

Living in Hope of the Rapture

William E. Johnson

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by William E. Johnson

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This series of sermons was preached in 2002 at New Testament Baptist Church in the auditorium Sunday School class.

My initial plan was for each chapter in this book to correspond to one sermon or lesson. However, seldom was I able to teach an entire chapter in one session. In most cases, it took me 2-3 weeks to teach each chapter.

The chapters are formatted in outline form. These are the outlines that I used to preach from. I suggest that the reader approach each chapter as a sermon, or as a study guide, with an open Bible at his / her side.

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Chapter 1. Salvation - Past, Present, and Future

READ - 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

TEXT - *Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father (1 Thessalonians 1:3)*

THEME - We trusted Jesus to save us, and we hope for His soon return, but in the meantime, we need to live lives changed by His presence.

Introduction:

Some background information:

The City of Thessalonica

QUOTE - (NIV SB) "Thessalonica was a bustling seaport city at the head of the Thermaic Gulf. It was an important communication and trade center, located at the junction of the great Egnatian Way and the road leading north to the Danube. Its population numbered about 200,000, making it the largest city in Macedonia. It was also the capital of its province."

Became capital of Macedonia ca. 168 B.C.

It was a "free city," ruled by its own citizenry under the Roman Empire.

Served as the hub of political and commercial activity in Macedonia... became known as "the mother of all Macedonia."

QUOTE (Cicero) "Thessalonica is in the bosom of the empire." (It was right in the center of the heart of the empire, and was the chief city of Macedonia.)

First named Therma because of the hot springs in the area.

In 316 B.C. Cassander, one of the 4 generals who divided up the empire of Alexander the Great upon his death, took Macedonia and made Thessalonica his home base. He renamed the city in memory of his wife, Thessalonike, who was a half sister of Alexander.

The city is still in existence and is now known as Salonika.

The Church at Thessalonica

READ - Acts 17:1-14

QUESTION - What are some key truths we can learn about this church from these 14 verses?

QUESTION - How much time did Paul spend in Thessalonica?

QUESTION - Was the infant church made up of Jews, Gentiles, or both? What verses support your answer?

1. Only had a short time with Paul (2-5 weeks)

"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures" (Acts 17:2)

2. Learned A LOT in 2-5 weeks.

cf. 1 Thess 1:3,7,8; 4:1-2,9; 5:1-2

3. Evidently NOT a scholarly church, though!

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11)

QUESTION - Which is more important, following the example of our Christian leaders, or following the truths of God's Word?

4. A model church, whose example was known far and wide.

READ - 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8

The Letter to the Thessalonian Christians

1. One of Paul's first (written approx. 51-53 A.D.) (Galatians may have been earlier - 49 A.D.)

2. Purpose

- Fill in the gaps left by hasty departure.
- Encourage new believers in trials (cf. 3:3-5)
- Give additional instruction re: Godly living (cf. 4:1-8)
- Give assurance about future things. (cf. 4:13-18)

3. Theme

QUOTE (J. Vernon McGee) "In 1 Thessalonians the emphasis is upon the rapture of believers, the coming of Christ to take His church out of the world. The fact that the coming of Christ is a purifying hope should lead to sanctification in our lives. There are a lot of people today who want to argue prophecy, and there is a great deal of curiosity about it. But John tells us, '*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*' (1 John 3:3). This hope should have a purifying effect in our lives. I am not interested in how enthusiastic and excited you get over the truth of the rapture of the church; I want to know how you are living. Does this hope get right down to where you are living, and does it change your life?"

So, the theme of the book is NOT ONLY the rapture of the church, but ALSO the impact that hope should have in our daily lives.

Now let's move into the first chapter:

I. Aspects of their salvation - 1 Thes. 1:3,9-10

A. Salvation is described in 3 tenses.

(3 is a significant number in scripture.)

QUESTION - The number 3 is significant in scripture. What are some things mentioned in scripture that bear the number 3?

ILLUS - J. Vernon McGee mentions a conversation he had with a scientist. The scientist asked, "Have you ever noticed that the universe is divided into a trinity?" You and I live in a physical universe that is divided into time, space, and matter. Time is divided into three parts: Past, present, and future. Space is divided into length and breadth and height. (Some speak of a fourth dimension, but it doesn't happen to be in this material universe.)" Although J. Vernon McGee didn't mention it, I believe you could also make note of the fact that matter is divided into solids, liquids, and gases."

Paul here describes the salvation experience as a "trinity" - 3 tenses / aspects of salvation.

B. "Work of faith"

1. There is an aspect of our salvation that is past tense, rooted in Christ's completed work.

- Paul explains this in 1:9, "...how ye turned to God from idols..."

- When we trusted in Christ (past tense), we immediately experienced salvation from the penalty of sin.

2. Salvation begins by BELIEVING ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Paul told the Philippian jailor, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.... Acts 16:31

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:13

ILLUS - Jesus made it clear that the WORK OF FAITH started out by simply BELIEVING IN HIM. *"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28-29)*

QUESTION - If FAITH / BELIEF is what secured our salvation, why did Paul use the term "WORK OF FAITH" here? What part does the word WORK play?

3. True faith shows itself in a life of works.

READ - *James 2:18-24*

QUESTION - Does Paul's teaching about salvation by grace through faith contradict James' teaching here?

ANSWER - NO, James is stating the same thing that Paul here tells the Thessalonians... true faith SHOWS ITSELF in works.

C. "Labor of love"

1. Present tense - once we're saved, this is what we should be dedicating our time to.

- Paul explains this in 1:9, "...how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God..."

- As we trust Christ in our daily lives, we progressively experience salvation from the power of sin.

QUESTION - Can you tell me the big theological word for this thought?

ANSWER - SANCTIFICATION.

QUOTE (Unknown) "Sanctification follows (See Justification). In justification our sins are completely forgiven in Christ. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit makes us more like Christ in all that we do, think, and desire. True sanctification is impossible apart from the atoning work of Christ on the cross because only after our sins are forgiven can we begin to lead a holy life."

- Paul mentions it again later in his letter:

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;" (1 Thes. 4:3-4)

"Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thes. 5:22-23)

ILLUS - From Texas history comes the story of the conversion of Sam Houston. At one time, the Texas hero was called "The Old Drunk." While he was governor of Tennessee, his wife left him. In despair he resigned as governor and tried to escape his problems by going to live among Cherokee Indians. He stayed drunk much of the time. It is said that the Indians, as they walked through the forest, would have to

move him out of the path where he lay in a stupor. Later, he went to Texas, where he became the great hero of the Texas revolution when he routed General Santa Ana's Mexican army. Houston's battle cry, "Remember the Alamo!" helped win independence for Texas. He married the daughter of a Baptist preacher and later trusted Christ, but he still had some of his old tendencies. One day as he rode along a trail, his horse stumbled. Houston spontaneously cursed, reverting to his old habit. Immediately he was convicted of his sin. He got off his horse, knelt down on the trail, and cried out to God for forgiveness. Houston had already received Christ, but God was teaching him to live in fellowship with him moment by moment. And as soon as the Holy Spirit made Sam Houston aware of his sin, he confessed it. (Darrell W. Robinson, *People Sharing Jesus*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, p. 17)

2. We rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit for this aspect of our Christianity. (We cannot do it without Him.)

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Gal. 5:16)

3. Paul's use of words is interesting, as we contemplate the truth of sanctification. (i.e. our progressive deliverance from the power of sin in our lives)

- LABOR of love

QUESTION - What does this teach us? What thoughts does Paul's use of this particular word bring to mind?

ANSWER - Hard work, not easy, continuous, difficult

QUOTE (John Flavel) "It is easier to cry against one-thousand sins of others than to kill one of your own."

QUOTE (D. L. Moody) "I've had more trouble with D. L. Moody than any other man I've ever known."

QUOTE (Thomas a' Kempis) "Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish yourself to be."

QUOTE (John Newton) "I am not what I might be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be. But I thank God I am not what I once was, and I can say with the great apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am.""

- labor of LOVE

QUESTION - What does this teach us? What thoughts does Paul's use of this particular word bring to mind?

ANSWER - Pre-eminence of love in everything we do. Too often we forget this most important of Christian virtues.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." (1 Cor. 13:13)

D. "Patience of hope "

1. Future tense - the goal, to be like and with Christ.

- Paul explains this in 1:10, *"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."*

- We will eventually experience salvation from the presence of sin.

- This is the great HOPE of Christianity.

QUOTE (Martin Luther) "Everything that is done in the world is done by hope."

QUOTE (Sophocles) "It is hope which maintains most of mankind."

QUOTE (O.S. Marden) "There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something better tomorrow."

QUOTE (Alexander Pope) "Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

QUOTE (Thomas Jefferson) "I steer my bark with hope in the head, leaving fear astern."

QUOTE (Carlyle, the Scottish philosopher) "Man is, properly speaking, based upon hope, he has no other possession but hope, this world of his is emphatically the place of hope."

