, he will be unrestrained to accomplish God’s sovereign will in bringing this age unto its climax and certain end. In regard to this restrainer, many have commented on what it is such as the Roman Empire, the common civil order of law in the world, the Jewish state, Satan or one of his evil agents, some holy angel such as Michael the Archangel, or even the Holy Spirit Himself, or some related work of the Holy Spirit such as the preaching of the Gospel to all nations. What ever the restrainer is, it is surely a personal being for it is referred to in the following verse with a personal pronoun when Paul states, “only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.” This indicates that it is not some impersonal force, but it is at a very minimum represented by a person. The exact identity of this restrainer is not clearly identified in this book and has been in dispute since this book was written. The silence about this matter therefore speaks a loud word as to our speculations and my own opinion is that it is important but not disclosed in Scripture, and therefore not something of vital importance for understanding the main point and theme of our text. What is very clear is that the Antichrist is being restrained by some powerful personage “until he is taken out of the way,” that powerful restrainer in the sure command of God’s Providence, in order for God’s purpose with Antichrist to be accomplished “so that in his time he will be revealed.” The background of this time of restraint is the fact that “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work,” setting the stage for the revealing of this evil worker. This is a profound thought in light of who he is and what he will accomplish as outlined in Jesus Olivet Discourse, in Daniel’s prophecies and in the book of Revelation. This beast of Revelation 13 will receive power from God to garner the worship of the whole world (Rev 13:8), and set up a religious and economic system of idolatry that will deceive all the nations of the earth. The scope of this character and his influence in the world is unprecedented by any, other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and these ideas show the importance of “the mystery of lawlessness” being “already at work” in the world in order to allow sin and evil to run its course and set the stage for the amazing deception that will occur under this man’s influence. When the stage has been set, and mankind has shown himself to fully reject the Gospel that has been preached “for a witness to all the nations, then the end shall come” and “then,” verse 8 states, “that lawless one will be revealed.” The parallel to Matthew 24:14-21 is striking here.

Matthew 24:14 - 14 “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. NASB

When this restrainer is removed and the lawless one is revealed and accomplishes his brief but powerfully deceptive attack against the truth of the Christian Faith, Jesus will return at His glorious Coming and will destroy this evil worker, as Paul states, “whom the Lord will slay with
the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.” This is also pictured in Revelation chapter 19:11-21.

Revelation 19:20 - 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. NASB

It is interesting to note the phrase “the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.” This amazing language describes the doom of the Antichrist, which is wrought personally by the very “Word of God” who is Jesus Himself, and by “the breath of His mouth,” and also “by the appearance of His coming.” The word “appearance” here is in the Greek epiphaneia and translated elsewhere as “glory, splendor, brightness, or radiance.” The picture is that the very brightness of the glory of the returning Christ will render this mere man utterly powerless and He will be personally and radically avenged and destroyed by Jesus the King.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 - 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. NASU

A. 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders 10 and with all the deception of wickedness – Paul further identifies the Antichrist by speaking about the scope of his influence and nature of it. He is “the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan.” Jesus characterized Satan as a thief, a liar, a murderer and a destroyer. This surely is an apt description of the work of the Antichrist, whom Paul calls “the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction.” This we should expect to see in full array, the most deceptive, murderous, destroying liar and thief that ever lived upon the face of the earth. This “activity of Satan” Paul describes as coming “with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness.” Note well that Antichrist will be a powerful being who will do amazingly deceptive “signs and false wonders,” and also seek to kill and destroy many “mighty men” and “holy people” (Dan 8:24). In Revelation 13, these “signs” are attributed to the false prophet, the Antichrist’s right hand man.

Revelation 13:13-18 - 13 And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. 15 And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, 17 and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. NASB

Jesus also warned that during the Great Tribulation that Antichrist would seek to deceive even the very elect people of God, by many “signs and wonders.”

Mark 13:21-23 - 21 "And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him; 22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray. 23 "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. NASB

Some argue that his signs are not real, but an illusion, because Paul describes them as “signs and false wonders.” But the Greek is not conclusive on this matter. What is surely true is that the “signs and false wonders” do achieve the purpose of “deception” as they successfully lead the whole world astray to believe “what is false” (v-11), except for God’s elect (v-13-14) and the nature of these “signs and false wonders” is “the deception of wickedness.”

B. for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved – See Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org
here who are the pitiful subjects of this “deception.” It is “those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.” These are identified as “those who perish,” as opposed to those who “receive the love of the truth” and are “saved.” And so is the destiny of all who reject the truth of the Gospel, they “perish” in a hopeless and Christ-less eternity (v-1:8-9) which they have chosen of their own accord, having spurned the free grace of God and salvation which is freely offered to all who will believe. The nature of the “deception” in verse 9-12 is clearly an opposition to the Christian Faith, as the words “because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” indicates a rejection of the salvation of God that is offered by receiving “the love of the truth” about the person and work of Jesus Christ by faith alone, which is the agency of being “saved.” Further, the deception brings clarification that the “apostasy” of verse 2:3 is as discussed, a departure from the truth of the Gospel in accepting the “abomination of desolation” as outlined in Revelation 13:12-17. This identifies the central attack of the Antichrist against the saints of Daniel 7:21-27 and Revelation 13:5-10 as an attempt to silence the voice of the Christian Faith/Gospel being preached in the world so that people can be “saved.” He deceives concerning the truth about being “saved.” It is this silencing of the mouth of the Christians that is what is in view when Daniel and John state that the “saints” will be “overcome, overpowered, and worn down” (Dan 7:21,25, Rev 13:7). This of course is to fulfill God’s purpose of allowing the sin of mankind and their rejection of the Gospel to run its full course and bring iniquity to its fruition, resulting in the vengeance of God.

**Daniel 7:21-22** - 21 "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. NASB

**Daniel 7:25-26** - 25 'And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. 26 'But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. NASB

**Revelation 13:7-8** - 7 And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. 8 And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. NASB

Hence see here more clear evidence of the Church’s presence in the Great Tribulation as they are yet preaching the Gospel and this “love of the truth” that they proclaim becomes the very object of the Antichrist’s deception, as he seeks to lead people astray concerning this “truth” and they finally reject it by believing his lies and up committing the ultimate “apostasy” by worshipping his image and receiving the mark of the beast (Rev 13:15-17). The result of mankind’s rejection of the Gospel on this worldwide scale is that they “perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

