

1 THESSALONIANS

Author :

Paul an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Date :

Sometime between 50 and 54 AD.

Themes:

During his second missionary journey Paul visited Thessalonica and preached the gospel of Christ. Some people there believed in Christ, left their idols, and became disciples (Acts 17:1-9). Now Paul writes to strengthen their faith, to let them know of his joy concerning them, and to give them some further teaching. A principal theme is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul refers to this event in each chapter of this letter (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-17; 5:1-4). Christ will come again and gather His believers to Himself to be with Him forever, therefore believers should now rejoice in this great truth and live lives worthy of it.

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

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering constantly your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, dear brethren, God's choice of you. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance. You know

1:1 "Paul" – Acts 8:1-3; 13:9.

"Silvanus" was the same person as Silas – Acts 15:22,40.

"Timothy" – Acts 16:1-4. Silas (and possibly Timothy) was with Paul when the church in Thessalonica was started – Acts 17:1-4,10-14.

"In God. . . and Christ" – Paul in this way shows the oneness of two distinct persons in the one Godhead (notes at Matt 3:16,17; 28:19; John 10:30; 17:1-5; Phil 2:6). Believers are "in" God. He is their refuge, their home, the location of their spiritual life. Compare Ps 90:1; Col 3:3.

1:2 "Thanks" – Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:8; Col 1:3.

"In our prayers" – Rom 1:9,10; Eph 1:16; 3:16; Phil 1:4,9; Col 1:3,9; 2:1.

1:3 Here are three great Christian qualities and something of what they produce. True faith will always produce good works. See Jam 2:14-17,26. The Greek word translated "love" here is "agape." See 1 Cor 13:1-13 for its description. Love can be known only by what it produces and seen only in how it behaves. Real love is always willing to labor for Christ and others.

"Hope" – see Rom 5:2-5; 8:24,25. Believers are willing to endure all things because their hope is fixed on God who has promised them eternal life with Himself – Titus 1:2.

1:4 "Knowing" – the evidence that they were true believers was very strong indeed and made Paul sure that God had chosen them for eternal life.

"Dearly loved" – Rom 5:8; Eph 3:18,19; Col 3:12; 1 John 3:1.

"Choice of you" – Mark 13:20; John 13:18; 15:19; Rom 8:33; Eph 1:4,5,11; 1 Pet 1:2; 2:9.

1:5-10 These verses, together with v 3, give the evidence that made Paul certain of their salvation. When he first preached to them he experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, he saw the profound change that occurred in them, a change which stood the test of persecution, and he knew that their witness for Christ was true and fervent.

1:5 "Our gospel" – the gospel revealed by Christ which they preached (2:8; 3:2; Gal 1:11,12; Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 15:1-8).

"In power" – Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 2:4,5; Col 1:29. Too much preaching is simply with words and lacks the power of God.

what kind of men we were among you for your sake. 6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord. You received the word in much suffering, but with the Holy Spirit's joy. 7 So you became examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord sounded out from you. Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith in God is becoming known, so that we do not need to say anything *about it*. 9 For they themselves declare concerning us what kind of entry we had among you and how you turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from

"In the Holy Spirit" – notes at Matt 3:16,17; John 14:16,17; Acts 1:4; Eph 5:18. Paul moved about and preached and served others in the heavenly atmosphere of God's Spirit. This was the source of his power.

"In much assurance" – both he and they were convinced that God was at work in their midst.

"What kind" – 2:5-12. Compare Acts 20:18-20,33-35.

1:6 "Followers of us" or "imitators of us" – Christian leaders must be examples which all may safely follow. See 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:7,9; 1 Tim 1:16; 4:12; Titus 2:7; Heb 6:12; 13:7; 1 Pet 5:3.

"In much suffering" – 2:14; Acts 17:5-10. This did not turn them from the gospel. It never will turn away those whom God has chosen.

"Joy" – compare Acts 8:8; 13:52; 16:34; Rom 14:17. God's Spirit alone can produce this joy in the hearts of those who believe the gospel.

1:7 "Examples" – Paul became a model to believers by following the greatest of all examples (1 Cor 11:1). They imitated Paul and became models to others.

"Macedonia and Achaia" – what we call Greece today consisted then of these two main regions. Thessalonica was in Macedonia.

1:8 "Word. . . sounded forth" – they were clear and open witnesses for Christ as all believers should be.

"Everywhere" – compare Rom 1:8.

1:9 "Idols" – many of the believers there were Gentiles – people other than Jews – and idolatry then was as common as it is now in some parts of the world. A clear mark of their conversion was that they abandoned their idols and turned to the one true God. So it must be with us.

"The living and true God" – Paul uses this expression to distinguish Him from the "gods" which are false and lifeless, the idols the Thessalonians had worshipped and that others still worshipped. See 1 Cor 8:5,6; Ps 115:3-8; Isa 44:20; Jer 10:14; Rom 1:22,23,25. If we want the true and living God to be our God we must do as these Thessalonians did. We cannot have both the true God and idols.

1:10 "Wait" – 1 Cor 1:7; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28. The second coming of Christ is an important theme of both letters to the

heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath to come.

