

# A POSITIVE HOPE

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assemblies Bible studies, some from home life, and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "The Epistle to the Galatians and the Epistles to the Thessalonians." by C.F. Hogg and W.E. Vine. Scripture Truth Book Company
- "What the Bible Teaches, 1 Thessalonians. by T.E. Wilson. John Ritchie Ltd.
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

## 1st Thessalonians

### 1 Thessalonians 1

#### STRONG FAITH - A GOOD REPUTATION

In the course of the Christian life, we will have burdens to bear that we may not have expected when we were first saved. There will be pressures to conform to the ways of the world, to compromise our faith, and to live only for the present. Grief over the passing of loved ones and disappointments because of failed expectations seek to overwhelm us in our efforts to further the Gospel. The first-century Christians of Thessalonica in Greece had been expecting the Lord Jesus Christ to return right away. The death of some of their number seemed to have left them uncertain in regard to the Lord's Coming. Paul was the writer of the epistle, but he included Silvanus and Timotheus as fellow workers and those who shared the truth of this hope. The first mention of the subject in chapter one is an inspiring hope linked with their salvation. It is an encouraging hope to the servants in chapter two. It is a purifying hope for the believers in chapter three. It is a comforting hope to the bereaved in chapter four and a rousing hope to the sleepy Christians in chapter five.

When Paul first preached in the synagogue at Thessalonica, he would have taught that the predictions of the coming Messiah in the Old Testament scriptures were fulfilled when "the Christ" came in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth. He "reasoned" with them by arranging biblical arguments supporting his teaching in ways they could be understood. "Opening" included both the scriptures and the minds of the hearers by expounding the word of God contextually in the way it was written. "Alleging" involves explaining and comparing his teaching with the scriptures. During the initial stages of the work there, he worked with his own hands to meet his needs and that of others. He had received at least two gifts from the Philippian assembly while there to support him in his work.

For at least three Sabbaths, he was teaching in the synagogue. The places he preached after that are not told, but we know the opposition became strong against them at the beginning of the work. In fact, it was so strong that Paul and Silas had to go away at night to Berea. The Jews stirred those who opposed them by charging them with turning "the world upside down." Timothy later returned to teach and encourage the saints. Now Paul writes as a father would write his children.

He begins with the first of twelve features that mark the children of God. A local church is composed of those who have been called out from the world and called unto the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ in a community. In keeping with the fatherly address of Paul to the Thessalonian saints, he told them they are "in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." This is the only time he speaks of the Father in this way in all his epistles. In this form of writing in this epistle, the emphasis is on our position in Christ. In other epistles, it is on the location of the local church on earth. Jesus is referred to as "Lord" twenty-five times in this epistle. Silas and Timothy are brethren in fellowship with Paul in their interest in the believers at Thessalonica. The support of fellowship with others in a work is strengthening and encouraging to those we are seeking to influence.

The grace of our Lord and the peace He gives sums up the Gospel and its effects. Prayers of thanksgiving and supplication for the assembly have a great impact on the Lord's people. Praying without ceasing has the idea of constantly reoccurring prayer rather than uninterrupted prayer. Continual thanks keep important things and people at the forefront of our minds. That, in turn, reminds us of the believers in that place as people of faith who practiced what they believed. They were also people of love who meet the needs of others without expecting compensation. People of hope are not easily discouraged. The work of saving faith is faith demonstrated. The labor of love is the intense action of self-sacrifice. "The hope" is what motivates the patience of hope. These three characteristics for the basis of our consecration.

Brethren beloved are believers whom the Lord loves unconditionally. They were in the same family as Paul, with the same interests and the same thinking as others in the family of God. They have experienced election not by their intuition, and they know its blessings from observation of the differences in life from those who are of the world. The elect is beloved by God and elected by God, even if we cannot explain it. Our knowledge of it is real to us because of what is seen and heard. "Our Gospel" is the same as the Gospel of God. He is the Source of the Gospel in whom we put our trust. The subject is the message of the Messiah sent to redeem us. The responsibility is ours to speak of and preach to others with conviction. The walk of believers demonstrates the word, the power to change, and the evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the assurance they have in Christ.

The purpose of God is the proclamation of the Gospel [v.4]. The presentation of the Gospel assures us of its accomplishments demonstrated by the messengers of God to the Thessalonians. They imitated the apostles and those who followed the Lord. Disciple/followers turned to God, and as afflicted ones, their testimony was challenged. The power of their faith brought about the practical results of joy, exemplary lives, and the public proclamation of the Gospel, like heralds using trumpets and reaching far out. Being models of truth in everyday life is the best way we can prepare for Gospel work. The internal effect of the joy of the Holy Ghost makes the words we speak affect those who hear them. Afflictions are the outward effect that demonstrates how the Gospel truth really works in everyday life. The message of salvation brings joy and suffering because those who live "godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

There is a motivation in new believers to see the word of God sounded out to as many people in as many places as possible. That is one of the greatest causes of our joy because we know what it is like to be saved from hell and the consequences of sin. The entering of the Gospel depends to a great degree on the way those who preach present themselves and the message. Turning to God happens when people know something is missing in their lives and the idolatry of their main interest does not satisfy them. Servants of God have a new Master and are involved in new services with new goals. Idolaters do not have a "living God." The service of the "true God" anticipates an active interest in the things of the kingdom of God.

"Waiting" for the Son of God to come does not mean we are inactive or just filling in time trivially. This does mean we wait patiently. We know the Lord is Coming, and because we are sure of that but do not know when it will take place, we are highly motivated to work for the kingdom of God with expectancy. What a blessed hope it is that we may be engaged in His service with enthusiasm when He calls us to Himself. Features that mark the Holy Spirit's work through us are effective Gospel work when the word is preached with power and understanding. It is confirmed when there is joy and suffering, and the believer rises above circumstances. He guards us lest we presume upon His love and reminds us not to quench the flame of zeal nor to forget our sanctification.

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

#### **OUR GOSPEL – plus.**

*The Gospel is much more than words alone that inform and teach us the way.  
Its effect is much greater than the sound of a horn, or the truths that we may say.  
For words only have weight when accompanied by proofs that are seen and not just heard.  
The message of life that we pass on each day is supported by more than mere words.*

*There needs to be power as evidence clear, that changed lives are truly reborn.  
When the drunks are made sober, the sad are made glad, and changes are made in the homes;  
Then those who look on and hear the word preached, are inclined to think that it's right.  
The power of the message, and power in the life, shows that Christ truly changes men's lives.*

*When the Holy Ghost works in conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment to come;  
The listeners hear, and the watchers can see something's going on here that's unseen.  
Folks not only face sin, but the light comes in and the Spirit new life then does give.  
God has obviously done something men cannot do; the truth is known by the way that we live.*

*Assurance is an attitude often seen on the face or known by the tone of a voice;  
Confidence in God cannot really be hidden; it starts when each makes his own choice.  
When truth can be seen and much assurance is there that I am now a child of God;  
Then the Gospel that came is supported by this, and others are convinced by the word.*

*The manner of life of those that speak out to declare all the counsel of God,  
Leaves a testimony true that the message they speak is truly from God's holy word.  
So the Gospel in words and in power is plain, it's reinforced when the Holy Ghost speaks.*

*With assurance and life, the messenger gives to hearers the truth that they seek.*

***“O God, the Source of the Gospel: my prayer today is that the Gospel I preach might be accompanied by similar evidence as the work of Paul and those with him when they went to Thessalonica. I can see evidence of the Holy Spirit at work, assurance is there, and even the manner of life seems to be in place. But the power seems to be missing. If there is something that needs to be addressed so that the power may be seen, please make it clear to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”***

### **THREES**

*There are a lot of things we know that are linked in groups of three.  
The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are each One deity.  
Time, Space, and Matter are together in unity.  
Body, Soul, and Spirit compose all of humanity.*

*Three servants of the Most-High God speak the truth in Jesus' name.  
To proclaim Gospel truths to the city of Thessalonica came.  
The results were souls of many were saved as the truth was there proclaimed.  
And because of their zeal for new faith lived out, the Gospel spread like a flame.*

*Beginnings are just that; the new work started from there moves on.  
To other countries and people, the Gospel goes from town to town.  
Those believers who were so grateful for what their Lord had done -  
Were spreading the word of Christ in haste as they waited for their Lord to come.*

*From them we can learn the value of an unceasing work of faith.  
The labor of love goes on continually as a testimony of grace.  
The patience of hope will be complete when we look upon His face.  
Till then, we need to commit ourselves to proclaim the truth in this very place.*

***“Father, may those of us who are Thy children display the features of those saints where we are today. May we, in the same way as our brothers and sisters in the past, spread Thy Gospel to ‘regions beyond.’ In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”***

### **TURN - SERVE - WAIT**

*Turning to God means I recognize I have a serious need.  
That I cannot meet, nor to helpless idols will I give any heed  
I may not even realize the idol is there until it claims my mind  
When I turn in my need to God, is when new life I will find.*

*To serve the living God is an acknowledgment that He is true  
And service for Him is a wonderful privilege I can experience too  
Representing the Almighty God involves exercising conscious integrity  
The words I speak today for God will affect people for eternity.*

*Waiting for God's Son from heaven means I believe the Lord will come  
At that glorious moment, millions of believers will rise to go home  
To be forever with Him they turned to, and for whom they served and waited  
Then a full life of service will unfold far more significantly than we anticipated.*

***“I am waiting and ready to go, Father, but until then, please allow Thy servant to serve Thee with significance and relevance, those whom Thou art bringing into Thy kingdom. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”***

## **1Thessalonians 2:1-12**

### **THE SERVANT'S WORK**

When we are involved in divine service, even though there will be obstacles and opposition, that should not stop us from fulfilling the commission we have received from our sovereign Lord. He does not ask us to do a work we are not able to do. Our Lord knows His servants, and when He wants us to do something, He is able to give us the strength and courage to do it. Our fears should not stop us from pressing forward with the Gospel. We may need to start right where we are with the small things before becoming bolder in the larger things.