**2 Thessalonians 2:11-12** - 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. NASU

A. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false – Notice here how God’s sovereignty in bringing this age to its fulfillment in clearly in view in Paul’s mind as he ascribes the deluding influence of Antichrist’s deception to God Himself. The picture is much like Romans 1:24-32 where God “gives men over to a depraved mind” and to their own sinful persistence, allowing their wickedness to run its course and bring their iniquities to fruition, resulting in His clear indictment as they are “storing up wrath” for themselves “in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Because mankind has ultimately rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ and “did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved,” it is “for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so
that they will believe what is false.” See here that when people’s rejection of the Gospel is final and complete (on a worldwide scale), that God will ultimately act in removing the restrainer and allowing the “deception of wickedness” (v-10) to run its full course by sending “deluding influence” which causes them to “believe what is false” and fall prey to Antichrist’s dooming idolatrous “abomination of desolation” (Dan 11:31, Matt 24:15-21, Rev 13:15-17). We are not told specifically here what this “deluding influence” is except that we know it comes directly from God’s command, as Paul states “God will send upon them a deluding influence.” See here God’s patience in waiting until their has been a complete rejection of His Gospel, and the certainty of His judgment for rejecting the free grace of His salvation in Christ which is offered to “whoever believes in Him” (John 3:16). It should be noted here that the God Himself does not delude people, but there is an evil agent of this delusion sent by God to accomplish this. God never carries out evil with His own hand, but evil always accomplishes His ultimate purpose for it, and He always has free moral agents who are willing to commit evil to bring His purposes to fulfillment. Leon Morris has an insightful comment here, “In Hebrew thought the powers of evil have no independent existence, but always depend on God. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him (Psa 76:10), and He works His purposes out even in the evil that people (or Satan) do. In particular, God uses the evil consequences of sin in His punishment of the sinner. These consequences are not simply the result of impersonal process; Paul can say that God gave people up to the consequences of their sin (Rom 1:24, 26, 28, 11:8). God’s hand is in the process whereby the sinner receives the fitting recompense of sin. But we should not miss the point that even in dealing with disobedience, God’s purpose is mercy (Rom 11:32).

B. 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness – Paul says “in order that they may all be judged.” See here that the “deluding influence” of verse 11 has a distinct purpose in God bringing His certain judgment on those “who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” Because people have ultimately rejected the Gospel and “did not believe the truth,” but rather than repent of their sins as the Gospel commands, they “took pleasure in wickedness” and brought God’s certain judgment upon themselves, even as the Gospel warned. Consider Paul’s language here in light of Jesus statements in John chapter 3.

**John 3:19-21** - 19 “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” NASB

The contrast between those who “believe the truth” and those who reject is always clearly seen by the repentance that comes from true saving faith. People who are truly born again and saved do not take “pleasure in wickedness,” but rather repent of wickedness and seek to flee from it. This is not to say that true Christians never sin, but rather that the general pattern and habit of their life is to flee from and turn away from wickedness and sin.

Thus ends this great section (2 Thess 1:7-2:12) of the Pauline corpus dealing with the Second Coming, the timing of the rapture, and the deceptive events of the Great Tribulation under the influence of that evil worker the Antichrist. The clarity of Paul’s thought and the striking parallels to Jesus Olivet Discourse enlighten us like the noonday sun! Let us heed well the warning of both Jesus and Paul we they tell us, “See to it that no one misleads you,” (Matt 24:4) and “Let no one in any way deceive you” (2 Thess 2:3).

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-14** - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our
gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASU
A. 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, - Even
though there is a transition here in Paul’s focus from the previous section, he nevertheless
presents a powerful contrast between those whom God has chosen to save and those who
“perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.” Paul now seeks to
reassure the Thessalonians that they will not come under the judgment of God, or be swept away
by “deception” under the influence of the “man of lawlessness,” but rather they have been
“chosen” by God “from the beginning for salvation.” Notice here Paul ascribes the surety of
these things to “God” when he states “we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren
beloved by the Lord,” showing God to be the author of their salvation by His sovereign electing
grace, because they are the objects of His love. God has freely chosen these Thessalonians who
are “beloved by the Lord,” and for this Paul says “we should always give thanks to God.” See
here that salvation belongs to the Lord, and man is not to receive the glory for it, nor for the wise
choice he made in coming to it, but thanksgiving is to “always” be ascribed to God.
B. because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the
Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may
gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ – Here Paul explains why “we should always give thanks
to God.” His reason, “because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation.”
“Salvation” is something that comes to individuals according to God’s own sovereign will, for
salvation’s election, calling, and sanctification are wholly according to God’s own purpose and
grace (2 Tim 1:9), which He purposes to do from before the beginning of time.

2 Timothy 1:9-10 – [God]9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our
works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all
eternity, NASB
Ephesians 1:4-6 - 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be
holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to
Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He
freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. NASB
Romans 8:29-30 - 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of
His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He
also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also
glorified. NASB

This is why Paul states that their salvation is a result of God’s electing love, which he says
happened, “from the beginning.” Paul then describes two of the means of God’s salvation when
he says, “through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.” Salvation is frequently
spoken of as happening through the course of time (past, present and future) and depending on
certain conditions (such as God’s election (Matt 11:27, John 15:16, Eph 1:4, Tit 1:1-2, 1 Peter
1:1-2), predestination (Rom 8:29-30, 9:22-24, Eph 1:5,11) or calling (Rom 8:28-30, 1 Cor 1:24,
Gal 1:15, 2 Tim 1:9, 2 Pet 1:10), or man’s response of repentance (Acts 2:38, 20:21, 26:20, 2
Eph 2:8-9) or perseverance (Rom 11:22, 1 Cor 15:2, Col 1:23, Heb 3:6). In Scripture, Christians
are seen as having been saved (past tense, salvation, Jer 1:5, Gal 1:15, 2 Tim 1:9, Eph 1:4), now
being saved (present tense, sanctification, Acts 2:47, 1 Cor 1:18, 2 Cor 2:15), and will be saved
(future tense, glorification, Matt 24:13, Rom 5:9-10, 8:30, 1 Thess 5:23-24). Therefore when
Paul says that salvation happens “through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth,” he
means to say that these are both ways and means that God uses to save us. They are not the
exclusive way or means, nor do they work exclusively apart from each other, but work together
to save us. It is “sanctification of the Spirit” of God, which in this text is the process of being
conformed into the likeness of Christ progressively over time, and “faith in the truth” which is
the gift of God (Eph 2:9) that is the conduit or vehicle which lays hold of the righteousness of

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Christ for us, by which we are saved. Those who are saved by faith are also sanctified by the Spirit, and these two ways and means are one way Paul has chosen to describe our salvation. Peter describes salvation in a similar way.

1 Peter 1:1-2 - 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ** and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. NASB

See then that salvation is expressed in many different ways in different contexts of Scripture, but nevertheless is the great reason that God has created mankind upon the earth, and allowed people fall into sin and death, that He might work His great **plan of redemption** upon His elect people, to “the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph 1:4-6). God the Father is the author of salvation, and Jesus is the Savior who carried it out, and He applies it to us by means of His Spirit in regeneration, and in these we see that salvation belongs to the Lord, and that it rests wholly on the work of God. Therefore Paul is moved to thanksgiving for these Thessalonians, “**we should always give thanks to God.**” His reason, “**because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation.**” See here a very great and precious promise from God of which we can gain a **certain assurance** that we shall persevere in our faith unto a final salvation, even if an Antichrist be empowered to deceive the whole world, God’s elect shall never perish with the unbelievers, for God has “**chosen them from the beginning for salvation,**” and “**called**” us out of the darkness of sin and deception into the marvelous light of salvation, and this He has done by means of “**sanctification by His Spirit**” and the gift of “**faith in the truth.**” Of the surety of our salvation, John Calvin comments on these verses, “**For he does not merely exempt from fear a few individuals, who had been led to Christ immediately on the commencement of the gospel, but this consolation belongs to all the elect of God, without exception. When, therefore, he says from the beginning, he means that there is no danger lest their salvation, which is founded on God’s eternal election, should be overthrown, whatever tumultuous changes may occur. However Satan may mix and confound all things in the world, your salvation, notwithstanding, has been placed on a footing of safety, prior to the creation of the world.**” Here, therefore, is the true port of safety, that God, who elected us of old, will deliver us from all the evils that threaten us. For we are elected to salvation; we shall, therefore, be safe from destruction.”