2. Only Christianity offers such hope.

ILLUS - A number of years ago researchers performed an experiment to see the effect hope has on those undergoing hardship. Two sets of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one set in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other rats were periodically lifted out of the water and then returned. When that happened, the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours. Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they suddenly had hope! Those animals somehow hoped that if they could stay afloat just a little longer, someone would reach down and rescue them. If hope holds such power for unthinking rodents, how much greater should its effect be on our lives. (Today in the Word, May, 1990, MBI, p. 34)

ILLUS - The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind." The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much. But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live." Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?" (Bits and Pieces, July, 1991)

E. These 3 tenses of salvation are mentioned elsewhere in scripture:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" (Titus 2:11-13)

"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;" (Col. 1:4-5)

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:25-27)

"Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (2 Cor. 1:10)

II. Mechanics of their salvation. (1 Thes. 1:4-6)

QUESTION - Look closely at verses 4-6. What 3 forces were involved in the salvation of the believers at Thessalonica?

ANSWER - Election (vs. 4), Gospel (vs. 5), Example (vs. 6)

QUESTION - Which of those 3 forces is dispensable? Can you be saved without any of them? Which is most important?

A. Election played a part in their salvation.

- Note that Paul states it as an obvious fact that everybody should simply know (vs. 4). (Much like the creation of the world... not explained, just stated as fact (*Gen. 1:1*))

- The ELECTION of believers cannot be DENIED.

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? [It is] God that justifieth." (Romans 8:33)

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. 2:10)

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." (1 Peter 1:2)

READ - 1 Cor. 1:26-29

READ - Eph. 1:4-5

- The FREE WILL of every man and woman also cannot be denied.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31)

"For by grace (that's the election part) are ye saved through faith (that's the free will part)..." (Ephesians 2:8)

QUESTION - How do we reconcile the tension in these 2 concepts?

QUESTION - What implications do these concepts have on soul-winning?

QUESTION - If the saved are ELECT, is there any reason for me to concern myself with soul winning?

- A WRONG RESPONSE to the confusion is to say, "It doesn't matter what I do, God will choose who is going to be saved, or who is going to be lost."

- A RIGHT RESPONSE to the confusion is to say, "I don't understand how God does His part, but He makes it clear that MY PART IS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE, and so I'm going to actively seek to get people saved.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-21)

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:15-16)

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:7-8)

- We need to consider ELECTION as God's part, and SOUL WINNING as our part.

QUOTE (John Cornette) "Did you ever notice how the churches that practice soul winning seem to have more of the elect?"

B. The Gospel had played a part in their salvation. (vs. 5)

- You cannot be saved apart from the gospel.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

C. Paul's example had played a part in their salvation. (vs. 6)

- The example (i.e. the lifestyle) of a believer is a powerful witness.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

QUESTION - There are those today who teach that we do not need to preach the gospel, but that simply living a godly life is sufficient. This concept is based, by some, on the verse mentioned above. What do you think of this? What role does such "lifestyle evangelism" play, and what role does verbal witnessing play, in our efforts to see people saved?

- It can also be a powerful witness to keep people from getting saved.

QUESTION (RHETORICAL) - Are you living what you preach? Is the truth of Jesus Christ REAL in your life? Does it change you? Has your lifestyle been altered since you believed? Is there a difference between the way you live and the way the lost world lives? A noticeable, tangible, meaningful difference that the lost world can see?

QUESTION (RHETORICAL) - If not, why would they ever be drawn to what you have... it makes no difference in your life?

III. Sharing of their salvation. (1 Thes. 1:6-8)

QUESTION - What did Paul say about the impact of the example of the Thessalonian believers?

A. Others in their immediate sphere of influence were now learning from the Thessalonians' example. (vs. 7)

B. Those beyond their immediate sphere of influence were learning, as well. (vs. 8)

C. Those who learned from the Thessalonians, were spreading the truth as well - MULTIPLICATION was occurring. (vs. 9)

D. When multiplication occurs, it ensures the message goes on, even if a key messenger (e.g. Paul) is taken out of the equation ("... so that we need not to speak any thing." - vs. 8)

THIS IS THE FORMULA GOD WANTS IN THE CHURCH!

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:11-12)

Conclusion:

Have you experienced the salvation that is available only in Jesus Christ? Has there been a time when you placed your faith and trust in Him?

Are you, daily, moment by moment, progressively becoming more like Jesus? Are you daily, moment by moment walking in the Spirit, experiencing deliverance from the power of sin in your life?

Are you living in hope of the great deliverance from the very presence of sin in your life? Does that hope energize you? Does that hope change your life? Does that hope impact the way you live, the places you go, the things you do, the goals and plans you make on a daily basis?

You see: We trusted Jesus to save us, and we hope for His soon return, but in the meantime, we need to live lives changed by His presence.

That is the great message of *1 Thessalonians 1*

Chapter 2. Hardships and Hecklers

READ - 1 *Thessalonians* 2:1-20

TEXT - *For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: (1 Thessalonians 2:1)*

THEME - No matter what hardships come our way, and no matter what hecklers say, our continued faithfulness to God will yield fruit, and bring joy to our lives.

Introduction:

In this second chapter of *1 Thessalonians*, Paul seems to be trying to defend himself against accusations. These accusations are never referenced directly, but the tone of his words indicate that he is trying to vindicate himself and his companions (Timothy and Silas) and their ministries among the Thessalonian Christians.

As we peruse this passage, we learn much about Paul... much about him as a man, and much about him as a minister.

We also learn much about how we should respond when faced with hardships and hecklers in our Christian walk.

From this chapter I hope we learn that no matter what hardships come our way, and no matter what hecklers say, our continued faithfulness to God will yield fruit, and bring joy to our lives.

I. Hardships and Hecklers (vss. 1-6)

A. Physical, life-threatening hardship. (vss. 1-2)

1. They had been greatly persecuted in Philippi

READ *Acts* 16:19-24

2. They were persecuted at Thessalonica

READ *Acts* 17:13

3. Persecution is part of Christianity.

2 *Timothy* 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

QUESTION - What are some examples of persecution that we face today?

ILLUS - This past week, in Pakistan, 7 Christians were tied up in chairs, and executed, with a single bullet to the head. People today are still being persecuted, and martyred for the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUOTE (News report from Mission Network News - <http://www.gospelcom.net/mnn/>) "Pakistan)--We begin today's news in Pakistan where sadness was mixed with dread as Christians mourned the loss of seven members in their church in Karachi. Jerry Dykstra with Open Doors says prayer for believers there is desperately needed. "It really is a really terrible time to be living in Pakistan, and they live in fear actually every time they go to work and go to church they're in fear of their lives." Pakistani Christians closed churches and Christian schools for the day. No arrests have been made in the attack but police say at least two gunmen are involved. Pray for the safety of believers in Pakistan as the threat against them grows. "

QUESTION - What can we learn from Paul's example that will help us when and if we face persecution?

4. Paul showed courage and boldness in spite of persecution. (*vs.* 2)

QUOTE (Ray Stedman) "Paul, of course, is here referring to physical courage. He really is understating the case when he says he was "shamefully treated," and that he had "suffered" in Philippi. Actually, this was one of the three times when he was beaten with thick rods and then thrown into prison, a Roman form of punishment. There, although he and Silas were thrust into stocks and held immobile, they began to sing praises unto God. Furthermore, Paul had suffered insult and mockery by being stripped of his clothes in public by order of the magistrates in Philippi. His Roman citizenship had been ignored. Even when he was freed by an earthquake he was summarily ordered out of town by the authorities. Yet he went bravely on to Thessalonica knowing that the same thing would happen there. You cannot read the life of Paul and fail to see the tremendous courage he demonstrated in his ministry. When a riot broke out in Ephesus he actually tried to face down a howling mob who were bent on his life. He had to be restrained by his friends to keep from sacrificing himself to the mob's fury. Where did he get his courage? Some say that Paul was courageous by nature, that he would take on anything or anyone. But certain verses indicate that was not true. He was like you and me. When he came into Corinth and began to preach, he did so, in his own words, "with much fear and trembling," {cf, 1 Cor 2:3}. Corinth intimidated him. Some of you who want to reach out to your fellow-workers feel intimidated at times by the pagan atmosphere of your work-place. Paul felt that very strongly. In Ephesus, he wrote, "there were fightings without and fears within," {cf, 2 Cor 7:5}. No, Paul was not naturally courageous. He was like most of us. By nature I am a devout coward. The few times in my life that I have shown courage were simply the grace of God at work. "

With the help of the Spirit of God in our lives, we, too, can continue on boldly in the face of hardships.

B. The hardship of having his motives questioned. (vss. 3-12)

(QUOTE - Barnes Notes (commentary) lists 3 possible charges that may have been leveled against him, and which he addresses in this chapter:

1. That it was represented by some that the apostle, and his fellow-labourers, sought influence and power; that they were dictatorial and authoritative; that they were indisposed to labour, and were, in fact, impostors. This charge Paul refutes abundantly by his appeal to what they knew of him, and what they had seen of him when he was there, cf. *1Th 2:1-12*.

2. That the church at Thessalonica met with severe and violent opposition from the Jews who were there. cf. *1 Thes 2:14-17*. This appears to have been a formidable opposition. (cf. *Acts 17:5*) They would not only be likely to use violence, but it is not improbable that they employed the semblance of argument that might perplex the church. These charges, if they were made, the apostle meets, by assuring the Thessalonians that they were suffering precisely the same things which the churches in Judea did; cf. *1 Thes 2:15,16*.