The three brothers in Christ who were involved in the writing of this epistle and in bringing the Gospel to Thessalonica were one in their objective. There was harmony among them even though each one was very different from the others. Fear of imprisonment didn't stop them, although two of them had just been in prison

in Philippi. There were not reckless, nor did they act impulsively. There is a cost to every work, and reaching out with the Gospel may be very different in one place than it is in another.

These servants had suffered and were scorned, but they were consistent even after they were insulted and hurt. The only way to counteract opposition when we are where we know God wants us is to be bold and have courage. When false accusations are laid against a servant, do not be deceitful nor act with pretense, but follow your sincere motive of making the message of Christ known. The truth of God must never be compromised. The wrong motives others have against faithful servants may bring some kind of suffering, but just like those in the past, we must be personally persuaded that what we preach is true. We have to have personally experienced the power of the Gospel message we preach and teach.

Moral cleanness is expected of those who represent the holy God. The people of Corinth, Thessalonica, and other places in those old days are similar to where we live today. People try to justify immorality by saying, "Everyone does it," or "It is legal." "What I do is up to me," they say, "and it is no one else's business." When a stand for biblical righteousness is made, we have to expect opposition will come in a variety of ways. Sin exposed does reach a person's conscience even though they often deny its consequences are serious. Broken marriages, broken homes, and broken hearts accompany immoral behavior. Those three men realized God had entrusted them with something of great value.

The message of the Gospel never changes, even though the method of presenting it may change. Faithful servants of the Lord must never compromise the heralding of the truth of the Gospel. What a privilege it is to be approved by God and allowed to speak His word publicly. At the same time, it is disgusting when one is a phony and uses flattering words to please people and entice them to respond to what he says. It is demeaning to the message when one dishonestly smooths over sin and its serious consequences in order to make guilty people comfortable. To cover up a dishonest person's intention is not beneficial to either the hearer or speaker. Those involved in Gospel work as servants of the Lord have a special responsibility to be honest and straightforward with the people. It is the true servant's motivation to bless the people with God's truth. It is very wrong to tell people what they want to hear so they will like us and get their own way.

The true servant is not after the money of those who hear. Such a person is openly seen, not crafty. They are not looking for human praise; they are looking for God to save souls from hell and for heaven. No one who heard Paul, Silas, and Timothy could detect flattery in them or any insincerity designed to mislead or color their thinking. No one could charge them with being hucksters who wanted money or anything from those who heard their preaching. God knows what no one else knows. He was their witness as to their work and the message they were proclaiming. No one could charge them with being lazy or wanting an honorary position from the people in Thessalonica or any other place. There is a certain right they had as apostles that they should "live of the Gospel," but they did not ask for support.

However, those men had the right attitude toward people, and the same practices hold true for us. The message we proclaim is Christ's message; it is God's Gospel, and lives are changed because of its truth. We know that our message of the Gospel is right. God gives the increase to the seed men plant and water. The attitude of gentleness, consideration, and meeting needs; goes along with the assertiveness and power when the servant presents the Gospel in fellowship with the Lord. We have to give time for understanding to those who hear. We need to let people know we care for them. An affectionate desire for people's eternal well-being indicates that our words and actions expressed in the Gospel are for their blessing. We want them to know what we know, have what we have, and be assured that our interest in them is because we are the Lord's servants.

When we live holily before the Lord, there is a positive impression that can be seen by those who live righteously before men. In those ways, we can be living unblameably before all as we seek to exemplify the Gospel message in daily life. People often make decisions based on what they see as well as on what they hear. So, the exhortation we give people to act on what they hear and the encouragement to act now, and our personal testimony to them, is the objective of the Lord's servant who seeks to lead people to our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

#### **THE GOSPEL OF GOD.**

*God is the Author of the greatest news of all, though men turn away and ignore.  
He is the One who planned and whom people did call, that others this grace will implore.  
These good tidings so true are needed that each might live in the good of its light;*

*Finds its Source in God's plan, before He made man, that can move each one out of the night.*

*There is love in this Gospel that begins with God and was shown when the Father sent Him  
Who was Love to be seen; in His life and His death; when He paid the price for our sin.  
There was love from the Father, and love from the Son, and love from the Holy Spirit too.  
Way back in the past, the Gospel was planned, and God's love was seen to be true.*

*There is truth in God's Gospel that all must face; we have come short of the glory of God.  
But truth also says that when repentance is real, there is the power to cleanse by Christ's blood.  
Truth in the words of the scripture is given so that believers, assurance can have.  
The life that God has, eternal and full, belongs to each one that God chooses to save.*

*When the Gospel is preached clear and plain to all men, conflict is sure to arise.  
Conviction of sin hurts the conscience of men and humbles each one's pride.  
Those who are bold to speak the whole counsel of God will find they are not in demand;  
Because people like to hear those who make them feel good and say that sin is not all that bad.*

*But God is the witness to messages given, and each one of us must give an account.  
Did the people know clear the words that they hear come right from the Gospel of God?  
It might be a problem to those who speak out clearly, to call all men to come to task.  
But the sinners will thank you, and God's ready to bless the preaching of His Gospel of grace.*

***"I am thankful Father, to have been able to be put in trust with the Gospel. By Thy grace, I  
have seen some of the power and  
results that are in the Gospel of God. I give thanks and praise for the lasting evidence of the  
Gospel of God. In the name of  
the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

### **1 Thessalonians 2:6-13**

#### **THE SERVANT'S CHARACTER**

There are challenges to those who have a heart for evangelism and who want to see that God saves living for Him and growing in faith. Three of these challenges are: first, validating the confession of faith and conversion of one who professes to be saved by showing personal interest and counseling. In order to do this; secondly, we will need to commit ourselves to follow them up and see them integrated into the life of an assembly of believers. Thirdly, the assembly needs to commit to the long-term care of the new believer and hopefully see them taking a responsible role themselves.

That kind of follow-up will include attendance at the Bible class and Bible study meetings of the assembly. Ministry meetings and attendance at conferences strengthen one when one meets with many of God's people who are there. Personal follow-up is a one-to-one relationship with a mature believer for the purpose of aiding the new child of God in growth as a Christian. In order to do that, the one following up can supply the new believer with study material such as a course to follow, a concordance, and some suitable books, as well as meeting regularly with that person.

Several factors affect follow-up that we can learn from examples in this chapter. In order to form a relationship with a new believer that will help them grow, I will need to be enjoying the Lord myself. As evangelists [v.1-6], Paul Silas and Timothy had an instinctive care to do the work of an evangelist. Follow-up is our responsibility that the Lord commanded in Matthew 28:20 as part of the commission. It is essential lest the tempter will overcome them by his temptation, and our labor is in vain. New believers need to have a good start. There may be many instructors, but there are not many fathers [1Thes.3:5].

Another example of a spiritual relationship these three men had was that of a nurse (nursing mother) caring for her children. Spiritual pediatrics involves serving them with intelligence and affection, as well as teaching them with patience. That, in turn, involves commitment on the part of the mature believer. Am I willing to spend the time necessary with the new believer? Am I willing to make this a priority and rethink the other things in which I am involved? That means there is needed concentration on my part. A person cannot take on too many people or things at one time. It may be up to us to spread this responsibility to others who want to see new believers grow.

The duration of follow-up may take a year or more before they get spiritual legs under them so they can stand alone. When the multiplication principle is obvious, and the learner has gone beyond the trial-and-error approach to the truth to be a systematic learner, then the spiritual nurse can move gradually on to others. Another example of the character of a servant that comes to light here is that of a brother.

The word "brethren" is mentioned 23 times in these epistles to the Thessalonians, indicating there is an example to follow in the after-care of converts. A brother is "family," as well as an instructor and a fellow laborer with whom we share our life in this time of conflict. The growth and warmth of the brethren should characterize the assembly environment. We need to see new believers as God sees them and be honest with them. It doesn't help or fool anyone if we want to appear perfect before them and put up a sanctimonious front [Phil.3:12].

When a person desires to be used and is willing and available, the Lord will see to it that we are where the action is. There is a need for consistency of life in ourselves if we expect to see that in a new Christian. We need to accept ourselves and our limitations before we have the needed strength of character to pass on the truth to others. The need of new believers is to have someone in their lives to communicate the principles of our new life in Christ, not just transfer spiritual truth. This becomes evident in a number of ways, as a father would nurture and instruct his children [v.11-12].

A father is careful, consistent, cautious, and comforting toward his children. God is the witness to the degree of concern we have for new believers. The attitude of honest concern will come from God and develop as we see the needs a new child of God has. To develop a relationship around the Person of Christ, we need to pass on what God has done and is doing now for us. A natural way of speaking and sharing our life in Christ sets a pattern of openness for the new Christian. By spending time together in the scriptures, a basis for living and faith is established. The Lord Jesus quoted scriptures from the Old Testament 160 times while He was with His disciples.

Building significant relationships takes time. The three men who came to Thessalonica and from whom this letter came were "pray-ers" [v.13] as well as fathers, brethren, nurses, and evangelists. In seeking to strengthen the people of God, we need patience because there will be failures. Everyone falls down sometimes, and we don't need to take it personally if someone stumbles. Reproof from a father is legitimate and is needed from time to time in order to deal with problems.