It is for this **“salvation”** of our souls that Paul says is the reason we were “**called**” by God, “**It was for this He called you through our gospel.**” Notice here that it is the **means** of the **“gospel”** that we are “**called**” by God and unto Him, yet another expression of salvation and its means. It is through the agency and working of the **“gospel”** that God calls sinners to be saved. Even though we may have been elected by God, “**from the beginning,**” yet there comes an appointed time for us to believe and be saved as we respond to God’s “**calling**” us through the **“gospel.”** It is very helpful to think of salvation in terms of the order in which it happens, although there is some controversy on exactly what parts of it happen in which order. This discussion is called the **“ordo salutis,”** meaning the **order of salvation.** Wayne Grudem presents a brief but helpful discussion of this in his Systematic Theology, in the beginning of chapter 32, (see the attachment – “The ordo salutis or order of salvation.”).

And more than this, as if Paul had not given sufficient cause for their assurance he says, **“that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,”** a description of our future state of **glorification** when we shall be transformed eternally and made immortal by God, when Jesus comes again (1 Cor 15:51-54, Phil 3:20, 1 Thess 4:15-17). Sharing in the **“glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”** is a yet another marvelous expression of the future tense of salvation, as the great hope of the Christian is to be finally transformed into our immortal state and share in the glory of...
the Lord, a promise which is mentioned in several places in Scripture (John 17:24, Rom 8:17-18, Eph 1:18, 2 Tim 2:12). It speaks of a time when Christ will have conquered all of His enemies and brought us safely and finally to His eternal rest, when all the elect people from every nation under heaven shall be gathered before Him in the glorious New Heavens and Earth, and evil shall be no more, and God shall be visibly and eternally exalted in His proper place, forever. In that place, “the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” will be bright shining as the sun, and Christ will visibly rule as the great King on the throne of God forever and ever, the glory of His majesty will be greater than anything that can be imagined in the heart of man (1 Cor 2:9).

1 Corinthians 15:22-28 - 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. 27 For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. 28 And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all. NASB

Revelation 21:3-5 - 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, 4 and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." NASB

Revelation 21:23-27 - 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. 25 And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; 26 and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. NASB

Revelation 22:2-5 - 3 And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; 4 and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever. NASB

It is no small promise for a fallen sinner like you and me, that we should “gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is an amazing promise of a world of paradise which is far beyond our imagination and of pleasures forevermore in a world where evil, sin and death have been abolished forever. These things Paul writes to reassure the Thessalonians that they are indeed held tightly in the grip of the eternal God, in whom is their salvation, and on His promise to save they rested their hope. The Christian’s hope shall never fail, for God will see to it that His promises to us are fulfilled, and this He will do very soon, for the end of all things is near.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 - 15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. NASU

A. 15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us – Paul now encourages them to “stand firm” in the afflictions they are facing, and to “hold to the traditions you were taught,” by the Apostles, “whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” They had need to remember the great promises of God to them because they were enduring much affliction at the hands of their persecutors, so much so that they thought they had entered into the tribulation period or “day of the Lord.” (2 Thess 2:2-3). Having sufficiently reminded them that they were the objects of God’s salvation in Christ, he now exhorts them to “stand firm” in this faith, meaning to stand their ground on promises they have believed, and not to be moved by their afflictions to the point of despair. See here that Paul...
has appealed to their knowledge of the gospel and what it has promised them as a bulwark against all the deception that Satan and the world can muster, which is a sure defense and cause for us to “stand firm.” When he says, “hold to the traditions which you were taught,” he refers to the whole body of teachings and commandments which he delivered to them, when he discipled them for that brief time of 3-4 weeks, and also which he delineated to them in the writing of the letters of 1 & 2 Thessalonians. This he confirms when he says “whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” As Paul had taught them in 1 Thess 2:13, the message that they had received was the very “word of God,” and not of men, lest it should be viewed as something that could be disregarded. The Christian message and the Holy Bible are in fact the very words of God which have been manifested to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and attested to by many powerful proofs, both by the hands of Jesus and the Apostles, and are to be received as the very authoritative “word of God,” which is to be revered accordingly and swiftly obeyed, lest we should taken away and held captive by sin and death with the world of unbelievers. You might remember the strong exhortations that Paul gave them seeking that they would live in a manner that glorifies God as His holy people.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-13 - 11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, 12 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 13 And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. NASB

See here then Paul reaffirming to them to remain obedient to the “traditions,” or teachings and commandments which he delivered to them, and exhorting them again to remain steadfast in their faith, regardless of the opposition they may face, and, even if the whole world falls prey to a deceiving Antichrist and perish forever. Even though we be assured of God’s election and calling, we are frequently exhorted in Scripture to “stand firm” and see to it that we remain steadfast in the faith, holding tightly to the teachings and “traditions” we have learned, and to persevere in the faith until the end, for only if we persevere in the faith shall our hope be realized.

Hebrews 3:12-14 - 12 Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end; NASB

Dear Christian, do not be moved from the hope that is held out in the gospel, for we shall reap a great reward in due time. Behold, your God has promised to uphold you and deliver you safely to His kingdom and glory, therefore “stand firm.”

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 - 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. NASU

A. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace – Here now is the conclusion of the main part of the letter, the section from 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. Paul has written in this section to clarify the fact that the Thessalonians, in spite of “much affliction” that they are facing from persecutors, have not entered into “the day of Lord” (v-2:3), and will not fall prey to the deception that will occur when the events preceding “the day of the Lord” (v-2:3-12) occur. In contrast to those who will be deceived and fall prey to the Antichrist’s deception (v-2:10-12), the Thessalonians, like all true Christians, have been “chosen” by God from the beginning and are secure in their salvation because of God’s great purpose in saving them, a fact clearly attested to by their ongoing “sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth” (v-2:13). Now in these final words, seeking to give them further assurance, he explains that they are secure in their salvation because it is
God who keeps them secure, through the means of divine, “hope, comfort and strength.” As verses 15-17 are clearly connected to verses 13 and 14, Paul’s aim becomes rather vivid. He aims to assure these afflicted Thessalonians that their salvation lies firmly in the grip of “the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father,” who being the great authors of our faith, “has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace.” Notice how Paul looks to “the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father,” as the ones who have saved us by the gifts they have “given us,” which he describes as “eternal comfort and good hope by grace.”

Here salvation is connected to Christ and God personally, as Paul makes a pointed expression of this fact when he says, “Himself and God.” Our salvation is not just some things that has been randomly offered up and made available to everyone who happens to come along and stumble onto the knowledge of it and believe, but it is firmly anchored in a personal election by God, which has been firmly established by the all sufficient atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, and applied to us by the Spirit through faith (v-2:13), and in these verses, will be seen through to its end by the keeping power of Christ Himself and God, in whom we have set our hope. This powerful promise from God is described by Paul as “eternal comfort and good hope by grace.”

The “comfort” and “good hope” that the Gospel gives to us is not temporal, but endures beyond the grave, to that “eternal” Kingdom laid up for us in glory, where we shall never die, and be personally united to Christ and God forever, a promise so magnificent, that its “good hope” shall strengthen us to face even the most bitter persecution and cause us to “stand firm” in the midst of it. All of this was freely given to us who did not deserve such kindness and mercy, but flows to us by the unearned and personal “grace” of Christ and God, who “has loved us.” See here, Paul firmly places the “eternal comfort” of our “good hope by grace,” into the strong hands of “the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father.”