3. It was very probably represented by the enemies of Paul and his fellow-labourers, that they had fled from Thessalonica on the slightest danger, and had no regard for the church there, or they would have remained there in the time of peril, or, at least, that they would have returned to visit them. Their continued absence was probably urged as a proof that they had no concern for them. The apostle meets this by stating that they had been indeed "taken from them" for a little time, but that their hearts were still with them, and by assuring them that he had often endeavoured to visit them again, but that "Satan had hindered" him, (cf. *1 Thes 2:17-20*). He had, however, given them the highest proof of interest and affection that he could, for when he was unable to go himself, he had, at great self-denial, sent Timothy to establish them in the faith, and to comfort their hearts, (*1 Thes 2:1-3*). His absence, therefore, should not be urged as a proof that he had no regard for them.)

Let us then notice how Paul answers these hecklers:

1. Perhaps some questioned his honesty (*vss. 3-4*)

QUESTION - Apparently, he had been accused of using methods of "deceit, uncleanness, and guile." What was his defence against these charges (*vs.* 4)?

ANSWER - 2 words, or phrases make up his defence:

AS WE WERE ALLOWED:

DEFINITION (Jamieson, Faucett, & Brown Commentary) "We have been approved on trial," "deemed fit."

Acts 9:15 (The Lord said to Ananias) But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

1 Timothy 1:11-12 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

SO WE SPEAK:

QUOTE (People's New Testament Notes) "So we speak. God had given them the gospel as a trust. They were "stewards of the mysteries of God" [cf. *1 Cor 4:1*]. They spoke as those faithful to a trust, seeking to please God instead of men."

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

NOT AS PLEASING - not as persons who seek to please men; characteristic of false teachers

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

2. Perhaps some thought him a glory hound. (*vss.* 5-6)

a. But he didn't flatter to please men. (*vs.* 5)

NOTE - You can either tell people what they WANT to hear, or you can tell them what they NEED to hear. Paul chose the latter. We should, too.

QUOTE (Old saying) "Flattery will get you nowhere." ... is absolutely true.

b. And he didn't seek glory, even though he was entitled to it as an apostle. (*vs.* 6)

II. Model for Ministry (*vss.* 7-12)

QUESTION - Paul describes himself in 3 interesting ways in these verses. In verse 7, how does he describe himself?

ANSWER - He says he was gentle, like a nursing mother.

QUESTION - How about in verse 11?

ANSWER - He says he was like a father with his children.

QUESTION - He also uses the term "brethren" several times in this section. So we see him describing his relationship to the believers at Thessalonica as being like that of a mother, and that of a father, and that of a brother. What does each of these images teach us about how we should act toward one another?

ANSWER - We'll discuss 2 this morning - Paul's behavior as mother and father. I'll leave his relationship as brother for your own study.

A. He demonstrated gentleness among them, like a mother.

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

(Good place to park and talk about GENTLENESS as a trait of believers, as opposed to the "tell others off" mentality that pervades society (and Christianity) today.)

QUESTION - Is there ever a time when it is right to "tell somebody off?"

QUOTE (Matthew Henry) - "Mildness and tenderness greatly recommend religion, and are most conformable to God's gracious dealing with sinners, in and by the gospel. This is the way to win people."

Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; (1 Timothy 3:3)

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all [men], apt to teach, patient, (2 Timothy 2:24 AV)

To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, [but] gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. (Titus 3:2)

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, [and] easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (James 3:17)

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

B. He had expectations of them, like a father. (vss. 10-11)

1 Thessalonians 2:10-11 Ye [are] witnesses, and God [also], how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father [doth] his children,

1. His HOLY lifestyle describes how he discharged his duties to God.
2. His JUST lifestyle describes how he discharged his duties to men.
3. His UNBLAMEABLE lifestyle describes how there was no charge that would stick.

QUOTE (J. Vernon McGee) "This means that no charge could be maintained against the apostle and his companions. This doesn't mean that his enemies didn't accuse him - because they did - but the charges didn't stick."

4. He EXHORTED like a father. (Greek - PARAKALEO - comes alongside to help)
5. He COMFORTED like a father. (from a Greek word meaning "to encourage, console")
6. He CHARGED like a father. Fathers EXPECT something of children.

III. Reasons for Rejoicing (vss. 13-20)

A. Because they RECEIVED the Word.

1. He reminded them of their responsibility to receive the message.

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

QUOTE (People's New Testament Notes) "Not as the word of men. They had received the gospel preached by Paul as the word of the Lord, a divine message."

QUESTION - How do you respond when you hear the Word of God preached... do you consider it the word of the Lord, or the word of the preacher?

NOTE that Paul shows both sides of the equation regarding the Word of God. Compare *vs. 1:5* with *vs. 2:13*. The preacher's responsibility is to GIVE IT AS THE WORD OF GOD, and the hearer's responsibility is to RECEIVE IT AS THE WORD OF GOD.

ILLUS - Parable of Sower and Soils (cf. *Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23*) - difference was in the receptivity to the Word!

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17:11 - THIS WAS A DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS CHURCH.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Acts 2:41

2. It is the WORD OF GOD, powerful and life-changing!

"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. 23:29

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Rom. 1:16

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12

"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food ." Job 23:12

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" 1 Peter 2:2

3. You must decide whether you will receive it or not!

ILLUS - Bumper sticker - "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." On the one hand, it doesn't matter whether you believe it or not, it is still true! On the other hand, whether you believe it / receive it makes all the difference in the world to you!

B. Because they were not defeated by Satan.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

Note that Satan will ALWAYS fight against the work of God.

QUOTE (C.H. Spurgeon) - "There was never a revival of religion without a revival of the old enmity. If ever the Church of God is to be built, it will be in troublous times. When God's servants are active, Satan is not without vigilant mercenaries who seek to counteract their efforts."

QUOTE (C.H. Spurgeon) - "... it has been the same since the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He was on earth Satan hindered Him. He dared to attack Him to His face personally; and when that failed, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and men of all sorts hindered Him. When the apostles began their ministry, Herod and the Jews sought to hinder them; and when persecution did not avail, then all sorts of heresies and schisms broke out in the Christian Church. Satan still hindered them. A very short time after the taking up of our Lord, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, had become like earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter; the glory had departed, and the luster of truth was gone, because by false doctrine, lukewarmness, and worldliness, Satan hindered them. When the Reformation dawned, if God raised up a Luther, the devil brought out an Ignatius Loyola to hinder him. Here in England, if God had His Latimers and His Wickchiffs, the devil had his Gardiners and Bonners. When in the later reformation Whitfield and Wesley thundered like the voice of God, there were ordained reprobates found to hinder them, to hold them up to opprobrium and shame. Never, since the first hour struck in which goodness came into conflict with evil, has it ceased to be true that Satan hindered us. From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle, in the vanguard and in the rear, at the dawn of day and in the midnight, Satan hindered us. If we toil in the field, he seeks to break the ploughshare; if we build the walls, he labors to cast down the stones; if we would serve God in suffering or in conflict everywhere Satan hinders us."

QUESTION - There is a web site where you can go and view satellite images of your house (Terraserver). By clicking on the image, which initially shows your property from outer space, you can zoom in until you can see the trees and other landmarks in your own yard! Let's click... let's zoom in and bring this discussion down to where we live. What are some ways Satan fights against New Testament Baptist Church?

ANSWER - Some thoughts - busy-ness, laziness (entertainment), depression (stinkin' thinkin'), gossip (lies), discord (disunity)

1. He gets you to question God's Word (cf. point above.)

READ - Gen. 3:1-5

2. He slanders the saints (and gets his agents to do the same - THIS NEVER COMES FROM GOD!)

"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. (substance: or, cattle) But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Job. 1:9-11

3. He tempts us with sin.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Matt. 4:1

4. He infiltrates the church.

"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." Matt. 13:38-39

5. He attacks our bodies.

"So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." Job 2:7

"And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father." Luke 9:42

6. He lies.

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." John 8:44

7. He is a predator, and he hunts YOU

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5:8

QUESTION - What can we do about it when Satan hinders us?

ANSWER - READ - Eph. 6:11-18a

QUOTE (C.H. Spurgeon) - "I have but one piece of advice, and that is, go on, hindrance or no hindrance, in the path of duty as God the Holy Spirit enables you. "I did not expect," said a Christian minister, "to be easy in this particular pastorate, or else I would not have come here; for I always count it," said he, "to be my duty to show the devil that I am his enemy, and if I do that, I expect that he will show me that he is mine."

C. Because souls were won to Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.

ILLUS (Personal) - I get very discouraged as a believer sometimes. I battle with depression and stress like everyone else. I have not won a lot of people to Christ, but I have won some. I rejoice with Paul in that fact. No matter what Satan says to me or

shows me or trips me up with, I can always point to those believers and say, "SEE!" That is all that matters.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him ." Psalm 126:6

QUESTION - (Rhetorical) - Are there believers in the church today that are there because of you? Is there someone in this local church who is here because of your witness to them? If so, it is a source of joy for you!

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Luke 15:6-7

QUESTION - (Rhetorical) - Are there believers in other churches... perhaps other places you've lived previously, who are there because of you?

"And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." John 4:36

"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." Luke 10:17

QUESTION - (Rhetorical) - Are there believers on foreign soil, won by missionaries you helped finance through your giving?

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Prov. 11:30

Conclusion:

We have learned much from 1 Thessalonians 2.

We have learned how to handle Hardships and Hecklers.

We have learned Paul's Model for Ministry.

We have learned the Reasons we have for Rejoicing.