As those who care, we need to be those who pray as intercessors. Our ministry to those in Christ is to help the whole person, not just challenge their intellect. The strengthening of the intellect will strengthen the emotional life. Our emotions have an effect on our physical life. Our physical life affects the spiritual, and the spiritual affects the social life of a believer. As human beings, each part of us has an effect on the other parts, both for good and bad.

When a new Christian becomes a friend as well as a learner, they will understand our concern for them is genuine - not just a chore we have to do. At the same time, we need to understand that a leader needs to be looked up to in a relationship in order for their instruction to be taken seriously. Leaders need to know where they are going and how to get there. Assurance of salvation and establishing one's understanding of their position in Christ is where we begin. From there, we go on to what it means to be consistent in the Christian life by learning the value of devotional life, of fellowship with God and other people, and of what fundamental truths we need to know and why.

Stability in doctrine, Christ-likeness was seen by the fruit of the Spirit in one's life, and growing strong in the Lord is what we look for as mature believers who seek to help others grow. As the children of God apply the things they learn from the word of God, we will see evidence of a desire to reproduce as an interest in others is demonstrated on their part. Understanding the value of Bible doctrines is followed by a devotional life that understands how truths learned become truths enjoyed and assimilated into one's life. An active devotional life develops further into active discipleship that the commission the Lord Jesus Christ gave anticipated. The work of God is established and promoted by those who have the character of a servant so they can effectively do the work of a servant.

#### **FEATURES THAT MARK SERVANTS**

*His commission came from the highest possible Source  
The true evangelist follows on a well-marked course  
Wherever souls of men are lost in the bonds of sin  
He knows this is where the people are in the need of him  
So, the Gospel he explains in words that are easily understood  
And the searching soul grasps the meaning of Christ's atoning blood  
In faith the evangelist explains; by faith the lost one the Savior receives  
And the Spirit gives new life to the one who in Jesus believes.*

*Coming alongside the new child, as one who sincerely cares;  
Is a person of intelligence who, as a nursing mother, bears*

*A new spiritual child in arms of quiet and realistic affection;  
Making sure the new born starts life going in the right direction  
Patiently teaching, imparting truths needed by the new nature  
Compassion, understanding, spiritual instinct is a feature  
Of those who want the newborn child of God  
To not only be saved but to daily follow the Lord.*

*"Brethren" is a word implying there are unique family ties  
That can be counted on for help when unexpected needs arise  
Brothers in Christ instruct, share labor and at times, defend  
There may be differences of opinion, but when it comes to the end  
Brothers are there to lift a brother up when He is down  
We protect and support each other because he is one of our own  
Friends and brothers are different, but when both are one and the same  
We stay close and connected because we both have the same name.*

*Fathers are aware of each of their children and their differences  
By spending time together, we understand their idiosyncrasies  
Spiritual fathers need to be exhorters as well as committed teachers  
Comforting and consistency are two of their important features  
A father warns, charges and loves children with strong appeals  
He knows choices and consequences have the effect to seal  
The rest of a new believer's life on a road where there is no return  
He prays earnestly the advice he gives the learner will not spurn.*

***"Father in heaven, there are many who have heard the message of the Gospel through Thy servant over the last 60+ years. In Thy grace, Thou hast saved some. I do not want to leave undone anything I should do for their spiritual welfare. Help Thy servant, I pray, to be an intelligent, spiritual nurse, a faithful brother, a caring father, and an effective "pray-er." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:13-20**

##### **APPRECIATION EXPRESSED**

It is not uncommon for us to remain silent when we meet others who have impacted us in our lives. It is not that we don't talk, but that, for some reason, we don't open our hearts to express appreciation for the blessing they have been to us. Our reticence is often just the fear of feeling vulnerable and being patronized. It may even be, on some occasions to be a matter of pride not to let our emotions show lest we appear to be less manly or even childish. A strong person who knows who they are and all they will ever be because of God's grace and mercy; will not have a lot of difficulty opening his heart to those for whom he cares. Paul expressed his appreciation in the epistle to the Thessalonians openly and specifically. He appreciated them because they accepted the message of the Gospel he brought to them [v.13-16], and he wanted to be physically present with them as a parent likes to be with his/her children [v.17-20].

The Thessalonian believers were constantly on his mind because he knew they had received the word of God for themselves when he preached it to them. The word of God is a light and a lamp to those in darkness. It is a mirror that reveals us as to who we really are. As the sword of the Spirit, it has the power to continue to work in conquering power over the enemies - the world, the flesh, and the devil. Through the word of God comes the needed understanding of ourselves and the awakening to what the Lord has done for us. By the power of the word of God, we were brought to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of God has the transforming power to work in the lives of believers who received it in their ears as objective truth and accepted it in their hearts as subjective truth. By the Spirit of God using the word of God, we received the Son of God as our Lord and Savior and became children of God who have been born of God. Now we live by faith in the Son of God as servants of God, proclaiming through the word of God the truth of the kingdom of God. No wonder the people of God appreciate each other because we are in the family of God.

Thankful people whom the word of God themselves has blessed, put God's word foremost in their teaching and preaching. The servants of God who do that are successful in their work as it "effectually" works in those who hear and believe and then live out what God has worked in. There are also features that mark a true servant of God as he labors in the word for the benefit of others.

It is to be expected that there will be persecution from those who do not agree with the message of the Gospel. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were persecuted by the Jews who wanted to retain their religion and their religious status. Now the Gentile Christians in Thessalonica were being persecuted and opposed

by Gentiles who had their idolatrous religion that was tied to their national identity. False gods and government went together in the Roman Empire. Opposition can be discouraging, and persecution can be very daunting, especially if it is accompanied by suffering. Knowing there are believers in other places who are going through the same things as we are can strengthen us. When we learn how they managed to go through the trials, we are able to imitate them and experience with them the fellowship of suffering.

The Jews in Jerusalem thought Jesus was a false prophet, and they feared reprisal from the authorities as Christianity flourished there. Jewish leaders also feared for their position and power in Jewish society. They were proud of their status and didn't want to lose that lucrative position in their culture. The apostles were driven out because of religious hatred. We have to accept the fact that the heart of man has not changed, and it will never be popular to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ - especially if we are committed to godly living. The Lord Jesus was killed because of who He was and what He did and taught. The servants of the Lord should not expect any better. It is still going on in the world today.

In those days, people were forbidden to speak the truth of the Gospel in many places so people could be saved. The same is true today in many places. Some of those things we have no power to change. Often it is in times of persecution that the Gospel flourishes best. We need to remember that God is "longsuffering, not willing that any should perish." In a brief phrase quoted from the Old Testament, Paul writes about sins being filled up. God's righteous wrath will come when His patience with man's evil is finished. He loves to the uttermost, but His wrath goes to the uttermost as well. There is not some compromising, inconsistent justice that God will carry out. Contrary to the deceitful brand of "justice" as a crooked judge might dispense is the righteous justice from a loving and just God. Religious people killed the Master, and the servant cannot expect different treatment from his Master.

In this last section of this chapter, as Paul addresses the "brethren," assuring them in this way of his identification with them, he expresses in words his appreciation of them and his desire to be with them. He had a father's heart for his converts. A soul-winner can't help it. When God's grace saves people through the efforts we put forth, there is a special place in our hearts for them. Their well-being, their growth, and their fruitfulness in the things of God are all causes for our desire to be with them. Paul was like a father bereaved of his children when he could not get to see them for five years. He tried twice to come, but Satan hindered him - "broke up the road in front of him." It is one thing when the Holy Spirit hinders us. We may not understand why we are hindered at the moment, but we can trust the Omniscient One. When Satan, the adversary, hinders, we know it is in opposition to what we can do or want to impart for the benefit of our spiritual children. Satan is a real adversary.

The preacher's character comes out through his preaching and conduct. His conduct and concern for his children in the faith will often bring on a conflict. In spite of persecution from those without faith and sometimes opposition from those within the family of God, the evangelist's hope is secure. There are souls whom God has saved through the preaching of the Gospel, and we will see them and rejoice in them, and with them, at the "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ. His coming (parousia) simply means His presence. That is like a period of time after His arrival. There is more than the rapture of the church involved in His coming. There will be crowns given at the judgment seat of Christ, the "bema." The crown of rejoicing is for the soul-winner; the crown of life is for the martyr. The crown of glory is for the faithful shepherd; the incorruptible crown is for those who lived consistent lives. The crown of righteousness is for those who love the appearing of the Lord, and there is the victor's crown.

What a wonderful cause of anticipation as we think of the time when the sower and reaper rejoice together, and the preacher and the convert share joy in the results of the Gospel. The great reward of seeing the new believers who were saved and going on for God thrills our souls. This is not the glory of vaunting one's self but glorying for the cause of the Gospel, bringing praise to God. To think about all the saints of God in the future and knowing some of them are with the Lord because they heard the word of God when we were allowed to preach it is glory and joy - all praise to God! What a privilege it is to be the Lord's servant!