B. 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word – Now in this benediction meant to give assurance, Paul even ascribes the very good work we do and the word we speak, to the motivating power of God at work within us. This is clear by the fact that he is wishing that God will “comfort and strengthen your hearts.” He does not ascribe our perseverance “in every good work and word” to our ability to carry them out, but rather even the aspect of salvation we call perseverance, he ascribes aptly to both Christ and God. If the Thessalonians are to endure through the trials and snares of Christian life in a fallen and evil age, and live productive and fruitful lives “in every good work and word,” it will be by the “comfort and strength” that God gives to our “hearts” to encourage us. See here the final perseverance and good works of the saints are ascribed to God, and He is to get the glory for it, and we are not to boast in them. Yet even in this work of God in our perseverance, we see that the Christian life is one that characterized by “good work and word.” The Christian is to be busy doing the work of the Master and doing it the Master’s way, for we have been bought with a price, and charged with a great work in the world. This great commission of our Lord was given to all of His disciples, even to the end of the age henceforth, and includes both our “good work and word” to carry out.

**Matthew 28:19-20**

19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” NASB

Let us therefore be encouraged “in every good work and word,” to “stand firm” in the faith by God’s “eternal comfort and good hope by grace,” that we may glorify our Lord in our life, and if he so choose, even in our death at the hands of those who hate both Christ and His Gospel.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 - 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; 2 and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. NASU
A. Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith—Here is now Paul’s closing statements, as indicated by “finally, brethren.” He means to address those few issues which still remain necessary for the Thessalonians, after Timothy’s visit to them. Paul requests that they would “pray for us,” a frequent request of Paul (Rom 15:30, 2 Cor 1:11, Eph 6:19, Col 4:3). And his specific request is “that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.” Learn here, that the Apostle believes that prayer is an effective means for bringing about God’s will in the world, even as we strive to carry out God’s will with our own hands. We don’t just pray and sit idly by awaiting God to somehow spread the Gospel, but rather we, like Paul, both “pray” to God and work diligently to carry out His will in the world. Here specifically, that the Gospel would “spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.” Of course he refers to that amazing miracle of evangelical service that took place from the revival that broke out as a result of the Thessalonians obedience to the Great Commission, which Paul had mentioned in 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 - 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. NASB

Here the Apostle teaches that revival happens by the means of both prayer and obedience. Surely our hearts are stirred as we read about these young Thessalonians believers, wondering if God would be so gracious as to carry out such a great work among us, if we would simply look to God in prayer and then simply carry out what he has commanded. But Paul not only requests that the Gospel should go forth with power, but that he would be kept safe from the harm of those unbelieving heathens who would harm a Christian Missionary. Even though the Christian comes in peace, bearing the message of peace with no sword in hand, the sons of the devil would seek his life. Paul requests prayer, not only for himself, but also for the Thessalonians, as verse 3 indicates. His request, “that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.” Here he identifies the fact that the reason that perverse and evil men persecute Christians, is that they do not “have faith.” Some argue that Paul speaks here specifically of those Jews who are enraged to violence by the Gospel, who sought his harm in the Greco-Roman world. Regardless of whether this is true, we know that people of true saving faith actually propagate the Gospel, in contrast to “perverse and evil men” who do not “have faith.”

2 Thessalonians 3:3-5 - 3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 4 We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. NASU

A. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one – Yet again, Paul will remind them of the fact that their security in the faith is in the hands of God, and reminds them that “the Lord is faithful.” And what is He faithful to do? “To strengthen and protect you from the evil one.” Notice how Paul shifts the emphasis from himself and his own persecution, to the Thessalonians and there security from the “evil one,” because of God’s “strength” and “protection.” Dear Christian, see here a powerful and magnificent promise from God, “the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.” Learn here, that if a Christian sheep were to fall prey to the deception of the evil one to the point of perishing, it will be at the failure of God to “strengthen and protect” them, as this verse plainly describes Christ’s office of shepherd, as effective to “protect” us from the deception of that wolf.

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And this we know is not possible, because God is faithful to both “strengthen and protect” us from his deception, and Paul clearly ascribes our perseverance to the keeping power of Christ and His faithfulness.

B. 4 We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command – In describing their perseverance in “what we command,” which he describes back in verse 2:15 as “traditions,” he yet again ascribes their obedience primarily to Christ when he says, “We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.” Notice the emphasis on “doing” the things the “we command.” The Christian faith is one filled with high and holy commandments given by our Lord and His Apostles in the New Testament, which are to be fully obeyed. And this obedience is a sign of true saving faith that has been wrought in a person by God’s regenerating power. This is clearly seen as Paul assigns their perseverance in obedience to his “commands,” as Christ’s faithful work in them, and in contrast to falling prey to the “evil one.” And even though it be true that Christ work obedience in us by His faithfulness, nevertheless we are charged to carry out obedience to His commands with our own hands.

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 - 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. NASB

C. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ – See here yet another benediction from Paul seeking to encourage them again, that having their “hearts” directed “into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ,” is a work that God works in them, for it is “the Lord” who “directs our hearts” into these things. Even Christian obedience is ascribed to God, for He alone is to receive the glory for the work of salvation he has wrought in out hearts, because His love for Him which he has placed there, and it is obedience and “steadfastness” which is the proof and fruit of our love to Him, which He has placed in our hearts by the regenerating work of the Spirit. This is why Paul can elsewhere tell us to “work out our own salvation,” and yet describe that as being the very work of God within us, “both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

Philippians 2:12-13 - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. NASB

See here in these verses, 2:13-3:5, that a strong emphasis is placed on many aspects of God’s work in salvation. Not only has He “chosen us from the beginning for salvation,” (v-2:13), but He is working “sanctification by the Spirit” in us through the gift of “faith in the truth” (v-2:13). He also “called us by His Gospel” (v-2:14), so that we could ultimately “gain the glory” of Christ in glorification (v-2:14). He further “comforts and strengthens” us in such a way that it produces “every good work and word” (v-2:17) with His “good hope by grace.” Because He is “faithful” to “strengthen and protect us from the evil one” (v-3:3), we “will continue to do what He commands” (v-3:4), as He “directs our hearts into His love and steadfastness.” These expressions of God’s sovereign work not only in the election to salvation (His past work), but also in the many and varied aspects of sanctification (His present work), and also in our final glorification, all because of His sovereign love and grace, should cause us to clearly see what the Bible means by the expression that salvation belongs to the Lord (Psalm 3:8). It is all His work from first to last, and He is to get the glory for it, from us, who are the objects of His grace, for every aspect of it. It is of these glorious things that we will sing forever and ever, in the presence of the Lamb, and to His and the Father’s glory, world without end. May our lives reflect a constant gratitude for His amazing love to us, according to His eternal purpose in Christ.
2 Thessalonians 3:6-9 - 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you. 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. NASU

A. 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us – Paul here now issues a stern command when he says, “Now we command you,” but this “command” is softened by the word “brethren.” But the authority that Paul issues this “command” is not of some man, or even of His own Apostolic authority, but rather “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” a frequent saying of Paul. This of course makes this an emphatic imperative that is to be taken note of, and swiftly and consistently obeyed. What is the command? It is “that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” The idea of “keep away” is to shun, to keep aloof from, or to ostracize. This process is the third step of corrective discipline as outlined by our Lord in Matthew 18, and meant to turn the person to repentance so that they can be lovingly restored to Christ and the church.