Paul said "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain" (1 Thessalonians 2:1)

I hope we have learned that "No matter what hardships come our way, and no matter what hecklers say, our continued faithfulness to God will yield fruit, and bring joy to our lives."

Chapter 3. Help for a Hurting Church

READ - 1 Thessalonians 3

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

Introduction:

Both churches and Christians go through hurting periods.

As we turn our attention to chapter 3 in our study, we learn something from how Paul attempted to help this church when it was hurting.

I. Send a good man. (vss. 1-4)

A. Paul was unable to visit them himself.

QUESTION - Why? What have we learned in previous studies about Paul's situation. Why was he not with them now, and why couldn't he return to them now?

ANSWER - He had been run out of town after spending only a few short weeks with this church (cf. *Acts 17*), and Satan hindered him in his efforts to return. - cf. *2:18*

QUESTION - Satan often attacks the head of a ministry - cf. *1 Thes. 2:18*. We see it often in churches, as well. Is Satan content to stop there?

QUOTE (Matthew Henry, re: *vss. 1-5*) "If the devil cannot hinder ministers from labouring in the word and doctrine, he will, if possible, hinder the success of their labours."

B. So, Paul sent Timothy.

QUESTION - What were some of the reasons why Paul sent Timothy? (*vs. 2*)

1. He sent Timothy to ESTABLISH the church. (*vs. 2*)

Cf. *vs. 3*

NOTE - Paul spent a lot of his personal time and energy on this type of ministry.

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. (Acts 15:32)

And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. (Acts 18:23)

ILLUS - This same type of ministry is demonstrated in the Old Testament story, where Aaron and Hur help up Moses hands. READ - *Exodus 17:8-13*

2. He sent Timothy to COMFORT the church. (*vs. 2*)

Cf. *vs. 4*

3. He sent Timothy, perhaps, to SILENCE the critics.

C. It cost Paul something to send Timothy.

QUESTION - What did it cost him?

READ *Acts 17:10-14* - When Paul went to Athens, he was alone. Timothy apparently joined him (*vs. 15*), but then (*Cf. 1 Thes. 3:1*), he sent Timothy away again, to Thessalonica.

D. Paul was more concerned about the church than about himself.

E. Paul always spoke the truth to his churches.

"when we were with you, we told you?" (*vs. 4*)

1. He didn't preach a health and wealth gospel.
2. He warned them of the realities of Christianity, persecution and hardship being part of that message.

QUOTE (Bible Knowledge Commentary) "When trouble comes, Christians often react by doubting that they are where God wants them to be; they often think that they have done something wrong and that God must be displeased with them. Even some mature Christians react this way, as evidenced by Paul's words of reassurance to Timothy many years later. (*cf. 2 Tim 3:12*). Yet storms often come to believers to make them able to stand firm, rather than to blow them away.

For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:15-16)

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

ILLUS - J. Vernon McGee tells of an elderly man who was once asked for his favorite verse. He replied, "It came to pass." When questioned why that was his favorite verse, he said, "When trouble comes my way, I look at that verse and remember that it came to PASS; it didn't come to STAY."

Just so, Paul always taught the realities of the Christian life, but also the assurance and comfort that these things come into life for our benefit, and they will never destroy us.

II. Seek an accurate report. (vss. 5-8)

A. Paul needed to know the truth of what was going on in Thessalonica. (vs. 5)

Cf. vs. 1 - "could no longer forbear" - lit. "couldn't stand it any longer!" Jamieson, Faussett, Brown says, "could no longer endure the suspense."

B. He didn't trust hearsay, but he trusted Timothy's assessment. (vs. 6)

1. Paul knew the dangers of gossip.
2. Gossip is a huge problem today.

ILLUS - "Four preachers met for a friendly gathering. During the conversation one preacher said, Our people come to us and pour out their hears, confess certain sins and needs. Let s do the same. Confession is good for the soul. In due time all agreed.

One confessed he liked to go to movies and would sneak off when away from his church. The second confessed to liking to smoke cigars and the third one confessed to liking to play cards. When it came to the fourth one, he wouldn't confess. The others pressed him saying, Come now, we confessed ours. What is your secret or vice? Finally he answered, It is gossiping and I can hardly wait to get out of here."

ILLUS - Do you remember when Walter Cronkite would end his news report with "And that's the way it is...." ? You believed him, didn't you? News casts today are little different from the National Enquirer. It is gossip and hearsay, and you never really know if that's the way it is!

ILLUS (Alan Redpath, A Passion for Preaching) "I once formed a mutual encouragement fellowship at a time of stress in one of my pastorates. The members subscribed to a simple formula applied before speaking of any person or subject that was perhaps controversial.

T Is it true?
H Is it helpful?
I Is it inspiring?
N Is it necessary?
K Is it kind?

If what I am about to say does not pass those tests, I will keep my mouth shut! And it worked!

3. May we, like Paul, learn to shun hearsay and seek an ACCURATE report, always.

C. He was comforted by the truth (vs. 7)

D. He was encouraged by the truth (vs. 8)

NOTE "stand fast" is an interesting word picture - denotes an army that refuses to retreat even though it is being assaulted by the enemy. Paul used this imagery often:

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. (1 Corinthians 16:13)

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11)

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; (Ephesians 6:13-14)

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (Philippians 1:27)

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. (Philippians 4:1)

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

III. Speak a thankful prayer. (vss. 9-13)

A. Paul's prayer always included thanksgiving. (vs. 9)

"what thanks can we render?" = How can we be thankful enough?

B. Paul's prayer was all-consuming. (vs. 10)

NOTE - Paul's mention of "that which is lacking in your faith." Paul started by praising them for that which was good in their faith (vs. 9), before mentioning that there were some things that needed corrected. This was his normal method, in all his epistles - praise first, correct second.

QUOTE (People's New Testament Commentary) "So recently heathen, they needed a wise teacher very much."

QUESTION - What can we learn from this method that applies to how we deal with our brothers and sisters daily?

ANSWER - See the good in them first. Speak the good in them first. Then, and only then, consider the need for admonition.

C. Paul's prayer was specific (vs. 11)

QUESTION - Was Paul's prayer ever answered? Did he ever return to Thessalonica?

QUOTE (Jamieson, Faussett, Brown) "Paul does not think the prosperous issue of a journey an unfit subject for prayer. His prayer, though the answer was deferred, in about five years afterwards was fulfilled in his return to Macedonia."

READ - Acts 20:1-2

D. Paul's prayer was intercessory (vs. 12)

QUESTION - What did he pray for them?

ANSWER - That their love (for which they were already known, cf. 1:3, 8) might increase and abound.

QUESTION - Is it possible for us to demonstrate too much love one toward another? I heard a man say once that it's possible to be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good. I considered that statement nonsense the moment I heard it, and still do today. What about loving one another. Can we love one another too much?

QUOTE - "Genuine Christian love? is the one thing in the Christian life which cannot be carried to excess."

E. Paul's prayer was sweeping (vs. 13)

QUESTION - What did Paul mean by praying that they would be unblameable?

QUESTION - Was he praying that they would be sinless?

QUOTE (Bible Knowledge Commentary) "Paul did not pray that they would be sinless; that was impossible. He prayed that they would be blameless (cf. 2:10), that is, that after they sinned they would deal with it as God requires and so be free from any reasonable charge by their fellowmen."

F. We need to learn to pray like Paul.

G. We need to pray like Paul (i.e. not just learn to, but do it)

Conclusion:

And so we learn the prescription for a hurting church:

First, send a good man.

Second, seek an accurate report.

Third, speak a thankful prayer.

Chapter 3. Help for a Hurting Church

Chapter 4. MORE AND MORE

READ - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

TEXT - 1 Thessalonians 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.*

THEME - While we await Christ's return, our lives should be pure, honest, and simple... increasingly so.

Introduction:

Paul's use of the phrase "furthermore then" in vs. 1 demonstrates a pattern he followed in all his letters. In all Paul's letters to Gentile churches there is a closing exhortation to purity of life and against such sins as Gentiles especially needed to guard against. These exhortations to the Thessalonians begin with the fourth chapter.

There is a phrase I want us to remember as we begin our study... it is a key thought that needs emphasized.

Notice vs. 1... the phrase is "more and more."

Notice vs. 10... the phrase is, again, "more and more."

Repeat it with me... I want it to undergird everything we talk about this morning. You see, as we live in hope of the rapture, we should be exhibiting certain Christian attributes, and we should be exhibiting them "MORE AND MORE."

I. More and More of what you already know (vss. 1-2)

(This is a general statement, which is expanded with specifics in the following verses.)

A. Commandments play a part in the Christian life. (vs. 2)

QUESTION - Are these the 10 commandments?

ANSWER - No, Paul refers to commands he specifically gave (and gives in this passage) to believers).

QUESTION - What are the 10 commandments? Where are they located in your Bible?

ANSWER - READ *Exodus 20:1-17*

QUESTION - What role do the 10 commandments play in the life of a believer? Does keeping them aid in salvation, or save? What is their purpose then?

ANSWER - *Galatians 3:24 "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."*

QUESTION - What are some of the commandments that believers have been given to follow?

ANSWER - Paul will share some in the verses we study today. At the conclusion of his letters, he always provided practical guidance (commandments) for how we as believers are expected to live. In chapter 5, we will find a list of 22 commandments for believers.

QUESTION - What should be our motivation in obeying these commandments? Why should we obey?