#### **APPRECIATION**

*Some things can't be expressed in mere words from a human pen  
The value of a soul who was saved when the Gospel they heard from men  
When we stop to think of that, it was God who directed us to go to them -  
The best words to describe such a blessedness is, "All glory and praise to Him."*

*To hear of new believers going on for God and growing in faith and grace  
Is a great reward in itself to know that God the Spirit led us to that place  
And when we recall how the Lord opened the way as the path of life we trace -  
The best way we can put our thoughts to words is, "All glory and praise to Him."*



*To be able to share in the work of the Lord with those we led to Christ  
Has a humbling impact on the soul as we realize He has blessed us twice.  
Any cost of time and effort, any losses we might experience are such a trivial price -  
The best thoughts to describe the privilege I have is, "All glory and praise to Him."*

*When the time comes to leave this earth and be gathered to the Lord above  
And we look around at millions who are the objects of God's grace and love  
We will see there among that throng, those spiritual children God gave to us -  
Each one singing the song of the redeemed; each one grateful to Him who them did save.*

***"O Father, this morning I am brought to tears at the thought Thou hast allowed Thy unprofitable servant the great privilege of bringing people to the Lord. When I think of souls Thou hast saved after we preached the Gospel to them, and know they will be in heaven and will love and serve Thee forever, all I can say is, 'Thank You! Thank You so very much for allowing me to be Thy servant!' In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

### **1Thessalonians 3:1-5**

#### **THE SHEPHERD'S AFFECTIONS**

Those servants of God whose lives are focused on bringing the Gospel to the lost and seeing those whom God has saved by His grace cannot help having those dear people in their hearts. The shepherd's heart has certain features that mark them out among God's people. One of those features is the urgency of the shepherd to know of the welfare of those for whom he cares. He wants to know if they are well in body and soul. He knows they will be suffering to a certain degree because that happens to all who follow the Lord. He is also aware of the temptations and pressures Satan puts on believers to conform to everything that is popular. The problems of pressures and just living for God are unavoidable, but not all new Christians know how to deal with them. The caring shepherd has the desire to help bear the burdens and see those who suffer living victorious lives in spite of all that happens.

Servants of God will suffer, but that does not mean suffering is because of sin. God allows the suffering of loneliness that Paul had to happen to us at times. There are those times of desolation when we need to have assurance about the well-being of the saints, about our own calling, and to be reminded that God has not abandoned us. Problems and times of persecution can build up our faith in God. Often the greatest work for God is done when there are obstacles and opposition, and we realize our own inability to accomplish what needs to be done.

The problems and pressures in life are ways God brings about maturity in us, so we have an understanding of how we can help others. Our character is developed in times of difficulty when what we believe is reinforced by what we are called upon to practice in adverse circumstances. Trustworthiness and the ability to thrive and persevere are developed in times of tension when the choices we make are serious and we realize we have to live with the outcome of them.

Our genuine interest in others and sensitivity toward their situations are enhanced and clarified when we learn by experience. The Christian life is quite different from that of the majority of people because we have goals and motivation that go beyond what pleases us. The true shepherd wants the best for his spiritual children. He knows their conduct in day-to-day living greatly affects their relationship with God. It is one thing to know God and be His child. It is quite another to enjoy God and be in full fellowship with Him.

Problems often indicate the effectiveness of our Christian living. That is one reason why an effective, caring shepherd wants to know the state of his flock. Because of circumstances, Paul, Silas, and Timothy had to leave Thessalonica and go to Berea. Paul went to Athens and sent his fellow laborers back to see the new believers. Silas went to Philippi and Timothy to Thessalonica. That method is still of great value to a true shepherd and is one of the ways he cares for those God has placed in his charge.

Not everyone can be trusted to represent the shepherd and do what needs to be done for the sheep and then bring a reliable report to the shepherd. Timothy was the right man for the job. He was a man of God who was mature and "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." He had the heart of a servant [Acts 19:22] and was willing and eager to serve people. We serve God what we serve people. He was a companion [Acts 20:4] who was available and satisfied to work with others. Timothy was teachable as a learner [1 Tim.3:10] who wanted to learn and "fully know" what the teacher was seeking to impart to him. He was also a genuinely caring person who was like-minded with Paul [Phil.2:20]. He was trustworthy (faithful) in difficult situations [1 Cor.4:17]. Paul and Timothy had the same goals that God had placed deep within them. Their minds and hearts were united on the objectives of the ministry in which they were involved. The relationship

between them kept them thinking the same way and maintained the fellowship they had in their service. Timothy was a reproducer, a worker with vision and the capacity to teach and observe what was needed by the Lord's people [1Thes.3:2]. A plurality of shepherds enables the objective to be reached and completed.

The sphere of service these men had, covered the needs of the Thessalonian Christians. The Gospel preaching had established them on the common basis of being believers in Christ in that city. Establishing the new believers in the faith was also what Timothy was trusted to do to preserve them so they would not be moved by the opposition and the suffering it caused them. The objective of both Timothy and Paul was to know the reality of their faith. It is normal for us to be concerned about new converts when we have gone through an open door with the Gospel and had seen God work. The contrast to being established is to be disturbed and upset because of the trouble and pressures that arise against the people of God.

These things happen to preachers who expect them because they know the adversary does not give up his people without a fight. We are not surprised when such things arise against us and are not easily dismayed or deflected by them. But for new Christians, it is unexpected even though they have been told that opposition will come when the power of God is seen, and the Gospel is spread. There are consequences that accompany new work that are not often seen after an assembly has been in a location for a number of years.

Christians from Thessalonica had taken the Gospel to areas beyond their community and had seen results for their labors. In the midst of their joy, they needed to be warned as to the "tribulation" and "afflictions" that would follow. A feature of one who is a shepherd is the fact that he prays for those for whom he cares. Those same prayers bring faces and names to our minds and move us to want some information regarding them. We long for some communication until we can bear the uncertainty no more. How thankful we are when someone brings news of the state of the saints. The burden for others becomes a strain so great that God in grace sends a "Timothy" along with the news for which we are so anxious and the assurance we need. We know the adversary will tempt God's people to turn away from holiness. He will seek to get them to yield to the temptation that will defile them and destroy their Christian testimony.

We are thankful for the shepherds who really are interested in the Lord's people and are willing to take the time to communicate with them in meaningful ways. Those same people need to "take heed" to themselves and to "the flock of God." An encouraging report of the condition of the assembly and the individual believers in it can meet the longing of a faithful heart.

**1Thessalonians 3:1-2.** *"Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith."*

#### **DELEGATION.**

*It is not easy to think that someone else can do what you do, as well or even better.*

*It is not easy to realize that there are things you can not do at all because of circumstances or situations you are found in.*

*It is not easy to see faces in your mind's eye, and know you can not help them.*

*It is not easy to turn over a major responsibility to someone who is much younger than you.*

*It is not easy to give the responsibility that will affect the lives of many people, to someone who is young enough to be your child.*

*It is not easy to trust completely a young man, even though you know he can do what needs to be done with grace and tact.*

*It is a wise man who knows his limitations.*

*It is a wise man who is willing to pass to others responsibilities that give significance to his ministry.*

*It is a wise man who places a work in the hands of another, and leaves him to do it without interfering.*

*It is a wise man who passes the torch of truth to another and lets that person carry it in the way that best suits him.*

*It is a wise man who admits he is not qualified, let alone able, to do everything.*

*It is a wise man who lets another make mistakes because he remembers he made mistakes himself.*

*It is a wise man who had learned from his own teachers how to help his students do their best.*

*It is a wise man who can define a delegated work specific enough for another person to know when they have completed it.*

*It is right to expect another to do a work to the best of his ability.*

*It is right to give a tested person responsibility equal to his ability.*

*It is right to define a work that is delegated specifically enough that a person can know what to do and when the work is accomplished.*

*It is right to want to know the results of the work that has been delegated.*

*It is right to make suggestions as to how to bring about the desired results.*

*It is right to encourage a person who may not feel as able to do a work as they would like to feel.*

*It is right to caution a person who is overconfident, lest they overlook the small things that need to be addressed.*

*It is right to support in any way possible the one who has been delegated a task.*

*It is right to give a trusted person's credentials in a public way.*

*It is right to praise a work well done.*

***“O Father, I am at the age when I know I must step back from things I once did. It is not easy to admit I cannot do effectively what I once did. I know that others can do things better than I can. Give me the grace to pass on the names and qualifications of good people to those who need their God-given gifts. Amen.”***

### **1Thessalonians 3:6-13**

#### **COMFORTED**

There are close ties that bind us to God's people because of the common faith we share. The suffering one passes through when one passes through the fires of affliction affects others because we are members of the same body. When the adversary attacks one with whom we share fellowship in the same assembly, we want to help that person through the difficulty they are facing. In times of blessing, we share their joy as well. The news Timothy brought to Paul from Thessalonica regards the saints there gave him special joy in himself and that he shared with God. The Lord's people were not only standing fast themselves but others were being blessed as from them, the Gospel sounded forth.

Preachers and teachers find great joy in seeing benefits from the work they have invested in others. When they are faithful themselves and strong in faith towards others, there is a unique fruitfulness because the love of God is shown to others through them. An outreach toward those around us that are motivated by "the love of Christ which constraineth us" is a demonstration of the reality of faith in Christ. That cannot be denied nor ignored as of no account. Not only is it an encouragement to those mature believers who invest time and effort in the new believers, but it is a cause for joy and real meaning in life for those new in the faith. They can see the value of their Christian testimony. They also care to appreciate more the ones who had an interest in them to bring them to Christ. The messengers are blessed; the new believers are blessed, and God is blessed.

Paul was going through crushing distress internally in himself and at the hands of others. When he got the report from Timothy as to how the Thessalonians were getting on in the things of God, he was greatly comforted. He was no longer fearful for them as he learned their faith was growing and they were maturing spiritually. In his great joy at this news, he gives thanks to God for them and the things concerning them. It is only right that we should encourage the initiative and commitment we see in other saints by thanking them and letting them know we appreciate their example. To "stand fast in the Lord" is what a Christian should do consistently in spite of what may come against us. There is a certain power in thanksgiving that challenges us to go forward because we know God is working through us, and we want Him to continue doing so.

How thankful we are when we hear of the advances of the Gospel and the work of God going on through the brothers and sisters we know! Some are in the far parts of the world and are speaking in languages we don't know, but God is working through them. What joy it brings in a prayer meeting when God's people hear of His work prospering in far places, even though it may seem to be slowly dying here. We can understand Paul's desire to go there and be with them in the work that was spreading in Macedonia and Achaia, and other places. Joy and thanksgiving before God are sometimes the only way we can share in the work of others.