Matthew 18:15-18 - 15 “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 ‘But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 ‘And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.”

Notice that Paul calls this person a “brother” and is to be admonished by this behavior in a spirit of corrective loving discipline. This is because his behavior is that of an “unruly life” and is certainly “not according to the tradition which you received from us.” Paul had always taught the church that Christians ought to “work with their own hands” (1 Thess 4:11) in order not to be a burden on others, but to meet their own needs by steady hard work, and also then to meet the needs of others who had legitimate and genuine needs because of an inability to work or some other employment hindering circumstance. Paul also points to this as a witness to “outsiders” of the attractive nature of the Christian work ethic and example of loving sacrifice for others.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 - 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; 12 so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.”

2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 - 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. NASB

Ephesians 4:28 - 28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.”

Therefore when a Christian refuses to work or is too lazy to work, he is to be taken note of as one who is “unruly,” meaning that he is disorderly and disobedient to the Christ. Paul had obviously dealt with these “unruly” persons in 1 Thessalonians 4:11, and even at that time commanded the church to admonish them.

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 - 14 And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.”

These instructions should highlight for us the weight and importance that God puts on the Christian work ethic, and cause us to see that Christ expects us to be fruitful laborers who work hard to meet their own needs and also the needs of others.

Acts 20:34-35 - 34 "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men

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who were with me. 35 "In everything I showed you that **by working hard in this manner you must help the weak** and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, **'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**" NASB

This matter is so important, that believers living in this **"unruly"** manner are to be disciplined to the point of being ostracized. Painful though it may be, this is what love demands!

B. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example – Paul ad obviously taught this to them as he reminds them saying, **“For you yourselves know.”** As he frequently does, he points to his own behavior as a model for them, saying, **“how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you.”** The idea of living in an undisciplined manner is in contrast to **“leading an unruly life,”** which is not according to the tradition we gave you. He clearly points to the fact that they worked for their own sustenance saying, **“nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day.”** The idea of **“eating one’s own bread”** is a Hebraism meaning more than just food but also life sustenance of all kinds. The importance of working for one’s own bread is biblical commandment, so that we don’t burden others with our needs, but rather work hard to have an abundance to meet the genuine needs of others how have much less. This Paul makes clear saying **“so that we would not be a burden to any of you,”** hoping that they would see his example and follow suit noting **“but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.”** The Apostles were obviously preaching and working simultaneously as Paul states, **“with labor and hardship we kept working night and day.”** See here that Paul had every right to eat the bread of those within the church when he says **“not because we do not have the right to this.”** Jesus and the Apostles consistently taught that Christian pastors are surely worthy of their life sustenance and material goods from those to whom they minister, as they are servants of those to whom they minister for their spiritual and eternal benefit, especially those who **“worked hard at preaching and teaching.”**

**Matthew 10:9-11** - 9 “Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, 10 or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; **for the worker is worthy of his support.** NASB

1 Corinthians 9:11-14 - 11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? 12 If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? 14 So also **the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.** NASB

**Galatians 6:6** - let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches. NASB

1 Timothy 5:17-18 - 17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." NASB

If your pastor spends his earthly labor and his days and time, a mere 40 or 50 years, serving the interests of His people which benefits them throughout eternity, should they not uphold and under gird him in this short life? Indeed they should, and they should do it in a manner worthy of the kingdom of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, for we do not want to be held in contempt by him on the great Day for the way we treated His ministers here and now.

**2 Thessalonians 3:10-12** - 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat

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their own bread. NASU

A. 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either - The fact that Paul also taught this principle to them verbally, and not just in his letter, is clearly seen by the statement, “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order.” That is was a command and not just a suggestion is clear by the words “give you this order.” Paul’s teaching in the church was authoritative and was to be fully obeyed. Christians will do well to obey their leaders with proper respect and ready obedience, when it is very clear that they are being taught accurately and with a hearty example of the Christian faith, for it is not men that we serve, but rather, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul reminds them that he used to give them this imperative, “if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.” And the fact that he had dealt with this problem both by word of mouth and also by letter, magnifies the nature of this problem in the Thessalonian church. There were among them, obviously, some who were “busybodies” and lived in this “undisciplined” manner. We should take note at this point that it is those who are “not willing to work,” who are in view here, and not those who are unable to work. A hearty distinction is to be made by those who are “not willing” and not able. Moreover, in our day and in our culture, there is much work that can be performed even by those with some physical disability, and if ready employment can be found, even for those with some limitations, it should be. We have an entitlement problem in America which is created by the abuse of the welfare system and many lazy people in our culture, who are “not willing to work.” use even the slightest excuses and disabilities to have their needs met by those who work hard. But this is not to be the case for the Christian. We have a much higher work ethic than those who are in the world, and only those with legitimate and genuine needs are to be dependent on others. Paul’s command is clear, the lazy man is not to be given food, but should be allowed to have his hunger drive him to the workplace. Paul elsewhere tells us that people who are unwilling to meet the needs of themselves and their own families are “worse than unbelievers” (1 Tim 5:8).

B. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread – Paul now refers to some report he heard, saying, “For we hear that some among you.” This report likely came from Timothy’s visit to deliver 1 Thessalonians. But nevertheless, the issue is, “that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.” Paul again mentions that this behavior is substandard for the Christian life saying that they are “leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all.” See here again, the weight and importance that Apostle places on the Christians working hard to be fruitful and to produce, rather than be lazy and “do no work at all.” It is imperative that Christians work hard to meet not only their own basic needs, but also to have an abundance to share in loving their neighbor. But these lazy Thessalonians brothers were not only “not willing to work,” but were causing problems because in their idleness were going around like “acting like busybodies,” a reference to meddling in the affairs of others. Paul uses the term also in 1 Timothy, and it is usually associated with idle behavior coupled with a loud mouth which gossips and meddles in the affairs of others.

1 Timothy 5:13 - 13 And at the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention. NASB

Peter uses the same term, which is translated in NASB as a “troublesome meddler.” The alternate in the NKJV is “a busybody in other people’s matters.”

1 Peter 4:15 - 15 By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; NASB

Paul had dealt with this same issue and these same people earlier when made reference to questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org
working and coupled that together with leading a “quiet life” and minding one’s “own business.”

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 - 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; 12 so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need. NASB

Paul now reaffirms this commandment, in a very direct manner, and by the authority of “the Lord Jesus Christ” Himself saying, “Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.” Note the contrast in these statements between the idle and gossiping meddler or “busybody,” and the hard working Christian who leads a “quiet life” in a “quiet fashion,” and supplies their own bread. Learn then two important things in this verse 12. First, Christ commands the Christian to work hard for their own needs. And second, that Christians are not to be “busybodies,” that is, “troublesome meddlers” in the business and affairs of others. It is crystal clear in this passage that this kind of behavior is not tolerated in the Christian church and is worthy of the process of church discipline. This process is a part of every healthy church, for a church which does not love its people enough to discipline and correct their misbehavior, is not worthy of being called a church.