ANSWER - *John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."*

QUESTION - What conclusion can we draw about a professing believer who thumbs his nose at the commandments of Christ?

ANSWER - Based on *John 14:15*, his love for Christ is questionable.

QUOTE (J. Vernon McGee) "The walk of the believer is very important. It is emphasized in many portions of scripture, and it is the emphasis here. A believer cannot do as he pleases; he does as Christ pleases."

QUOTE (Matthew Henry) "To abide in the faith of the gospel is not enough, we must abound in the work of faith. The rule according to which all ought to walk and act, is the commandments given by the Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification, in the renewal of their souls under the influences of the Holy Spirit, and attention to appointed duties, constituted the will of God respecting them. In aspiring after this renewal of the soul unto holiness, strict restraint must be put upon the appetites and senses of the body, and on the thoughts and inclinations of the will, which lead to wrong uses of them. The Lord calls none into his family to live unholy lives, but that they may be taught and enabled to walk before him in holiness. Some make light of the precepts of holiness, because they hear them from men; but they are God's commands, and to break them is to despise God. "

B. We should INCREASINGLY obey those commandments. (vs. 1)

(Here we have our central thought - MORE AND MORE... It pervades every aspect of our Christian walk.)

Colossians 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him [be] glory both now and for ever. Amen.

ILLUS - Paul's life exemplified this thought of MORE AND MORE. READ - *2 Tim. 4:9-13*

ILLUS - We have this concept of RETIREMENT in America today. We think that as a person matures, he/she earns a rest... a slowing down period. This thought is alien to scripture. There is no reference to slowing down... only references to MORE AND MORE... INCREASING AND ABOUNDING...

With this general thought (MORE AND MORE) in mind, let's notice some specific areas where Paul applies this principle:

II. More and More Purity (vss. 3-8)

A. Sanctification - God's will for your life. (vs. 3)

QUESTION - What is sanctification?

ANSWER - Being "set apart" for and "set apart" to God.

QUESTION - When a person is sanctified, i.e. "set apart" for and to God, does that mean the person no longer struggles with sin, but has been delivered from it?

ANSWER - There are 3 aspects to sanctification:

1. POSITIONAL sanctification

QUOTE (J. Vernon McGee) "Positional sanctification means that Christ has been made unto us sanctification. We are accepted in the Beloved, and we will never be more saved than at the moment we put our trust in Christ. We are never accepted

because of who we are, but because of what Christ has done. This positional sanctification is perfection in Christ."

2. PRACTICAL sanctification

QUOTE (J. Vernon McGee) "Practical sanctification is the Holy Spirit working in our lives to produce a holiness in our walk. This practical sanctification will never be perfect so long as we are in these bodies with our old sinful flesh."

3. TOTAL sanctification

QUOTE (J. Vernon McGee) "Total sanctification will occur in the future when we are conformed to the image of Christ Jesus. Then both the position and the practice of sanctification will be perfect."

QUESTION - Have we talked about this at any other point in our study of 1 Thessalonians?

ANSWER - 1:3, when we discussed the 3-fold aspect of our salvation.

QUESTION - According to verse 3, who is "set apart" for God's use?

ANSWER - All believers... not just preachers, missionaries, etc..., but YOU and I. You have been set aside for a holy purpose, for God's use.

B. Sexual purity a key component of sanctification. (vss. 3-5)

1. The believer is not to be involved in fornication (vs. 3)

DEFINITION - Greek PORNEA - broad word denoting all types of sexual immorality - includes adultery, but goes beyond it. We get our English word pornography from this word.

QUOTE (People's New Testament Notes) - "The student of the Epistles will note how often this command is repeated to Gentile churches, a fact easily explained when we remember that fornication was considered no sin among the heathen. "

Acts 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and [from] fornication, and [from] things strangled, and [from] blood.

ILLUS - Demosthenes wrote "We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for the day to day needs of the body; we keep wives for the begetting of children and for the faithful guardianship of our homes." So long as a man supported his wife and family there was no shame whatsoever in extra-marital affairs. (Sanctity of Life, C. Swindoll, Word, 1990, p. 62)

1 Corinthians 6:15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make [them] the members of an harlot? God forbid.

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

2. Marriage is a key component in sexual purity (vs. 4)

Marriage is an interesting institution. Those who are involved in marriage would usually agree that it can be, at times, extremely difficult and trying. They would also agree, though, that it is rewarding and worth the effort.

You see, the thing that makes marriage such an interesting institution is the differences between men and women.

ILLUS - An English professor wrote the words "Woman without her man is a savage" on the blackboard and directed his students to punctuate it correctly. The men wrote: "Woman, without her man, is a savage." The women wrote: "Woman! Without her, man is a savage." (Bits & Pieces, March 2, 1995, p. 2)

ILLUS - Regarding marriage, it has been said that there are only two types of people in the world, Type A and Type Z, and they can be found in nearly every marriage:

1. How long before the plane leaves do you arrive at the airport? Early plane-catchers, Type A, pack their bags a day in advance, and pack neatly. If they're booked on a flight that leaves at four in the afternoon, they get up at five-thirty that morning. If they haven't left the house by noon, they're worried about missing the plane. Late plane-catchers, Type Z, pack hastily at the last minute and arrive at the airport too late to buy a newspaper.
2. Type A eats a good breakfast; Type Z grabs a cup of coffee.
3. Type A turns off the lights when leaving a room and locks the doors when leaving a house. They go back to make sure they've locked it, and they worry later about whether they left the iron on or not. They didn't. Type Z leaves the lights burning and, if they lock the door at all when they leave the house, they're apt to have forgotten their keys.
4. Type A sees the dentist twice a year, has an annual physical checkup and thinks he may have something. Type Z has been meaning to see a doctor.
5. Type A squeezes a tube of toothpaste from the bottom and rolls it very carefully as he uses it, puts the top back on every time. Type Z squeezes the tube from the middle, and he's lost the cap under the radiator.
6. Type Z's are more apt to have some Type A characteristics than Type A's are to have any Type Z characteristics.
7. Type A's always marry Type Z's. Type Z's always marry Type A's. (Reader's Digest, October, 1982)

ILLUS - A husband is a person who, if his wife says, "Never mind, I'll do it myself," lets her. A wife is a person who, if she says to her husband, "Never mind, I'll do it myself," and he lets her, gets mad. A husband is a person who, if his wife says to him, "Never mind, I'll do it myself," and he lets her and she gets mad, says, "Now what are you mad about?" A wife is a person who, if she says to her husband, "Never mind, I'll do it myself," and he lets her, and she gets mad, and he says, "Now what are you mad about?" says, "If you don't know I'm not going to tell you."

Yes, marriage can be interesting... challenging... infinitely rewarding...

The Bible is clear, though, that marriage is a key component in living a pure and holy life.

DEFINITION - Possess his own vessel - Refers to having your own wife, so not tempted sexually by other mens' wives.

Regarding use of word "Vessel" for wife - cf. *1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with [them] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

cf. *1 Corinthians 7:2 Nevertheless, [to avoid] fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.)*

NOTE - The Bible never teaches that sex WITHIN marriage is wrong (on the contrary, that is esteemed - *Hebrews 13:4 Marriage [is] honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*) HOWEVER, the Bible repeatedly teaches that sex outside of marriage is sin... displeasing to God.

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

3. To disobey in this area is to live like the lost, not the saved. (vs. 5, 7)

Ephesians 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

4. It is dishonest and dangerous to disobey in this area (vs. 6)

DEFINITION - "Defraud" (vs. 6) - overreach, take advantage of

DEFINITION - "in any matter" (vs. 6) rather as Greek, "in the matter"; a decorous expression for the matter now in question; the conjugal honor of his neighbor as a husband, *1 Thes 4:4; 1 Thes 4:7* also confirms this view; the word "brother" enhances the enormity of the crime. It is your brother whom you wrong (compare *Prov 6:27-33*). (from Jamieson, Faucett, and Brown)

5. To ignore this teaching is to ignore God, and the leadership of His Holy Spirit. (vs. 8)

NOTE - "Despiseth not man, but God" (vs. 8) - those who would reject this teaching (re: fornication / sanctification) are rejecting God, not Paul.

QUESTION - Let's get real real real real practical this morning. Let's park on this subject of MORE AND MORE PURITY for a while, and discuss how we can apply it to our lives... LIVE IT. What practical steps can you and I take today and everyday to ensure we are MORE AND MORE PURE than we were yesterday?

QUESTION - What are some of the things that we deal with on a daily basis that we, as believers, should avoid in order to live MORE AND MORE PURE lives?

ANSWER - Some discussion topics - What about television? MTV? Internet?

QUESTION - Is there a test that we can apply to any situation that will help us to maintain a MORE AND MORE PURE life?

ANSWER - W.W.J.D.? By applying that simple test, would we be able to maintain a purer lifestyle?

III. More and More Brotherly Love (vss. 9-10)

A. You and I should love one another.

Galatians 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only [use] not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and [in] all judgment;

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

1 John 2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

1 John 4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

B. We are so taught BY GOD. (vs. 9)

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:34)

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. (Psalm 32:8)

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. (Psalm 71:17)

QUESTION: What method(s) does God use to teach us?

ANSWER: The Word of God, The words of men, The experiences of life, The inner voice of the Holy Spirit, to name a few.

QUESTION: Have you ever done something, or thought something, and experienced the Holy Spirit's teaching about that thing? Ever felt Him say to you, "You should not do that" ?