Paul wanted to see them all again, but only if the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ gave him that guidance. There is much we would like to be doing and many places we would like to share in the work, but even in the work of God, we can act in the energy of the flesh. The key to any effective work is acting in the will of God. We may have our own desires to assist others and be where God is doing great work, but our responsibility is to be where He wants us to be, doing what He wants us to do. Our joy, our prayers, and our rejoicing in the triumphs of the Gospel through others may be the extent of our participation in some new work, but that may be enough.

We can find a part in the work others are doing when we intercede on their behalf and ask the Lord to increase their love and devotion towards those they see saved, even as we do for them. The interests we have in other and their spiritual well-being and growth establishes our own hearts. Christian character unmistakably rooted

in the Lord vindicates us against any charges that others may lay against us. Usually, the fewer words we say in our own defense, the better. Our character that has been established speaks louder volumes than all the words we can say.

All those things: words, deeds, sufferings, joy, and everything involved in living for God, will be seen in their true light at the Lord's coming. The challenge is to be pure in life in view of the Lord's coming when holiness will be seen for what it really is. The motivation of our hearts will be clearly revealed before God, the Judge of all who has committed all judgment to the Son. When the Lord Jesus Christ establishes His kingdom at His coming with all the saints, the Thessalonian believers will be there; Paul, Silas, and Timothy will be there, and we will be there. The family of God will share in the joy of the King when He rules in peace and righteousness and when justice and grace will be hand-in-hand.

As children in the family of "God, even our Father," we will stand as His sons and daughters before Him. The purity that is to accompany the work of God at this present time will be absolute on that day. There will be **Purity** in His presence at His coming when we see the **Person** of Jesus at His coming, and look at all those we had a part in seeing saved and growing in the Lord as the **Prize** we will enjoy at His coming. It is with this in mind; we also **Petition** the Father. We would like to be able to go and see those who are our children in the faith. We would **Pray** that they, too, will be knit together in love and that they will be able to stand in blameless sanctification before the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. These features mark those who care for the sheep and lambs the Chief Shepherd has entrusted to us for their keeping.

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

#### **INCREASING LOVE.**

Love is only mentioned once in this verse but is the center of attention. Its source is in "The Lord." He is working on me to make stronger and greater the love that already exists toward the Lord's people. But more than that, He is making it increase toward "all men." There is an increasing love for the unsaved people all around me. The arrow of divine love is getting larger and longer as it is focused on me. Then the arrow of my love is getting larger and longer as it is focused on the people of God on one hand and the world around me on the other hand. Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus are, in their turn, directing and increasing in love toward the Thessalonian believers. With such a development of holy love on every hand, what great blessings will reach out in all directions! One of the most significant results of this increase in love from above and in all really reflects on Him as He is the Lord who made that love increase in me in the first place. "May the love of Jesus fill me, as the waters fill the sea; Him exalting, self-abasing, this is victory."

***"Father God who is love: I am so thankful for Thy love which is shed abroad in my heart. I know it is there, and I can tell when it is strong and surging with the divine nature. I can also tell when it is faint and flickering. I need to keep the wick trimmed and the basin filled with oil so the flame of Thy love to me can shed light on those in darkness around. I need the grace for living in love that can only find its source in Thee. I am ready to be filled. Amen."***

*These are not mine, Oh Gracious Father  
But in my heart, each sister and brother  
Has claimed a place that I cannot shake  
So that I find joy or sorrow in each step they take  
And from deep within there is a real care  
That they will be willing in their lives to share  
The truths of God they have personally received  
Since the time in their lives they came to believe  
On Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord  
And since then have been committed to following Thy Word  
To the place they gather with others where Thou hast placed Thy name  
It is the same place where I many years ago came  
Now I look ahead to when we all shall see  
The One who has called us and with Him we shall be  
To share in His life, His kingdom and glory  
And then we shall know better the fullness of the story.*

***"Father, I am longing to see the saints where we have proclaimed the Gospel. It seems now that I am older, I have a deeper concern for them than even when they were saved. If it is possible, grant that Thy servant may look upon their faces. If not, keep them by Thy grace in fellowship with Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

**1Thessalonians 4:1-8**

## **PLEASE GOD**

There are certain features that those who are faithful teachers of the word of God have that others do not have. They are willing to teach things that are needed, not just what people like to hear. In this final section of 1st Thessalonians, Paul goes further than encouraging the saints at Thessalonica because of their obvious interest and commitment to the Gospel. These were plain folks who needed plain talk and instructions so that we were not misunderstood. Those involved in the work of the Gospel need to go beyond the basics of the truth they preached to others to practical sanctification themselves. Paul did not want them to be "ignorant" concerning the Lord's coming and how it was going to happen. But before answering their apparent concern about the loss of their loved ones, he had to make one more matter clear in view of that coming event. Sexual immorality was a serious social problem that needed to be addressed. That is what a sincere and true teacher will do. He will clarify things in order so that all aspects of living make sense - common sense as well as spiritual sense.

For those who live in an immoral, promiscuous society, it does not take long for those things that are practiced by those who do not know the Lord to seem to be a normal way of life. Holiness in living is not a common practice in today's world, and it was not common in the Greek and Roman empires. It was in that social setting that the Gospel came to Thessalonica, so not only was the salvation of the soul explained, but the salvation of a person's life. There is an inward and outward change when one becomes a child of God. "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." The new nature of the believer is entirely a work of God. The outward change is our responsibility. We have an inward strength from the indwelling Holy Spirit, but we also have an outward obligation that depends on us.

In view of the pressures of that age when Paul wrote and the necessity of living to please God, he used the word "beseech" rather than a command. Beseech is a word used between equals when making an appeal. In the family of God, esteem between believers is something that has to be nurtured. We can't take for granted that everything we say will be gladly accepted. People may think, even if they don't say, "Who does he think he is, telling me what to do!?" It is an appropriate approach to sensitive issues to beseech and "exhort." To urge the Lord's people to act a certain way needs a legitimate voice of authority behind what is said. Paul had the right to encourage the Thessalonians to please God because that authority came to Him from the Lord Jesus, who is the highest possible authority. Our relationship with Him is maintained in good standing when we please God. That involves our "walk," our conduct in daily life. It is not sufficient to put on Christian characteristics on the Lord's Day and live like the world the rest of the time.

We all like to make some people happy. Probably the first one who comes to mind that we would like to see happy is ourselves. Certainly, the happiness of our spouse and children motivates us to do what is needed for them to be happy. Other family members and the Lord's people stir love in us to do what we can to bring pleasure to them. How much more should we want to please God? Abounding like an overflowing well is the desire to please God, not just once but over and over again. There is no end to the need for practical holiness in the life of a believer, both for his or her enjoyment of the Christian life and the blessings that come to others through the testimony of a godly life.

Instructions given by a teacher are "commandments," as in a chain of command. When a superior person gives instructions to be carried out, it is important to follow them. In this case, these commandments originated with the Lord Jesus and came to the believers at Thessalonica through the ministry of the apostle Paul. The will of God is that His people are identifiable by their holiness. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Greeks and Romans were used to immoral living, so these new believers had to be reminded that Christians are different. They are to be holy in their sexual life. Marriage has been ordained for that purpose. It is honorable, and within the bonds of marriage is where believers maintain their sexual life. Fornication is illegal access into another body, and that is forbidden to a child of God. Every believer needs to take control of his/her own body. The importance of marriage needs to be emphasized because we live constantly in the sight of God and are expected by Him to do His will. There is dignity and respect expected from the family of God that is not expected of those who follow the ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Uncontrolled passion is evidence of fleshly lust, which "wars against the soul." People who don't know God do not govern their emotions but are willing to act out of control to fulfill selfish desires.

Lustful desire causes people to excuse sin; rather than stop sinning, they covet a neighbor's wife, causing a marriage to be destroyed. It is also a deliberate rebellion against God and His word. Sexual immorality always hurts more than one person and leads to a lost reputation that is unable to be regained. We need to remember that the Lord knows all we do and think. Immorality begins in the mind and soon leads to action. Pornography in our day is easily available, and those fantasies that begin in the mind will soon become a dark reality if we do not commit ourselves to holiness.

Blameless living and holy behavior represent the Holy and Righteous God. Godly believers may not realize the influence they have on other people for good. Righteousness is a reward in life for the believer and a testimony for the One who has imputed His righteousness upon us. Holiness, sanctification, and purity in life are directly related to our Christian witness. An assembly is affected by the conduct of all of its members. God is directly involved in the life of each person because the Holy Spirit is within each of us. We dare not despise that which pleases God even though other men may mock, challenge and oppose the conduct of life by those who belong to God.