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15 - 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. NASU

A. 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good – Paul now presents yet another contrast when he says “But as for you, brethren.” Here it is between the “unruly busybody” who refuses to work and the rest of the church. In this contrast he means to encourage the church at large to press on in their virtuous example of “working hard” to provide for their own and living in a “quiet” and orderly lifestyle, when he says “do not grow weary of doing good.” In this contrast, it is important to note that Paul does not want them to be affected by these “busybodies” and becomes themselves lazy and disobedient, but in every way to follow Paul’s example(verses 7-9) of hard work so as not to be a burden on any of the brethren (verse 8) or the church at large. This is clearly seen by the fact that verse 13 is really a continuation of the authoritative command in verse 12, which he pronounced by the authority of “the Lord Jesus Christ” Himself. In summary Paul is giving them an authoritative command to continue in their hard work and to “not grow weary of doing good” in doing so.

Church Discipline

B. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother – Now Paul means to continue his instruction from back in verse 6 when he said “that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” Here Paul picks up the thought again to provide clarification when he says, “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him.” Here Paul is bringing further action upon a situation that he has been dealing with since the first visit (2 Thess 3:10) and also his first letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 4:11-12). Because these lazy “busybodies” had been stubbornly obstinate and refused to work, even after being corrected, Paul now exhorts the church to take corporate action in an official disciplinary proceeding. This is the third step in the Church disciplinary process outlined by our Lord in Matthew chapter 18.

Matthew 18:15-17 - 15 "And if your brother sins, [1]go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 "But if he does not listen to you, [2]take one or two more with you, so that
by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 "And if he refuses to listen to them, [3]tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, [4]let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. NASB

MacArthur lists these in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

- **Step 1** – to confront the sinning believer privately and for specific sin
- **Step 2** – to confront them a second time with witnesses present
- **Step 3** – to tell the congregation publically and to cut them off from normal fellowship and publically ostracize them
- **Step 4** – officially remove them from the fellowship altogether and publically, and treat them as an unbeliever [if they have persisted in sinning after the first three steps]

Each step in this process is designed by God to **restore the sinning person to repentance.**

Church discipline is a loving and restorative process which is vital to the life of the church. We cannot condone the sin of believers publically in the church, because this would be a denouncing of the essential human response required as the means of salvation, which are repentance and faith. The vital step of the human response is **repentance,** a genuine contrition motivated by saving faith which results in the turning from sin to Christ in obedience. Repentance and faith are the result of regeneration. Therefore the church publically preaches, upholds, urges and admonishes all people to repent from their sin and publically confess their faith and obedience to Christ in baptism. Flagrant, continued and public disobedience to the faith, is to ultimately and publically be dealt with in the church, after many private attempts to help an erring believer. If a person remains obstinate after many attempts to restore them to repentance, the church simply recognizes what is the obvious conclusion of their actions, that they are not truly saved (at least by all outward appearance), and are to be regarded **“as a Gentile or a tax-collector.”** Persistent and willfully sinful activity from a once professing believer is treated in the New Testament as a forsaking of the faith which results in damnation, the same condemnation of the devil and unbelievers (Rom 2:8, Heb 6:4-6, 10:26-31, 39, 2 Pet 2:20-22).

Nevertheless, when Paul says **“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him,”** he has an expressed purpose in mind. That purpose is **“so that he will be put to shame.”** Sin is a shameful thing, and it is to be recognized as such. Make no mistake here, Paul expects the church to unite together to **“put to shame”** a stubbornly sinful member. This they are to do by ostracizing and admonishing them which is clearly seen by the statements **“do not associate with them,”** and **“admonish them as a brother.”** And of course the obvious goal of this action is to restore them to repentance and obedience to the faith, which in this case is **“our instruction in this letter.”** See here further clarification that both Christ and Paul expect obedience from Christians, and that if they persist in disobedience, both Christ and Paul expect the church to respond publically to correct the misbehavior and restore the erring person. It is important to see here, that **this is only the third step** in the process of Church discipline, as Paul is exhorting the church to **“take special note of that person and do not associate with him.”** We know this is the third step and NOT the fourth because he goes on to say **“Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”** This obvious statement of the fact that he is still to be regarded as a brother shows clearly that it is NOT the fourth step, for that is to regard them as an unbeliever, to **“be regarded as a Gentile or a tax-collector.”** See here then the loving and gracious way we are to treat erring believers, with much patience, giving them ample opportunity to consider their ways and repent, and yet firmly admonishing them to the fear of the Lord and obedience to the faith. All of this we do, because we love their eternal soul more than their earthly comfort.

**Hebrews 12:11 - 11** All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. NASB

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2 Thessalonians 3:16-18 - 16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! 17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. NASU

A.16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! 17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all—Here now is Paul’s conclusion to this wonderful letter. As is often the case with Paul, he wishes God’s peace upon and His presence with his beloved fellow believers when he says, “Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!” And see here his desire for “peace in every circumstance.” He undoubtedly longs to see them at peace, and the situation with the “busybodies” has him concerned that this can disrupt their peace. Learn here that persistently sinning members in the church present the opportunity to disrupt the church’s peace, and the church needs to be careful not to allow this to happen, and to seek God for His presence and His peace to continue.

Paul has written many instructions in this letter designed to help the Thessalonians deal with the waving and tossing of many toilsome and trying circumstances that have come upon them and that will come upon the world. He has exhorted them how to deal with the trails of the persecution, as well as clarified the massive implications of lawlessness at work in the world and the culmination of God’s dealings with man in this present age, ending with the worldwide deception of the “lawless one” and his certain success and pending demise. In all of these stormy waters, Paul longs for their well-being saying, “Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!” Paul now asks by way of prayer to the Lord that the Thessalonians may have God’s peace and His presence in order to remain steadfast in the faith. In this he asks that Christ Himself would be with them and give them His peace when he says “may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace.”

He assures them that these instructions have come from him when he says “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.” Here he is obviously pointing to his writing style as a way of authenticating his letters. Undoubtedly he says this because of the false letter which had been given them which had stirred up their unrest which he referred to earlier (2 Thess 2:2). He means here to reassure and comfort them concerning the many unsettling things they are facing.

And so he gives them this benediction, which is common with Paul, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” See here Paul wishing that “all” these Thessalonians might stand in the unmerited favor of God, His grace which is granted to us through “our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is in this grace and only in this grace, that anyone can withstand the tumultuous things which are going on in the world and are yet to come. May we all look to Him for His “grace” and rely heavily upon it.
Preparatory reading for our upcoming class….

*An Exposition of II Thessalonians*

September 12th  9:30 AM

In order to prepare for the eschatological material we will cover in this class, it is important for you to know these Bible passages well so that you will be familiar with the events spoken of in them. Please read these passages through at least once in the upcoming weeks.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:9  
2 Thessalonians 1-3  
Daniel Chapter 2  
Daniel Chapter 7-8  
Daniel Chapter 9-12  
Matthew Chapter 24-25  
Mark Chapter 13  
Luke 17:22-37  
Luke Chapter 21  
1 Corinthians 15:22-28  
Revelation Chapter 13  
Revelation 20:1-10

1 Corinthians 15:50-54  
Matthew 24:29-31  
Mark 13:24-27  
Isaiah 26:19-21  
Colossians 3:4  
Philippians 3:20

This may seem like a lot of reading, but you will benefit much from a good knowledge of these Scriptures.