NOTE here that that teaching by God is specifically mentioned in regards to this matter of Brotherly Love. God teaches us to love one another.

C. That love should be INCREASING.

ILLUS - Every action you take toward a brother or sister in Christ, every word spoken to him or her... is it motivated by love for them? If not, should you do it or say it?

Lord, let me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way,
That, even when I kneel to pray,
My prayer shall be for others.

Help me, in all the work I do,
Ever to be sincere and true,
And know that all I'd do for Thee,
Must needs be done for Others.

Let "self" be crucified and slain,
And buried deep, nor rise again;
And may all efforts be in vain,
Unless they be for Others.

And when my work on earth is done,
And my new work in heaven begun
May I forget the crown I've won,
While thinking still of Others.

Yes, Others, Lord, yes, Others.
Let this motto be;
Help me to live for Others,
That I may live with Thee.
(Anonymous)

(And yet another wrote)

To dwell above with saints we love,
That will be grace and glory.
To live below with saints we know;
Well, that's another story!

ILLUS - (LESSONS FROM GEESE) We will never become a church that effectively reaches out to those who are missing out if we shoot our wounded and major on the minuses. Instead of being fishers of men, as Christ has called us, we will be keepers of an ever shrinking aquarium. Next fall when you see geese heading south for the winter, flying along in V formation, you might be interested in knowing what science has discovered about why they fly that way. It has been learned that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. (Christians who share a common direction and a sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier, because they are traveling on the thrust on one another.)

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. (If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed the same way we are going.) When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point.) It pays to take turns doing hard jobs - with people at church or with geese flying south.) The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. (What do we say when we honk from behind?) Finally, when a goose gets sick, or is wounded by a shot and falls out, two geese fall out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly, or until he is dead, and then they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their original group. (If people know we would stand by them like that in church, they would push down these walls to get in.) You see, all we have to do in order to attract those who are missing back to church is to demonstrate to the world that we have as much sense as geese here in church. That seems little enough price to pay to win the lost and minister to one another. Even geese have sense enough to know it works every time. (James S Hewett, ed ILLUSTRATIONS UNLIMITED pp. 125-126)

QUESTION - What are some practical ways we can demonstrate ever-increasing brotherly love in our church?

ANSWER - Secret Sisters is an excellent example. Others?

IV. More and More Honesty and Simplicity (vss. 11-12)

A. Study to be quiet

QUIET is GOOD!

1. Being quiet keeps us from saying something stupid.

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: [and] he that shutteth his lips [is esteemed] a man of understanding.

2. Being quiet allows us to listen to God

B. Work with your own hands

WORK is GOOD!

"Work with your own hands" - there is evidence that the Thessalonians were lying about doing nothing, thinking the Lord was returning any moment and therefore

they had no need to continue in their daily work / tasks. Paul may have been correcting this erroneous thinking here, when he told them to stay busy and not be idle busy-bodies.

Ephesians 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with [his] hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

QUOTE (Bunyan) "An idle man's brain is the devil's workshop."

WE NEED MORE WHO ARE WILLING TO WORK!

ILLUS - Zig Ziglar tells of visiting the Washington monument. As he and his party approached the monument, he heard a guide announcing loudly that there would be a two-hour wait to ride the elevator to the top of the monument. However, with a smile on his face the guide then said, "There is no one waiting to go to the top if you are willing to take the stairs." (King Duncan, King's Treasury of Dynamic Humor, Seven Worlds Press, quoted in Bits & Pieces, Vol. T/No. 17, p. 23)

C. Walk honestly

DEFINITION - "that ye may walk honestly" - "becomingly" - such that your religion is attractive to those who do not yet have it.

V. More and More Hope and Comfort (vss. 13-18)

A. Less ignorance is the first step (vs. 13a)

QUESTION: Is there any excuse for a believer to be ignorant of the things of God?

QUESTION: Compare this verse to verse 9b (taught of God)... is there any excuse for a believer to be ignorant of the things of God?

JOKE - Professional golfer Tommy Bolt was playing in Los Angeles and had a caddy with a reputation of constant chatter. Before they teed off, Bolt told him, Don't say a word to me. And if I ask you something, just answer yes or no. During the round, Bolt found the ball next to a tree, where he had to hit under a branch, over a lake and onto the green. He got down on his knees and looked through the trees and sized up the shot. What do you think? he asked the caddy. Five-iron? No, Mr. Bolt, the caddy said. What do you mean, not a five-iron? Bolt snorted. Watch this shot. The caddy rolled his eyes. No-o-o, Mr. Bolt. But Bolt hit it and the ball stopped about two feet from the hole. He turned to his caddy, handed him the five-iron and said, Now what do you think about that? You can talk now. Mr. Bolt, the caddy said, that wasn't your ball. (Crossroads, Issue No. 7, pp. 15-16)

QUESTION: What are some things we as believers can do to avoid ignorance of the things of God?

1. We can READ.

QUOTE - Once out of school, nearly 60 percent of all adult Americans will never again read a single book. (Larry Wolwode, quoted in Youthworker Update, Signs of the Times, October, 1992, p. 6.)

2. We can PRAY.

3. We can LISTEN to the Holy Spirit's teaching

... and allow Him to change us.

B. The rapture WILL occur, just as described in these verses.

(REVIEW: We discussed this in our series entitled What I Believe - "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible... I believe that Jesus Christ is coming again, and I will seek to live today so as to be ready to meet Him at His coming." Let's review what we learned in that lesson:)

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

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14:1-3)

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (1 Corinthians 15:51-54)

1. Jesus will return to the air - 1 Thes. 4:17

2. The dead in Christ will be raised - 1 Thes. 4:16

QUESTION - Who are the dead in Christ?

ANSWER - All of the saved who have already died.

3. The living saved will be:

1. Changed

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (1 Corinthians 15:51)

2. Caught up instantly (same verse)

ILLUS - Jesus spoke of the suddenness of this event in a parable: *For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. (Matthew 24:38-42)*

3. United with Christ and each other forever

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

C. The rapture gives reason for hope (vs. 13)

D. The rapture is a source of comfort (vs. 18)

Conclusion:

More and More... Paul here gives us the simple and wonderful truth that the things we have learned we should put into practice... MORE AND MORE... IN EVER INCREASING MEASURE.

1 Thessalonians 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.

May God help us each to live Christian lives that are more and more pure... more and more marked by brotherly love... and more and more honest and simple... and more an more hoping in His soon return.

Chapter 5. The Day of the Lord

READ - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

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

THEME - Jesus Christ will return suddenly to judge the lost world. We as believers should live soberly, faithfully, lovingly and hopefully as we look forward to that event.

Introduction:

We come to the final chapter in this great book.

The theme for our series of lessons has been "Living in Hope of the Rapture." Paul develops this thought now in these next 11 verses.

He teaches us that Jesus Christ will return suddenly to judge the lost world, and that we as believers should live soberly, faithfully, lovingly and hopefully as we look forward to that event.

Paul uses a particular term here which is used elsewhere in scripture - the day of the Lord. Let's see what he has to say about that day:

I. The Coming of the Day of the Lord (vss. 1-3)

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

QUESTION - What is meant by the phrase "the Day of the Lord?"

QUESTION - Does the Day of the Lord differ from the Rapture, described in chapter 4? How?

QUESTION - Does the Day of the Lord have an impact on the life of a believer?

QUESTION - Does the Day of the Lord have an impact on the life of a lost individual?

A. The Day of the Lord is a time of judgment

The phrase "day of the Lord" appears 29 times in our King James Bibles, and every single reference appears to be to a time of God's wrath and God's judgment.

Some examples:

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

II Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Joel 2:11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Joel 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Zephaniah 1:14 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

Amos 5:18: Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

B. The Day of the Lord refers to a specific time, yet future.

1. Some Old Testament references were to specific times of judgment in Israel's earthly history.

(But these also had reference to the future day of the Lord - double reference principle of hermeneutics)

ILLUS - READ 2 *Sam.* 7:10-13 - Double reference - to Solomon and to Christ.

2. The Day of the Lord begins with the 7 year tribulation period and ends after the 1000 year millennial reign of Christ.

QUOTE (Bible Knowledge Commentary) "The day of the Lord is a future period of time in which God will be at work in world affairs more directly and dramatically than He has been since the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a time referred to by many Old Testament prophets.... ... the day of the Lord will include both judgment and blessing. That day begins immediately after the Rapture of the church and ends with the conclusion of the Millennium. This day is a major theme of prophecy with its fullest exposition in *Revelation 6-19*."

3. The future timetable:

a. The rapture - READ 1 *Thes.* 4:16-17

b. The tribulation

Matthew 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Daniel 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

c. The millennium - 1000 year reign of Christ. - READ *Rev.* 20:1-10

II. The Day of the Lord and the Lost (vs. 3)

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

(NOTE Paul's use of pronouns throughout this passage. He clearly delineates between the saved and the lost in these verses. REREAD scripture, emphasizing pronoun usage.)

A. It is a time of DESTRUCTION.

I Thessalonians 5:3 "... then sudden destruction cometh upon them..."

DEFINITION (Strong's) "olethros ol'-eth-ros from a primary ollumi (to destroy; a prolonged form); ruin, i.e. death, punishment:--destruction."

B. It is a CERTAIN time.

I Thessalonians 5:3 "... as travail upon a woman with child..."