*It is not a complicated thing to commit to do what's right  
Fellowship with saints and God is what it means to walk in light.  
When grace has been responded to and the Spirit is within  
We know what is right and wrong, and what is good or sin.*

*A mind with thoughts that aren't controlled begins a darkened course  
Soon the thoughts become latent plans and plans become a choice.  
When those plans are fleshly based and are fantasies unfulfilled  
One who is away from God will hope their conscience stilled.*

*There is a way to escape, we don't have to yield to temptation.  
Faith, the Holy Spirit and God's word defines the situation.  
God's will, is able to act on our behalf bringing sanctification  
And one who may have close to a fall, values practical redemption.*

*Take control, do not let get out of hand thoughts that plague the mind  
From God's provision of the Spirit and word, sanctification you will find.  
And actions that were planned fall back, and by faith you turn away.  
From any person or temptation which had pressured you to stray.*

*Pleasing God begins at first in the mind where our plans are laid.  
Decisions made before the acts, strengthen one who mind on Christ is stayed.  
Pleasing God then acts in faith by grasping hold of task now undone.  
And our efforts and our heart are in those things that please Father and the Son.*

***"How grateful I am Father; that Thy provision of grace, Thy word, and faith has kept Thy servant from falling through these past years. Please help me to keep my mind and life focused on Thee until this life is over. And please remember my brothers and sisters who are facing temptation today. By Thy Spirit guide them back to the cross where this journey with Thee began. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

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

#### **FURTHERMORE.**

*It is not enough to stay where I am, and think everything's just fine.  
My life is not over, I am still moving on and maturing really takes time.  
I can learn from others who have gone on before, but the response to them is mine.  
I cannot stop now, there is more up ahead, as toward faith's goal I climb.*

*To keep on adding to what I know and have experienced, is important to me;  
Because I may have seen and done quite a lot, doesn't mean I know everything.  
The more that I learn reveals to me, that of all things around that I've seen;  
It is only a scratch on the surface of life, and of truth God gave me.*

*Physical life doesn't reach a point, where everything is under control.  
My heart's deceitful, the desire for more isn't gone because I am old.  
Ambition and challenge, influence and power, at times are more important than gold.  
But I want true devotion, compassion and grace, to be what abounds more and more.*

*Love for the saints, for God and His word, is one thing to daily increase.  
I need to be constant to show to all men, real proof of God's redeeming grace.  
In order to maintain a devotional life right, I need to - in everyplace-  
Take time to go, and put in the mind, more truth to fill my heart's space.*

*It takes time and will to go farther than here, and add to each facet of life.  
My walk and my word, and life with the Lord, need to grow in faith far more than sight.  
I need time with God who helps me each day to be strengthened to live by His might.  
And my response to His will, to go farther with Him, will make each part of my life right.*

***“Father God, who knows each and every part of me and my life. I commit my mind and heart to seek to go further than I have been, by applying effort to what has been given me. Give me the desire to add more to the things that count, and not waste time on the trivial things. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”***

## **1 Thessalonians 4:9-18**

### **COMFORT ONE ANOTHER**

Just because we know and love the Lord doesn't mean we have reached the acme of the Christian faith. There were some things lacking in the faith of the believers at Thessalonica that Paul wanted to help them with and in which to instruct them. The purity of life must be taught over and over to the Lord's people. New believers come among us, and many still have habits from their past that need to be dealt with by the word of God being well-taught them. The love between believers is natural evidence of new life when we pass from death to life. That love implanted by God is as real as breathing to us. We are bound by love to those we have never met, and when we meet them, there is genuine "phileo" love, family love, and affection that is natural to a child of God. Love expresses itself in deeds, mutual affection, and respect, in hospitality, sympathy, friendliness, and in warmth. That love, when nurtured and acted upon, purifies our souls so that we do not fake our affection. That love comes from a pure heart that is fervently linked with brothers and sisters in Christ. That kind of spiritual brotherly love creates an affection evident in service and fervent care.

There is another evidence of spirituality that goes further and deeper than family love. Self-sacrificing love (agape) is the deepest expression of value that we can give toward others. This is the kind of love God has for us. "The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." That kind of love is limited only by lack of opportunity as it grows more and more in reaching for Christ-likeness. The believers at Thessalonica had that love toward others, and the charge here is that it would be ongoing and increasing, not just a passing act.

Excitement is not always the best evidence of spiritual interest. There are physical and visible ways this kind of love is demonstrated. In our lives in this world, and in particular in daily living, there are those who are going to need our help. We need to apply ourselves to being quiet and minding our own business, and taking care of our own concerns. Working and walking honestly go together in the view of onlookers. I don't meet their needs by putting my nose into their business, but by tending to my own business in honorable labor, I can provide some benefit for others. It seems like some believers in Thessalonica were not working to even provide for themselves. This may have been because they were expecting the Lord to return momentarily, and they had stopped everything to wait for Him. This was one thing that was lacking there - an understanding of what happens when a believer dies. If a person stops working, they have to depend on others to sustain them. Then there is the tendency to start minding the business of others. Manual labor is dignified work. Adam worked in the Garden of Eden before he sinned. Paul worked with his hands so he would not be a burden on others. It was not uncommon for the Greeks to have slaves to do their work for them. The Jews, on the other hand, historically had learned a trade and were quite astute when it came to personal responsibility for themselves and their families. Working not only makes it possible to provide what we need, but it promotes honesty.

The teaching of the coming of the Lord was introduced in Matthew by the Lord Himself shortly before He died. The general coming that includes the imminent return of the Lord for the church, and the appearing of the Lord in glory to reign as King, was introduced to avoid the deceptive attempts of false messiahs to get a following. When the disciples were troubled the night of His betrayal, the Lord comforted their troubled hearts by promising to return and take them with Him to a prepared place for a prepared people. Some people had said the resurrection had already taken place. To clarify the truth and at the same time not take away the sense of urgency the hope of Christ's return, Paul taught the fact and order of His return in 1st Corinthians 15, and then here to the Thessalonians. That teaching would settle their doubts or any denials that it would even take place. Believers that die before the Lord's return are not lost.

A lack of knowledge of a subject is not sinful. To have the truth taught and deny or reject it is. The ignorance referred to in this passage of scripture was that this purifying hope had not been fully taught before. It had been spoken of in general terms. The Lord's coming is both a personal and public matter. At the coming of the Lord, He is coming to take us to a specific place, heaven; those He will receive to Himself are believers only. This is the first resurrection. Those whose bodies are asleep because of the death of the body will have their spirit and body reunited at this resurrection. Sleeping of bodies is only referred to in regard to believers. The real person is with the Lord presently and will rejoin that changed body that will be like the Lord Jesus Christ's resurrected body. As far as believers are concerned, Christ dealt with our death and judgment when He died

for us on the cross. So, the bodies of believers are asleep when they are "present with the Lord." That body will be awakened at the coming of the Lord, and physical personhood will be eternal.

The Greeks of Paul's day had a hopeless religion, as do many today. Fear of death has a strong clamp on the souls of those without hope, without Christ, and without God. Christians have a "blessed hope." Our hope is based on the fact that Jesus died for us and rose again physically. In the same way, it happened to Him; it will happen to us at the rapture of the church. Those who had been in the terrible persecution of the early church, and even today, are put to sleep by Jesus, and through the Lord Jesus will God bring with Him. Sleeping bodies and redeemed living spirits will be brought together - one from the earth and the other from heaven.

The dead will be raised from where those bodies are - in the graves, in the ocean, or wherever they are, by the power of the omnipotent God. The word of the Lord will instantaneously change living Christians because of His cross work, His resurrection, and the words we have of accomplished redemption. It will be the same loud voice that called Lazarus from the dead and announced a finished work at the cross that will call us to Himself. Michael's voice will move back the hosts of darkness in Satan's domain, and the trumpet of God will call us all to move forward to gather unto Him.

The dead shall rise in response to the One who holds the keys to life and death. The resurrection of life will happen as the Lord Jesus said, and God's power will accomplish this first resurrection. He who made man from dust will reassemble that person again in a glorified body that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that will not fade away. That rapture, the catching up, will affect the bodies of the living saints as all the family of God is caught up in fellowship together and joyfully gather unto our Lord and Savior.

Our first physical view of our Lord Jesus Christ will be in the air, and from then on, we will be forever with Him. There will be no separation, and we will share in His likeness and life. By virtue of His righteousness imputed to us, our character and body will be blameless before God. We are comforted and can comfort others when loved ones pass away because we know what is coming. We know now what is the end of the story. Grief is not inconsistent with acceptance of the will of God. There is concern and sorrow because of loss, but hope and rest because the future has been made plain to us by the word of God and the Holy Spirit.

*It is going to happen; we just don't know when  
The Father chooses the time, not angels or men  
The Son rises from His throne, joined by a holy throng  
The archangel, the trumpet bearer, and all those saints who have gone.*

*They all move toward earth where they stop in the clouds  
The Lord's shout, the archangel's voice, and the trumpet all sound  
The dead in Christ are raised, leaving graves an empty space  
Body parts, once scattered, are gathered together from their resting place.*

*Living saints are changed in an instant of time  
Darkness they leave, now in His presence they shine  
With faces reflecting the brightness of His glory  
And another chapter opens as God unfolds more of His story.*

*The role we will play and the service we will give  
Is hard to conceive of, in this scene where we live  
Here things get worse and worse; there, people are right  
Here is moral and spiritual darkness; there is moral and spiritual light.*

*We bore the image of the earthly; then in the image of heaven, we will be  
Here on earth, I am a unique person; in heaven, I will still be me.  
But I will be changed to be like the Lord, suited to the environs of heaven  
And able to do what He wants and accomplish the purposes given.*

*Fellowship and joy here experienced will then be complete  
Rejoicing with the Lord and the completed bride as finally, we meet  
As one purchased possession, He paid for with the "blood of His own"  
There to share in the blessings of the One who now sits on His throne.*

***"Father, there are a lot of things about the coming of the Lord that are in my mind at this moment. But I do not want to stray into areas of my imagination as I think of seeing Him. It is just that I am getting anxious to see Him and experience those things that will show the whole universe the glory of the Lord. Amen."***

**1Thessalonians 5:1-11**



## **BE ALERT**

There is no question that the coming of the Lord for the church was on the mind of the apostle Paul when he wrote this epistle. Teaching about the coming of the Lord had been given but in the sense of His promise to return. In this book, he begins with salvation and the Lord's coming. We have been rescued from coming judgment. Service for God in view of His coming will give us the incentive to keep us pressing ahead with the Gospel. The sanctification of believers in light of the Lord's coming motivates believers to live holy lives in purity before God and the world. Sorrow was lifted from the Lord's people when they understood how the coming of the Lord would take place. Now in view of the Lord's coming, the epistle concludes with an effort to stir up the Lord's people first in themselves and then in their calling and relationship with others.