Looking forward to the class,

Shaan
Appendix

What Daniel says about Antichrist

Daniel 7:19-28-
1. Eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. (Rev 13:5-6)
2. Wages war against the saints and defeats them. (Dan 8:24-25, Matt 24:15-22, Rev 13:7)
3. Fourth kingdom will devour the whole earth, it will be global. (Rev 13:1-13, Dan 2:40)
4. He will be a king or ruler. (Dan 8:23, 11:31-40, Rev 13:5-17)
5. He will speak against the Most high (Dan 11:36, 2 Thess 2:4)
6. He will oppress God’s saints or holy ones (Dan 11:30-40, Rev 13:7)
7. Saints are handed over to him for 3.5 yrs. (Dan 12:7, Rev 13:5)
8. His power will be taken away and destroyed forever. (Dan 8:25, 7:11, 2 Thess 2:8, Rev 19:20)
9. The saints will be given sovereignty and power forever. (Dan 7:27, Rev 20:1-7, Matt 25:34)

Daniel 8:9-26-
1. Takes away the daily sacrifice and makes his sanctuary low. (Dan 11:31, 12:11)
2. Because of rebellion, the saints are handed over and the truth is thrown down to the ground. (2 Thes 2:3, Dan 7:21-25, Rev 13:7)
3. He becomes strong, but not by his own power. (Rev 13:4, 17:12-13)
4. Causes astounding devastation and succeeds at whatever he does. (Matt 24:15-22, 2 Thess 2:3-12, Rev 13:3-17)
5. Destroys the mighty men and the holy people. (Dan 7:25, 8:10-12, Rev 16:6, 17:6)
6. Causes deceit to prosper (2 Thes 2:8-12, Rev 13:3-9)
7. He considers himself superior (Dan 8:11, 11:31-36, 2 Thes 2:3)
8. When they feel secure, he will destroy many. (Dan 11:21)
9. He will be destroyed but not by human power (Rev 19:20, Dan 7:11, 2 Thes 2:8)
10. Vision concerns the time of the end

Daniel 9:26-27-
1. His people will destroy the city and the sanctuary.
2. Abolishes the daily sacrifice and sets up the abomination of desolation (2 Thes 2:3-4, Matt 4:15-22, Dan 11:31)
3. He will confirm a covenant for 7 yrs. and in the middle of that time period he will set up the abomination of desolation.

Daniel 11:28-38-
1. He will vent his fury against the holy covenant.
2. Abolishes the daily sacrifice and sets up the abomination of desolation.
3. People who know their God will resist him and instruct many, but many will fall and be refined.
4. He will magnify himself above God and say unheard of things against God.
5. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed.
Reasons why the saints in Daniel refer to the church?

1. The saints in Daniel 7:21-25 directly parallel the saints in Revelation 13:5-7.
2. Daniel's people are clearly defined in chapter 12:1 as "all whose names are found written in the book." This directly parallels Revelation 13:7-8. Revelation 13 is clearly speaking of people in this age, defining them as "those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus." (Rev 12:17, 14:12)
3. The saints in Daniel 7 are to possess the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heavens and are referred to as the people of the Most High. This is clearly Jesus promise to the church. (Matt 25:34, Rev 2:26-27, 3:21, 20:4-6)
4. Jesus makes it clear in Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 that the church will see the rise of Antichrist to power and the events which follow, and the people involved in Daniel 7, 8, 11, 12 are referred to as the "holy people," the people of the Most High, and the holy covenant. There is only one "Holy people", and one "Holy covenant" called the Christian Faith and they are both sanctified by the blood of the Perfect Son of God.
5. The saints of Daniel 8:12 directly parallel 2 Thes 2:3 and Matt 24:10. Because of “rebellion” (2 Thes 2:3), [ "And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn,"(Dan 8:12) ] "the falling away" (Matt 24:10), the saints are given over to it and “the truth is thrown down to the ground.”

Daniel 8:11-13 - 11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. 12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. NASB
Matthew 24:8-13 - 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. NASB
2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 - 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. NASU
6. The holy people of Daniel 8 and the holy covenant of Daniel 11, refer to the same people who are under the persecution of the antichrist in Daniel 7. As we have already pointed out, the saints of Daniel 7 are the saints of Rev 13.
Commentators who say the “temple of God” is the Church –

**Poole** - As God’s residence of old was in the temple of Jerusalem, so he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God: not that temple that was built by Solomon, and afterwards rebuilt, and to be built again, as the popish doctors speak: for it is now destroyed, and if it be built again by this man of sin, as they say, at his coming, would the apostle call that the temple of God? 2Co 6:16; Re 3:12, &c. *But it is a spiritual temple, as the church is called.* 1Co 3:16,17. So **Augustine, Jerome, Hilary, Chrysostom,** understand it. And he is said here to sit, to have here his cathedra. The apostle speaks of him as a bishop, whose episcopal see is called a seat, or cathedra; and here he sitteth as God: the popish writers give the pope that and suchlike titles, Dominus Deus noster Papa, Idem est Dominium Dei et Papae, Tu es alter Deus in Terra, "Thou art another God on earth." Concil. Later. sess. 4. And as God he maketh laws to bind the conscience, and dispenseth with laws natural and moral; pardons sin as he pleaseth, past, present, and to come; can deliver souls out of purgatory, and translate them to heaven: so that this man of sin is not to be looked for among the Turks, pagans, or infidels. *He sitteth in the temple, the church, of God; not that it can be the true church where he thus sitteth and acteth, but rather the synagogue of Satan; but that which he calleth so, and which beareth that name, and which before the falling away was really so,* Ro 1:8. As Jerusalem is called the holy city after it had lost its holiness, Mt 4:5; and the faithful city, when become an harlot, Isa 1:21; and Mount Tabor a holy mount, 2Pe 1:18; because once so: or called so according to men's opinion; as idols, that are nothing, are yet called gods, 2Ch 28:23; 1Co 8:5. Some read the words, eiv ton naon, in templum Dei, as we say, in amicum, i.e. velut amicus, he sitteth for the temple of God, as if he himself was the temple and church of God. So Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 20. c. 19. And so some of our protestant writers, applying it to the pope, who, as the head of the church, hath the whole church virtually in himself, and doth exercise all church power.

**Barnes** - **Sitteth in the temple of God.** That is, in the Christian church. It is by no means necessary to understand this of the temple at Jerusalem, which was standing at the time this epistle was written, for

(1.) the phrase *'the temple of God'* is several times used with reference to the Christian church, 2Co 6:16; Eph 2:21; 1Co 3:16,17; Re 3:12; and

(2.) the temple was the proper symbol of the church, and an apostle trained amidst the Hebrew institutions would naturally speak of the church as the temple of God. The temple at Jerusalem was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God on earth. When the Christian church was founded, it was spoken of as the peculiar dwelling-place of God. See the passages referred to above. He dwelt among his people. He was with them, and walked with them, and manifested himself among them— as he had done in the ancient temple. The usage in the New Testament would not lead us to restrict this language to an edifice, or a "church," as the word is now commonly used, but rather to suppose that it denotes the church as a society; and the idea is, that the Antichrist here referred to would present himself in the midst of that church as claiming the honours due to God alone. In the temple at Jerusalem, God himself presided. There he gave laws to his people; there he manifested himself as God; and there he was worshipped. The reign of the "man of sin" would be as if he should sit there. **In the Christian church he would usurp the place which God had occupied in the temple.** He would claim Divine attributes and homage. He would give laws and responses as God did there. He would be regarded as the head of all ecclesiastical power; the source from which all authority emanated; the same in the Christian church which God himself was in the temple. This does not then refer primarily to the pope as sitting in any particular church on any particular occasion, but to his claiming in the church of
Christ the authority and homage which God had in the temple at Jerusalem. In whatever place, whether in a cathedral or elsewhere, this authority should be exercised, all that the language here conveys would be fulfilled. No one can fail to see that the authority claimed by the pope of Rome, meets the full force of the language used here by the apostle.