ILLUS - Many a mother (and father) will testify that there is nothing in this world that will stop a child coming when it is time.

C. It is an INESCABLE time.

I Thessalonians 5:3 "... and they shall not escape."

ILLUS - Judge Doddridge, an English judge was commonly called "The Sleeping Judge." Indeed, he had an affected drowsy posture on the Bench, inasmuch that many persons unacquainted with his custom, have even given up all for lost, expecting no justice from a dormant judge. He, all the while, did only retire himself within himself the more seriously to consult with his own soul about the validity of what was alleged. The fact that he was not really sleeping was afterwards proven by the fitting oracles of law which he pronounced in the judgment of the cases which he tried. Wicked men, in like manner, erroneously suppose God to be a sleeping God; but in due time He will assuredly confute their mistake. --Thomas Fuller

D. It will be a surprise.

I Thessalonians 5:2-3 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

1. It will be a surprise to some because they are preoccupied by this life:

ILLUS Archimedes was so fond of mathematical problems that, when the city in which he was residing was stormed, he did not know it. He heard not the whizz of the arrows that were shot into the market place; he heard not the tramp of the armed men that marched to the forum of the conquered city. He was busy in his study with his triangles and squares and obtruse calculations. He heard not, when the very street in which he was, was stormed; he heard not when the soldiers entered his house; and it was not till a soldier came and plucked him by the sleeve that the calculating philosopher lifted his head and realized that the soldier had business with him

2. It will be a surprise to some because they simply refuse to think about the future:

QUOTE (Albert Einstein) - "I never think of the future. It comes soon enough."

ILLUS - Beth and I were privileged to take a cruise to the Bahamas last week. To non-drinkers, such as Beth and I, it was a cheap vacation. Others, however, were never without a glass filled with liquor in their hands. At the end of the end of the cruise, all received a bill for outstanding moneys owed, and many were surprised at the bill... they shouldn't have been, for it was told in advance that such was extra expense, but yet many lived in the moment and denied the future judgement until the ship's steward slipped it under their door.

ILLUS - More than four out of every five Americans agree that "we all will be called before God at judgment day to answer for our sins," says a poll conducted for the Times Mirror company. (National and International Religion Report, quoted in Signs of the Times, August, 1993, p. 6)

AND YET, HOW MANY CHOOSE TO BE UNPREPARED!?!?!

III. The Day of the Lord and the Saved (vss. 4-11)

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

QUESTION - What did Paul mean by this? Why did he say that there was no need to write about this topic?

ANSWER - Because he had already taught them this truth while with them (not so with the rapture, in *1 Thes. 4*), and because the believer does not need to know the time... only the reality and the imminence.

A. We don't need to know when it will occur. (vs. 1)

1. It WILL occur, and that certainty should be enough to motivate us to live like Christians.

2. WHEN it will occur is unknown.

QUOTE (Jesus) "Of that day and hour knoweth no man."

3. It will occur SUDDENLY

Matthew 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

QUOTE (Matthew Henry) "As the thief usually cometh in the dead time of the night, when he is least expected, such a surprise will the day of the Lord be; so sudden and surprising will be his appearance. The knowledge of this will be more useful than to know the exact time, because this should awaken us to stand upon our watch, that we may be ready whenever he cometh."

B. We will not be here, anyway!

(The beginning of the day fo the Lord is immediately AFTER the rapture of the church... we will be feasting with the Savior while this is occurring on earth!)

C. The reality of the Day of the Lord should motivate us as believers.

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

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

1. We should be watchful.
2. We should be sober.
3. We should live a life of faith (i.e. Our attitude toward God)
4. ... and a life of love (i.e. Our attitude toward men)
5. ... and a life of hope.

Conclusion:

And so, the day of the Lord is coming...

It is certain...

It is future...

We do not know the time, but like Paul, we know it is now nearer than when we first believed!

We know that it is a time when Jesus Christ will return suddenly to judge the lost world.

And we know that in light of its certain coming, we as believers should live soberly, faithfully, lovingly and hopefully as we look forward to that event.

But perhaps, today, you are one of those who has never trusted Christ... perhaps you do not know for certain whether you will be around for the day of the Lord or not. I say to you, that if you will but "call upon the name of the Lord" you will be saved, and never need fear the day of the Lord!

ILLUS I read of a group of pioneers who were making their way across one of the central states to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading. They traveled in covered wagons drawn by oxen, and progress was necessarily slow. One day they were horrified to note a long line of smoke in the west, stretching for miles across the prairie, and soon it was evident that the dried grass was burning fiercely and coming toward them rapidly. They had crossed a river the day before but it would be impossible to go back to that before the flames would be upon them. One man only seemed to have understanding as to what could be done. He gave the command to set fire to the grass behind them. Then when a space was burned over, the whole company moved back upon it. As the flames roared on toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, "Are you sure we shall not all be burned up?" The leader replied, "My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!"

What a picture of the believer, who is safe in Christ!

On Him Almighty vengeance fell,
Which would have sunk a world to hell.
He bore it for a chosen race,
And thus becomes our Hiding Place.

The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Him, and all who are in Christ are safe forever, for they are now standing where the fire has been. (Illustrations of Bible Truth by H. A. Ironside, Moody Press, 1945, pp. 34-35)

Where are you standing this morning? Where the fire has already been, or where it is surely about to fall?

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Chapter 5. The Day of the Lord

Chapter 6. Behave Yourselves

READ - 1 Thes. 5:11f

Introduction:

Now Paul becomes practical. In light of Christ's soon return, he tells us how we should behave.

J. Vernon McGee, in his commentary on 1 Thessalonians, goes so far as to refer to this section as 22 "Commandments for Christians."

QUOTE (McGee) "The child of God is not under the Ten Commandments as the way of life - he is way above it. He is to live on a much higher plane, as we can see by the commandments in this section. These commandments are practical - right down where the rubber meets the road. It is a wonderful, glorious thing to keep looking for the coming of Christ, but it is also very important that we keep walking down here on the sidewalks of life - at home, in the office, in the schoolroom, wherever we are called to walk. The Lord Jesus said, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). There are some Christians who have never listened to His commandments. Well, here are 22 of them. They are given like military orders, brief and terse. They are barked out like a second lieutenant would give them to you. We were just told to be sober and to put on the uniform of warfare (see v. 8). Now the orders are given..."

These 22 commandments teach us how to behave in 3 key areas. They teach us how to behave toward Christian leaders (specifically pastors), how to behave toward one another, and how to behave toward the circumstances of life that God brings our way.

I. How To Behave Toward Christian Leaders - vss. 12-13

(Paul describes 3 aspects of the pastor's work in these verses - labor, rule, admonish.)

A. Know Them - vs. 12

QUOTE (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown) "Recognize their office, and treat them accordingly with reverence and with liberality in supplying their needs (cf. *1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.* . The Thessalonian Church having been newly planted, the ministers were necessarily novices, which may have been in part the cause of the people's treating them with less respect."

Indicates need to be familiar with Christian leaders PERSONALLY. (... know THEM...)

QUESTION - How do we do this?

ANSWER - 1.) Listen to their teaching. 2.) Fellowship (at church and in homes). 3.) Spend time - take them out to eat.

ILLUS - What do you know about our pastor? I know some things about him. 1.) He is a man of prayer. 2.) He likes hats. 3.) He loves Cracker Barrel

Indicates need to be familiar with their WORK. (... which LABOR...)

QUOTE - (Barnes) " The word is one which properly expresses wearisome toil, and implies that the office of preaching is one that demands constant industry."

Word seems to imply the CONSTANCY of the pastor's labor:

QUOTE - (Robertson's NT Word Pictures) "Them that labour among you (tou v kopi-wntav en umin). Old word for toil even if weary."

1 Corinthians 15:10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which [was bestowed] upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

1 Corinthians 16:16 *That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with [us], and laboureth.*

B. Submit to Them - vs. 12

Pastors are OVER YOU - they RULE: (Here we see their POSITION, AUTHORITY)

Paul used same word in *Romans 12:8* "*Romans 12:8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, [let him do it] with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*" (... ruleth...)

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.

QUESTION - Is there a limit to their authority?

QUESTION - Note the phrase "*in the Lord.*" Does this phrase explain the bounds of a pastor's authority? How?

ILLUS - We are not Catholics who believe in papal infallibility. We are not cultists, drinking poison Kool Aid at the behest of our leadership. We follow pastors as the Berean Christians followed Paul. cf. *Acts 17:11*

QUOTE - (Barnes) "They are not absolute sovereigns, but are themselves subject to one who is over them - the Lord Jesus."

QUOTE - (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown) "in the Lord - Their presidency over you is in divine things; not in worldly affairs, but in things appertaining to the Lord."

Pastors ADMONISH you: (Here we see their METHOD, MODUS OPERANDI)

QUOTE - (Barnes) "The word here used is rendered admonish, and admonished, in *Romans 15:14, Col 3:16, 1 Thes 5:12; 2 Thes 3:15.* And warn, and warning, *1 Cor 4:14, Col 1:28, 1 Thes 5:14.* It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, to put in mind; and then to warn, entreat, exhort. It is a part of the duty of a minister to put his people in mind of the truth; to warn them of danger; to exhort them to perform their duty; to admonish them if they go astray. "

And so, Paul WARNED his people

ILLUS (Paul was an example): *1 Corinthians 4:14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn [you].*

Colossians 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

And Paul EXHORTED his people, patiently.