Dates are not given in relation to the coming of the Lord. The fact of it is all we need to know in order to be ready. The commencement of it will be sudden and the time appropriate to God's calendar of events, not ours, nor by our wishful thinking. It is foolish for us to set dates because "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." The people of God should never allow themselves to be misled by those who set dates based on current events in the world or for any other reason. His coming will be unexpected and surprising. "Times" has to do with the length of the interval between His ascension and His coming. "Seasons" have to do with the characteristics of the interval. The Thessalonians, and we, know all we need to know. Avoiding speculation in regard to this event is the attitude we are to have.

They knew the day of the Lord was coming but did not know that the commencement of the day of the Lord would be the rapture of the church. That event will be the first act of the day when the judgment of sin begins on this earth. The punishment of those who rejected their Messiah, the punishment of those who persecuted God's chosen earthly people, and the punishment of those who knowingly and deliberately reject Christ as their personal Savior will begin at the coming of the Lord for His church. It will end when the Lord Jesus Christ reigns as King. This was common knowledge from the scriptures, but the coming of the Lord for those who are His own was not known. This was the first written down message regarding the rapture. The manner of His coming is like "a thief in the night," not the time of His coming. As believers, we should maintain the type of conduct and purity of life so that we will not be ashamed of what we are doing when He calls us to Himself.

Those people who do not know nor acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ have accommodated themselves to the world around them and say, "Peace and Safety." The attitude of those people is to live in tolerance and harmony, in spite of the evil and moral wickedness that is going on around them and in which some of them were engaged. They say to be friendly with everyone and don't cause any stirring up of conscience by preaching the Gospel and warning people of the consequences of sin. Safety to such people is being secure from disturbance by God interfering with their sinful lifestyle. There will be an end to what is happening, no matter what laws are passed by godless legislators. The inevitable effect of ignoring righteousness and justice is that destruction will come suddenly, and the effect of the commencement of the day of the Lord will be felt worldwide as millions of people are suddenly and unexplainably not able to be found.

Christians are not ignorant of this fact and so should not be surprised that it will happen. The return of the Lord will be sudden; even though we don't know when it will take place, we will have no time to make any quick changes. We should be conducting ourselves daily at this present time as if it will happen today. As sons of light, the new birth has given us the capacity to understand the light of the word of God. This is not second-hand reflected light but like from God that is part of our new nature. By not knowing the date of His return, we will keep on with our work here and avoid anything that we know is wrong right up to the time we die or the Lord comes. We do not belong in the position of those in darkness, nor are we in the condition of the unsaved.

It is incumbent upon us to be awake to spiritual things, not insensible to them like those who have no interest in the things of God. They are willfully unaware of God and choose to ignore His word. In contrast, Christians are to be alert mentally and spiritually to all that is going on around us. We are to be stable, and not panic because of all the increasing ungodliness, and what others may say are evidence of Christ's coming. It is right that we should be vigilant in view of the signs of the times and use this awareness as a motivation to pursue and engage in the things of God actively. The common practice of sleeping is used as an illustration of man's indifference to God. People are spiritually asleep because they want to indulge themselves in their own pursuits and pleasures. Therefore, they are spiritually indifferent to all that is important in the future and live only for the present.

God's people, on the other hand, are aware of what is happening around us. We know the consequences of sin from the historical accounts in the scriptures, as well as what has happened in secular history. The learning process has made sense to us, and we live in the light of day, where everything is exposed to the light. There is a real difference between a believer's outlook on events, then that of those who chose to deceive themselves. There is stability, sober, self-controlled conduct in those who understand what God is doing. Faith

and love are a shield to our vital life practices in the same way a breastplate is to the body. Faith is our confidence in the Lord, what He is doing and will yet do. We know that whatever is the objective of God's dealings with mankind, it is right. That faith in Him produces in us love toward people that preserves us from compromise and sinning because love wants the best for others.

The principle of cause and effect (faith and love), along with hope, enables us to resist the influence of the ungodly that seeks to claim our thoughts and choices. The "hope of salvation" as a helmet does not refer to our salvation from hell but from the power and presence of sin in this life. Hope keeps us looking ahead. Instead of being asleep, we are alert to spiritual matters. We are mentally alert to all that is going on, so we will not be sidetracked or compromising for the sake of peace and safety that deceives people. The sober, stable people of faith and love also need the helmet of hope because the wrath that inevitably is coming will not overtake us. We have been delivered from that wrath because we have been purchased through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He died on our behalf, and for that reason, we will be caught up in the Lord's coming for the church before that wrath comes. Whether in the natural state of being awake or asleep, or alive or dead, really doesn't affect that fact. We will be delivered from the coming judgment. The condition of the believer does not affect the fact of our deliverance because of that purchase He made when He paid the price of our sin, and it was ratified when we trusted Him by faith. He died that we might live with Him and for Him. All of these things are reasons for us to be alert and ready because the coming of the Lord may be very close to happening.

In view of the fact that us being ready for His coming and that we will be living with Him, we need all the benefits of encouragement and challenges now that believers can offer each other. When one comes alongside us, there is given the urge to press forward in the things of God and conduct ourselves appropriately as sons and daughters of God. When we know another person needs our support emotionally and our help physically, we should be there to strengthen and edify one another as believers. Being alert to the fact of the imminent return of the Lord is an important incentive to godly living and conduct consistent with our testimony. Being alert to the needs of others is a practical way to assist them in looking ahead with hope, living in faith, and demonstrating love.

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

#### **CHECK THE SKY.**

*He promised it would happen - He is coming!  
Not a stranger or an accomplice - He is coming!  
We will know without a doubt who it is - He is coming!  
No one is going to stop the process - He is coming!  
The voice of the archangel will make the announcement - He is coming!  
The sound of the trumpet will arouse all who are waiting - He is coming!*

*When? Don't worry, everything is under control.  
What? The meeting, of course! We will meet Him - there - with them.  
Who? You who are family - brethren - children of light - of the day.  
How? Like a thief in the night - no time to make changes or preparation.  
Where? Whether awake or asleep - we will live - with Him.  
Why? We belong to the day - eternal day.*

*Look for -----?  
Times and seasons? Don't waste your time looking at the calendar and watch.  
Peace and safety? Don't get complacent because things may seem good to you.  
Destruction and war? Don't be misled. They have been around for a long time.  
Sleep or awake? Don't worry, as long as you are ready ahead of time.  
Faith and love? Put them on like armor and be ready for whatever comes.  
Day or night? It doesn't make any difference which side of the world you are on.*

*Christ will return visibly - with a loud command.  
The angel will shout unmistakably - saints will hear.  
The trumpet will sound audibly - there will be a great fanfare.  
Believers who are dead will rise literally - the graves will not hold them.  
Believers who are alive will be changed instantly - raptured into His presence.*

***"O Father, who has reserved the time of the coming for Your own knowledge: I thank You for the promise of the coming of Christ. It is enough for me to know that it is going to happen. Just remind me from time to time to be on my toes and ready. Amen."***

**1Thessalonians.5:2** *“Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it,”*

### **PRESERVED.**

The preservation of the believers in testimony was always a concern of Paul. He wanted their complete sanctification, not a partial setting apart that would look okay outwardly but left the saints without a real and lasting peace. When we are at peace, not only with God but with ourselves and all the saints, it affects my whole person. I am at peace and preserved when there are no barriers between God and me. The soul is preserved because I am able to rejoice in songs of praise and thanksgiving, which not only affects my soul but warms my spirit toward God. The body is preserved because when I am feeling good physically, I am not sidetracked by pain or discomfort, so the soul can sing, the spirit is raised higher, and I can walk without complaint in the ways that please my Lord. And perhaps better than all the explanations I can make about it all is that it is a done deal. He that has called me will make it happen. I can be assured that it is going to be accomplished. Thanks, Lord!

***“When I step ahead firmly, Father, it makes everything around my going seem right. I know the reason for that is the preserving hand of God. I praise You for this vigor; this enthusiasm; this confidence; this grace that reminds me that it He that is in me is making this happen. Thanks again! I really appreciate this! Amen.”***

### **1 Thessalonians 5:12-28**

#### **COMFORT AND EXHORT**

In an earnest appeal to the Lord's people, whom he treats as equals in the same family, Paul exhorts the believers at Thessalonica to acknowledge and appreciate the labor of some of those in the assembly. There are those "among you" that could include people like Phoebe of Cenchrea, Dorcas of Joppa, and Aquila and Priscilla, who were noted for their interest and efforts to be a help to the Lord's people. Such people among us deserve our respect and thanks. There are those who are "over" us by virtue of them being raised up by the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. Church government is to be recognized, and their spiritual concern establishes their designated authority. Their position of headship in the local congregation comes from the Lord. Spiritual maturity and wisdom are obvious evidence of their right to admonish us by putting into our minds those things that are right scripturally.

Those who have insight into the things of God have the responsibility to impart what is right to the believers in that fellowship. Admonishing does not only mean the correction of what is wrong but of promoting and teaching what is right. There are those among us who are over us, who have the capacity and God-given wisdom to help us in the difficulties of life. There are also those who, by the very fact of having lived longer, know how to address problems and how to define and bring about wise solutions to those problems. It is a comfort to have such people to whom we can turn and know with confidence that they have our spiritual welfare in their hearts.