Adam Clarke's Commentary: Verse 4. Who opposeth and exalteth] He stands against and exalts himself above all Divine authority, and above every object of adoration, and every institution relative to Divine worship, sebasma, himself being the source, whence must originate all the doctrines of religion, and all its rites and ceremonies; so that sitting in the temple of God—having the highest place and authority in the Christian Church, he acts as God taking upon himself God's titles and attributes, and arrogating to himself the authority that belongs to the Most High.

Matthew Henry - (2.) As God, he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. As God was in the temple of old, and worshipped there, and is in and with his church now, so the antichrist here mentioned is some usurper of God's authority in the Christian church, who claims divine honours; and to whom can this better apply than to the bishops of Rome, to whom the most blasphemous titles have been given, as Dominus Deus noster papa--Our Lord God the pope; Deus alter in terra--Another God on earth; Idem est dominium Dei et papae--The dominion of God and the pope is the same?

Phillip Doddridge - So that he himself, as God sets himself in the church, which is the temple of God, showing himself with such pompous parade, and such despotic authority assumed over the consciences of men, that, so far as actions can speak, he in effect asserts that he is God, nothing human and indeed nothing created, having a right so to dictate.

Thomas Scott - Moreover, “This man of sin” “sits as God in the temple of God;” and we must therefore look for him within the visible church: there he blasphemously usurps the throne of God, showing himself to be God. Many Roman emperors affected divine honors, and demanded adoration: but there was no antecedent apostasy from Christianity, and they might rather be said to sit in the temple of Jupiter or Mars, than in that of God; whose temple must be considered to be among his professed worshippers, and not among avowed heathens. But the Roman pontiff claiming to be the universal head of the whole church of God; called by his flatterers Vice-God, a God upon earth; arrogating the title of his Holiness, boasting of infallibility, arrogating a right to depose kings, and bestow kingdoms on whom he pleases; with those impious claims previously—answers so exactly to the description here given, that we cannot doubt for whom it was designed. While the Roman pontiff opposed the worship of God, by enjoining the worship of images, and of saints and angels, and the authority of his laws to enforce subjection to his own edicts; he himself might be called the great idol, as well as the great tyrant, of the Romish church; as he demanded the most abject submission and prostration from all men, both in body and soul, and poured contempt on all authority human and divine. But particulars cannot here be more fully insisted on. It suffices to show that the Roman pontiffs answered this description, as the person intended is the archetype of an excellent portrait; and we may venture to assert, that no other succession of men ever did thus accord to it; perhaps no single individual within the visible church.—The apostles, at least after the gospel was preached to the Gentiles, never spake of the temple at Jerusalem as the temple of God; but the Christian church in general, or believers in particular; are always denoted by that phrase.—The striking coincidence of this extraordinary prediction, with many parts of the prophecy of Daniel and of the Revelation of St.

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John, may be seen to advantage by consulting the marginal references; and, as far as the author’s view of them are concerned, by examining the notes on the passages referred to in those prophecies.

William Burkitt - His arrogance is set forth, in relation to God himself, that as God he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. By the temple of God, understand the church of God, the external, visible church, which professeth the faith of Christ and bears his name; in this temple of God he sitteth as an officer or bishop: and sits as God, that is, as God upon earth, whom all must adore: kings kissing his feet, emperors holding his stirrup; and claiming the same power that Christ hath in and over the church, namely, an universal supremacy, an absolute authority, and an unerring infallibility.

Concerning the question raised in class week of 5-2-2010. Hope this helps....

Q. - If you are saying that no one will be saved after the rapture, how is it that you can say that people will be saved in the Millennial Kingdom. This is logically inconsistent.

True, not consistent. Let me clarify.

I do not mean to say that people can never again in the course of history be saved after the rapture (which is the Second Coming), but that during the time of God’s judgment which commences immediately after the rapture and continues until Christ has destroyed the earthly kings and those in authority, and, destroys the Beast and the False Prophet, and, establishes His own earthly governmental structure. This period will be a period of wrath and destruction from the Almighty where God is exterminating sinners (in the language of Isa 13:9-13), not saving them. The obvious teaching of our Lord is that once He comes and delivers His people, it will be too late to heed the warnings any longer.

What is explicit in Scripture

The teaching of Jesus is very clear concerning the fact that once deliverance comes, God’s judgment commences immediately.

“then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.” This is exactly how Jesus described His coming. On the very day He rescues the righteous, then sudden destruction comes upon the wicked and unbelieving.

Luke 17:25-37 - 26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building: 29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back. 32 "Remember Lot’s wife. 33 "Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it. 34 "I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 35 "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 36 ["Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."] NASB

Not only is the Second Coming of Christ inevitable, but when it comes, there will be no way of escape for anyone who is not ready (being a born again Christian, living in Christ). Notice, “then
"destruction will come upon them suddenly" and the end of the world as we know it will be upon mankind, and with utter finality and fierce judgment the wrath of God will come down upon the kingdoms of this world, and upon all the ungodly and unbelieving sinners who have ignored God’s warnings and rebelled against His authority and “they will not escape.” Paul gives a more comprehensive and vivid description of what happens here in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-11 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. NASB

Isaiah 13:9-13 - 9 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light. 11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. 12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold, And mankind than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger. NASB

Notice in these verses above Paul's point, "they will not escape." Those who are left after the Coming of the Lord "will not escape," but will instead be destroyed as he makes clear in 2 Thes 2:7-11. The obvious teaching of our Lord is that once He comes and delivers His people, it will be too late to heed the warnings any longer.

Matthew 25:10-13 - 10 "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 "And later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' 12 "But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13 "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. NASB

Luke 13:24-28 - 24 “Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 “Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' 26 "Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; 27 and He will say,’ I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.’ NASB

What is only implicit in Scripture
After the Millennial Kingdom is established, we have very little biblical revelation concerning what the nature of that time period is like, especially the message of the Gospel and how sinful men(who are present in the Millennium- Rev 20:7-10) are reconciled to God. Because of this limited revelation I have assumed or implied that God is still about the business of saving men and that their salvation is by grace alone, faith alone, in Christ alone. But the nature of the message is vastly different from the age we now live in because of the physical presence of Christ in the Millennium. We will preach about a physically present Christ, through whom sinners can be reconciled.

Factual Data from Scripture or mere implications from Scripture
This is only an assumption and an implication, for it is not explicit in Scripture. However the fact that those left after the rapture will be destroyed and that it will be too late to be saved is explicit in Scripture.

It is not wrong to make implications from the clear teaching of biblical data. We must do this. This is for instance how we learn things like the doctrine of the Trinity. However we must be careful and discerning when dogmatically defending these implications, or believing implications that Bible teachers make.