2 Timothy 2:14 Of these things put [them] in remembrance, charging [them] before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, [but] to the subverting of the hearers.

2 Timothy 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all [men], apt to teach, patient,

2 Timothy 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

1 Peter 5:3 Neither as being lords over [God's] heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

C. Esteem Them - vs. 13

Respect them... Honor them...

QUESTION - How do we do this? What are some practical means we might employ to ensure we are "esteeming" our pastor?

ILLUS - The office of pastor has fallen on hard times in the world. Where once it was a respected profession to the world at large, it is now often the subject of late night comics. Scandals have rocked the credibility of pastors. WE AS BELIEVERS MUST set an example of providing due respect. Why? Because the Bible says so.

D. Love Them - vs. 13

(This is like an umbrella over all the other behaviors toward pastors - if we truly love them, all the other things will fall into place.)

E. Be at peace among yourselves - vs. 13

QUESTION - Is there any significance in the fact that this thought is included in Paul's teaching on how we behave toward Christian leaders? Is it somehow related to that topic?

QUOTE - (J. Vernon McGee) "These all come together in one package. You can't have everybody running the church. You can't have everybody running any kind of organization. There must be a certain one with authority. I think one of the great problems in many churches today is a case of the old bromide, 'too many cooks spoil the broth.' There needs to be one who is the leader and who is followed. With that arrangement you can have peace. But when everybody is trying to play his own tune, you have anything but harmony and peace!"

II. How To Behave Toward One Another - vss. 11, 14-15

A. Comfort one another - vs. 11

(From Greek PARAKALEW - Come alongside to help.)

Includes idea of BEING THERE for one another. (i.e. comforting through our presence)

QUESTION - How do we do this?

ANSWER - We need to be there for each other IN CHURCH. We need to be there for each other OUTSIDE OF CHURCH.

Includes idea of EXHORTING one another (i.e. comforting through our words and actions)

(The tongue is a great power for both good and evil.)

B. Edify one another - vs. 11

(From Greek OIKODOMEW - build, edify, build up - literally means to build, as in building a house. Metaphorically means to promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness)

Building takes TIME

Building takes COMMITMENT

Building takes PERSISTENCE IN FACE OF SETBACKS. *ILLUS* Paul Phillips wall being knocked down

Building takes IMAGINATION / FLEXIBILITY *ILLUS* My brother Chris' "blueprint".

Building includes BATTLING. cf. *Nehemiah*

All of these things that are true of building a building have application in our building each other up in the Lord.

C. Warn one another - vs. 14

(Unruly is from a Greek word meaning - disorderly, out of ranks (often so of soldiers). This word was used in Greek society of those who did not show up for work.

Indicates that there IS a correct behavior, and there IS an incorrect behavior.

(Contrary to popular teaching about right and wrong)

Indicates that each believer has a responsibility to keep order.

(Not just pastors)

Indicates that it is serious business to be out of order.

(So indicated by use of word "WARN")

QUESTION - How do we do this and obey the other teachings of scripture (including this passage) concerning our words?

ANSWER - QUOTE (professor from my Bible college days used to always say that a key was to) - "Always be kind."

D. Comfort one another - vs. 14

QUESTION - COMFORT is mentioned in verse 11 and again in verse 14. Is there anything interesting or significant about that?

ANSWER - (Comfort here is from a different Greek word than used in vs. 11. The word used in verse 14 means to to speak to, address one, whether by way of admonition and incentive, or to calm and console 1a) to encourage, console) (Feebleminded from Greek word meaning FAINTHEARTED)

Indicates need to provide STRENGTH to others when they grow weary, faint in the fight.

ILLUS - Aaron and Hur, holding up Moses hands. cf. *Exodus 17:11-12*

Indicates the value of WORDS.

QUESTION - OK... we've had a lot of emphasis on words so far in this lesson. Thinking about our WORDS specifically as they relate to COMFORTING THE FAINT-HEARTED, what are some specific things we might do to share such WORDS OF COMFORT?

ANSWER - Cards, letters - (ILLUS - I have a pastor friend who received a simple post card in the mail saying, "I'm praying for you by name everyday this week." He was greatly moved and encouraged by that simple act.)

ANSWER - Remembering prayer requests. I've been greatly encouraged when somebody comes up to me and asks about a situation I requested prayer for earlier.

ANSWER - Saying kind things, and LEAVING UNSAID the unkind things that could be said. ILLUS - While at Tree City Baptist Church, being asked to serve as deacon shortly after a failing in my life, which was dropped and never mentioned again after I had dealt with it in my life.

E. Support one another - vs. 14

(From greek work ANTECOMAI - to hold before or against, hold back, withstand, endure, to keep one's self directly opposite to any one, hold to him firmly, cleave to, paying heed to him)

Indicates that it is my responsibility to hold up those who cannot hold up themselves.

QUESTION - Who is Paul referring to here when he says to support the WEAK? Who are the WEAK? (GOOD PLACE TO DISCUSS "WEAK" CHRISTIANS - cf. Romans 14?)

F. Be patient with one another - vs. 14

(From Greek MAKROYUMEO - to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart 1a) to persevere patiently and bravely in enduring misfortunes and troubles 1b) to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others 1b1) to be mild and slow in avenging 1b2) to be longsuffering, slow to anger, slow to punish)

Indicates need for perseverance.

Indicates need for perseverance in misfortune and trouble.

Indicates need for perseverance when offended and injured.

Indicates need to be mild mannered.

Indicates need to be slow to anger, avenge, and punish.

G. Follow a higher standard than the world - vs. 15

QUOTE - "There are three philosophies of life or standards of conduct. 1.) The pagan world operates on a philosophy which does evil in spite of good. In other words, you get the other fellow before he gets you. Use any kind of method. He may have treated you well, but if you can get the advantage over him, do that. That is pagan and heathen philosophy. 2.) Then there is the standard of the so-called refined, cultured, and educated world. That is, do good to those who do good to you. The political parties in our country operate on that principle. If one man helps another man to get into political office, the politician reciprocates by offering the man a job or office. You take care of your own. That is the philosophy of the so-called civilized world. Jesus said, "And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same." (Luke 6:33) 3.) The Christian is to live under a different standard. We are to do good to those who do evil to us. That is contrary to the natural man. The minute someone hits us, we just naturally want to hit him back. This is the philosophy that Paul is talking about - "See that none render evil for evil to any man, but ever follow that which is good" - even to those who do evil to you." (J. Vernon McGee)

III. How To Behave Toward the Circumstances of Life - vss. 16-22

A. Rejoice always - vs. 16

QUESTION - Does this mean Christians will always be happy?

ANSWER - No. Happiness is not really mentioned in the Bible. JOY is the Christian concept, and it goes well beyond happiness. We have JOY because of our relationship with Christ. Happiness is based on our circumstances which change... are often not good! Because joy is based on our relationship with Christ, which never changes, our joy is always there!

ILLUS - Paul and Silas rejoiced even after being bloodied and imprisoned! *Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

B. Pray without ceasing - vs. 17

From GREEK *adialeiptos* - without intermission; incessantly

QUESTION - How do we do this?

QUOTE - (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown) "(it means to pray) without allowing prayerless gaps to intervene between the times of prayer."

C. Be thankful in everything - vs. 18

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.

Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

NOTE - "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" - probably we should read vss. 16, 17, 18 with commas separating the commands rather than periods. "This is the will of God" then refers to all 3. (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown)

D. Listen to the Spirit - vs. 19

Imagery is of putting out a fire.

QUESTION - What are some ways we can quench a fire?

We can quench a fire by pouring water on it.
We can quench a fire by putting dirt on it.
We can quench a fire by starving it of fuel.

QUESTION - Do any of these 3 images suggest ways we might quench the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

E. Listen to the Spirit's messengers - vs. 20

(This is a similar thought to that in verses 12-13.)

F. Gravitate toward what is good - vs. 21

(Verses 21-22 might be considered in context of verse 20, in which case it is another example of our need to be BEREAN in our approach. *cf. Acts 17:11*)

(Verses 21-22 might also be considered as applicable IN ALL THINGS.)

(Both interpretations are correct.)

G. Shun what is evil - vs. 22

Indicates we should avoid anything that LOOKS like evil.

QUOTE - (J. Vernon McGee) "This... is the answer for questionable pastimes and amusements. If there is any question in your mind whether something is wrong, then it is wrong for you. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Indicates that we should avoid every FORM of evil.

(The two different meanings of the word stress both ends of the spectrum. We should be concerned about evil in general - every form of it. We should be concerned about the slightest and smallest appearance of evil - its most minute manifestation.)

Conclusion

And so, we learn how to behave while we await Christ's imminent return in the rapture.

Paul ends this letter, as all his letters, with some closing remarks (*vss. 23-28*). In those closing comments, we learn some things:

We learn that every aspect of our being is preserved by God - *vs. 23*

We learn that we can depend on God - *vs. 24*

We learn that Christian leaders need and want our prayers - *vs. 25*

We learn the importance of demonstrating our love to one another - *vs. 26* (QUOTE - McGee "This is a commandment, too. Just make sure it is a HOLY kiss! In our culture and with our customs, a warm handshake will do.")

We are reminded of the importance of the Word of God... ALL of the Word of God (*vs. 27*)

We are reminded of the grace of God in our lives - *vs. 28*