People like that need to be respected, not with gushing words of flattery, but with an intelligent, sympathetic appreciation for who they are and what they are doing for the Lord's people. We need to let them know we respect them for their work and competence in the things of God and assure them of our gratitude and love. They, in turn, need to promote harmony among God's people in the assembly and maintain harmony among themselves as leaders among us. A divided, contentious oversight soon loses the respect of the believers in the assembly and their ability to lead. Fellowship can easily be lost in an assembly when it is lost among those who lead. Living in peace with others will mean there are times I have to listen and act on the opinions of others, even though they may differ in some ways from mine. Leadership has its dangers, and Satan knows that if he can divide leaders, he can divide assemblies.

There are some rules and guidelines that enable those who lead to maintain the purpose of the assembly effectively. The warning to the idle on that day may have been because they were expecting the Lord to come within a short time and so quit working. The warning was corrective rather than a threat. Being disorderly requires a verbal warning, but that does not mean we are to yell at them to straighten up. A firm, clear, serious statement as to what is appropriate and their need to correct their behavior has in view a person who is out of work to get back in step with what is right.

Some of the saints are timid or shy and are afraid of making a mistake. They need some understanding and encouragement from a sensitive, long-tempered man who has compassion but is not a pushover. When a person grieves over the death of a loved one, they need comfort and sympathy. A leader who maintains self-control in spite of the opinions of others or provocation and unavoidable difficulties is one who can be trusted. All of us need these characteristics in our dealing with others. Acting with grace and sensing the condition of others, and being able to give some sound advice, is a great help to those who suffer in one way or another.

We need to be able to communicate in order to know the problem, and we need God to give us the right solution. People need to see Christ in us, not retaliation or criticism. That may mean we will have to suffer rejection of our advice or some vindictive action taken against us. Do not pay back in kind!

### **EXHORT ONE ANOTHER**

*We need each other as the people of God  
We need comfort and exhortation in this ungodly world  
When we know there are those who care for our soul  
We recognize that each one is sanctified, set apart for the Lord.*

*Some lead, and some follow; some labor intensely  
Others are careless and need warnings when they're unruly  
Leaders need to take the careless ones aside  
And urge them to remember who, for them, has died.*

*Normal living for most is not right for the people of God  
Our commitment to Christ means we follow our Lord  
How He lived and taught when He was here among men  
It is the way we are to live as representatives of Him.*

*Let us all commit ourselves to live by faith  
In that way we can demonstrate God's grace in this place  
Our testimony will then have an impact on others  
We, in turn, trust in Christ, learning from our sisters and brothers.*

***"Father, the saints of God here do want to please Thee and come together in faith and fellowship. Bless us all as we share in common our life in this assembly. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

Perhaps the best way we can influence and lead or help others is to have a glad heart ourselves. Joy is one very positive thing that is contagious. Our joy as believers comes from many reasons. To express joy in being alive, being able to know God and experience His grace is one way to pass on joy to others. Joy at the arrival of the Lord's Day, joy in singing a hymn, joy when we see our Christian brothers and sisters bless us and others. Joy when we hear the Gospel preached, joy when we hear the Lord Jesus well spoken of, declares the Source of our joy. Joy in sickness because we know the Lord is with us; joy in the very shadow of death demonstrates the reality of our faith in Him. It may be that there are times when we are not inclined to be joyful, but joy is a result of our choices, not our circumstances. Christian joy is different from our natural human response to events or people. It finds its source in God, and "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

The second of these commands that connects us with God as believers is our communion with Him in prayer. This act of choice on our part is to stay in conscious contact with God at all times. This lifts us above all the stress of life that hinders us when we try to "go it alone." In this sense, prayer is an attitude of being aware of God with us at all times, even though we may not be speaking words to Him constantly. We need to have times set aside to pray and express ourselves in words of "Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication" to God in our "closet." In this case, prayer is dealing with God in faith when we are working, singing, are in danger, or are suffering. The consciousness of fellowship and communion with God is our choice in response to this command from Him.

Thankfulness in spite of difficulties does not mean we are thankful for the difficulties and suffering, although sometimes they are for our good. This third command makes us aware of what we have rather than what we don't have. Joy is what we have in God. Prayer is what we have with God. Thankfulness is what we give to God. Prayer is in relation to our appreciation of knowing God is with us in all circumstances. Thanksgiving is our attitude and includes acts of appreciation being expressed to God for "every good and perfect gift that cometh down from above." Nothing that happens to us is haphazard. God's will, has been designed by Him for us, and through us, He can work effectively for the benefit of those around us. Everything from the warnings we give to blessings that result as a result of our service is a reason to be thankful that God is willing to work His will through us.

We are not turned loose to act independently of God. The Holy Spirit is in each believer to work out God's will. There are times when we wonder why someone else is doing something very different from what we do. There may be a temptation to criticize and stop them because it doesn't fit our mold. That would be wrong. Don't suppress or quench the fire another person has because it is different from our traditional or formal way of doing things. To quench that action because of a technicality we might have could mean that we are interfering

with God's work. In the same way, we should not quench the Spirit in ourselves by passing up a "teaching moment" when it arises. The Spirit of God can use the spontaneous action that comes unexpectedly to produce results of which we never thought. To resist is to refuse divine guidance. It is the Spirit who gave the gifts, and He guides the use of them.

Before the days of the written New Testament, the Lord gave prophets to pass on His truth to His people. Apostles and prophets were the foundation of the church. There may have been a tendency in some of the Judaizers or those who listened to them to treat those prophets with contempt because their "prophesying" was not what they wanted to hear. We need to understand the fact that God uses others to minister to us, and we are not to despise what they know to be true. It may be things we have never thought of, but when we "try the spirits" or test the teaching with the scriptures which we now have, we can be edified, exhorted, and comforted. There is an unfortunate tendency to put down what someone else says because it doesn't agree with my opinion about a matter or an interpretation of a scriptural passage. By examination to test for reality, we are able to discern what is right or wrong. It is up to us to check out and prove what is right. That needs to be our objective, not just to prove the other person is wrong. "The word of God is not bound." It is up to us to be willing to let it teach us, guide us, and empower us when we let the Spirit of God work through others for our benefit.

### **COMFORT ONE ANOTHER**

*Joy comes by choice from our spirits in worship  
That gladness is caught by others because it is contagious  
We come together in testimony and happy fellowship  
To praise our Lord Jesus, who has daily blessed us.*

*Our thanks we raise when our souls are warm  
With songs, we testify and praise our Lord's name  
We wait for that moment of time when our Lord will come  
And with prayer and thanksgiving, we testify to His honor and name.*

*These bodies in which our spirits and souls now dwell  
Move under the direction of the choices we make  
The Holy Spirit bids our voices to open and tell  
Of the salvation and blessings in this way that we take*

*This epistle was written that we might look higher than the earth  
The things of time and sense will soon be things of the past  
Spirit, soul, and body are of immeasurable worth  
At the rapture, when the Lord comes, we will be home at last.*

There is a list of rules given that are simple and plain and essential in order to maintain an appropriate Christian testimony. One of these is to keep us away from and have no part with anything that even looks like it is evil. We need to distance ourselves from every visible form of that which would dishonor, disregard or dismiss the name and character of our Lord. It is our responsibility to "prove what is good" and do it, know what is bad, and remove ourselves from it. This includes errors in teaching, not just pleasure seeking. Unscriptural teaching is not of God. I will remove myself from it and have nothing to do with it. That action will often make us very unpopular with those who want "everyone to be happy, so we must be tolerant," even though their doctrine is wrong.

When we separate from that which is wrong, "sanctify you wholly," there will be charges of bigotry, intolerance, unchristian-like attitude, divisiveness, and a judgmental attitude. People want to lay down their own rules of conduct and think we all should accept them in spite of what the word of God says. We need to testify that it is "the God of peace" that completely sets us apart to peace on His terms, not ours. He sanctifies us and enables us to carry out His instructions in His way. The whole person is affected by this sanctification. My obedience to His word maintains my spirit and the fellowship it has with God. It will be worked out daily when "the Spirit bears witness" with my spirit. The soul is sanctified as my relationship with people around me is affected by my response to my spirit's fellowship with the Lord. My body will turn away from that to which it is attracted by others when it responds to the mental and moral restrictions placed upon it by my soul and spirit. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all working on our behalf as "the God of peace" to preserve us, so there will be no grounds for accusation in view of the Lord's coming.

God has called us to Himself. What we cannot do ourselves, God can do through us. He will work out His will when we are available for Him to use, and that is what He expects of us. The Thessalonians need to be taught that God is working through them to further the Gospel, and that was why they were successful in their

Christian testimony up to this point. Now they had to be made aware of the way God intends to keep on using them and their responsibility in this activity. The same is true for us today.

We need to pray specifically for those engaged in laboring in the Gospel and teaching God's word. We need to keep in fellowship with our fellow believers and show our friendship and gladness whenever we see them. They need to know we appreciate them, and we can demonstrate our faith and love in ways appropriate to their culture and the place they live. We need to realize there is an authority in these epistles we read, and the words need to be heard publicly today as a message from God, not just a book to be studied. A charge is a strong statement that does not allow any excuses to be avoided. Everyone needs to hear the same things at the same time so there will be no speculation or misunderstanding.

Assemblies of God's people are testimonies He raises up in communities to represent Him and to demonstrate the characteristics of God through God's people. In that way, those in darkness may see the light of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." When they see that grace lived out in God's people in attitudes and actions, God is glorified. When God is glorified, those unbelievers may see the reality of faith in God's people and recognize there is a Supreme Authority, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom they are obligated and whom they must trust. He is not dead. His body is not in the grave. He is alive. He has promised to come again, and He is coming - soon!

***"Father, I give Thee thanks for giving the truth of the coming of the Lord so plainly and understandably in the book of 1st Thessalonians. May this hope purify Thy servant so I will not be ashamed when He comes. The promise the Lord gave just before He died provides a lot of motivation to press forward in the work to which we are called. I praise Thee for this in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***