2 For, brethren, you yourselves know that our coming to you was not in vain. **2** But even after we had suffered previously and been spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak the gospel of God to you, in *the midst* of much conflict. **3** For our exhortation *did* not *arise* from error, or from impurity, or from deceitfulness, **4** but since we were approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not to please men, but God, who tests our hearts. **5** For we did not at any time use flattering words, as you know, or a cloak *to cover* greed. God *is our* witness. **6** And we did not seek glory from men, either from you, or from others.

As the apostles of Christ, we could rightly have been a burden to you, **7** but we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* lovingly takes care

of her children. **8** We yearned over you with such affection that we were willing to give to you, not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you were dear to us. **9** For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil. For labouring night and day because we would not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

10 You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holy, righteous and blameless our behaviour was among you who believe. **11** Also you know how we encouraged and comforted and instructed every one of you, as a father does his children, **12** that you should behave *in a way* worthy of God, who has called you to his kingdom and glory.

13 For this reason also we constantly thank God: because when you heard the Word of God from us and received it, you embraced *it*, not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God. Also it is effectively working in you who believe. **14** For, brethren, you became imitators of

Thessalonians – indeed an important theme of the whole New Testament – 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 2 Thess 1:7; 2:1; Matt 24:30; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Rev 1:7.

"Raised from the dead" – Matt 28:6; Acts 1:3; 2:24-32; 1 Cor 15:3-8.

"The wrath to come" – Rom 1:18; 2:5; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6; Rev 6:16. Notes on God's anger at Num 25:3; Ps 90:7-11; John 3:36; Rom 1:18. God's wrath will come when God rises to judge the world. Wrath is the opposite of salvation – 5:9. It means eternal punishment – 2 Thess 1:7-10; Matt 25:46. Jesus is the only one who rescues believers from this wrath. See Rom 5:9. Some commentators on this passage of Scripture have expressed their belief that the wrath Paul speaks of here is the same as the great tribulation at the end of this age (Matt 24:21). However, the great tribulation is nowhere called the wrath of God. Actually it is the wrath of Satan and of evil men against God's people. See notes at Matt 24:29; Rev 6:12-17; 13:7,15-17. Paul does not say here (or anywhere else) that believers will be rescued from this. Also we should understand that whether or not the church will be in the great tribulation period, true believers of some kind will certainly be – see Rev 12:17; 13:7. If the tribulation is the wrath of God this would mean that the wrath of God will come on those saints who resist antichrist to the point of death. Can we think that this is possible? Surely "the wrath to come" refers to something far different and far worse than the great tribulation period.

2:1 "Not in vain" – 1:5-10 makes this very clear.

2:2 "Philippi" – Acts 16:19-24.

"Conflict" – Acts 17:5-10.

2:3 It is probable that someone at Thessalonica had been speaking against Paul. Compare 2 Cor 1:12; 2:17; 4:2.

2:4 "Entrusted with the gospel" – 1 Cor 4:1; Gal 2:7; Eph 3:7,8; 1 Tim 1:11,12.

"Not to please men" – Gal 1:10.

"Tests our hearts" – 1 Sam 16:7; Ps 66:10; 139:1,23,24; Prov 21:2; Jer 17:10; Rev 2:23.

2:5 Acts 20:33-35; 2 Cor 7:2. Some preachers are after money, and put on a mask of piety to trick people into giving it – 1 Tim 6:5. Paul was not like them. He well knew that the anger of God rests on the greedy and deceitful – Eph 5:5,6; Col 3:5,6; 1 Tim 6:9-11.

"God is our witness" – v 10. A very solemn and emphatic way of speaking.

2:6 "From men" – compare John 5:44; Rom 2:29.

"Burden" – see 1 Cor 9:7-15; 2 Cor 11:9. **2:7** Verse 11; Gal 4:19.

2:8 2 Cor 7:3; 12:15; 1 John 3:16.

2:9 Acts 18:3; 2 Cor 11:9; 2 Thess 3:8.

2:10 He is not speaking like this for his own sake, but for their sake and for the sake of the gospel he preached. Compare 2 Cor 1:12; 11:16-21; 12:19. He wanted them to have no doubts about the truth of the gospel.

2:11,12 He was like both a mother and a father to them – v 7. Compare 1 Cor 4:15; Gal 4:19. He is an example of how evangelists and pastors should behave toward converts.

"Behave" – or "walk" – note at Eph 2:10.

"Worthy of God" – see Eph 4:1; Phil 1:27; Col 1:10.

"Called you" – note at Rom 1:6; 8:30. Observe what God calls us to.

"Kingdom" and "glory" – see Matt 4:17; 25:34; John 17:22,24; Rom 5:2; 8:17; 14:17; Col 1:12,13; Heb 12:28; 2 Pet 1:11.

2:13 "The Word of God" – here means the gospel of Christ. See Gal 1:11,12. Compare 2 Tim 3:16.

"Working in you" – compare Phil 1:6; 2:13. The Word of God in the hearts and minds of people is an active force for great good – Ps 119:11; Heb 4:12. So we have the instruction in Col 3:16.

2:14 "Imitators" – 1:6.

the churches of God in Judea which are in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen that they *have* from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us. And they are not pleasing to God, and are opposed to all men, 16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, and *so* always filling up *the measure of* their sins. And wrath has come on them to the utmost.

17 But we, brethren, for a short time, being removed from you in person (but not in heart), with great longing, made every effort to see your face. 18 Therefore we would have come to you, certainly I, Paul, more than once, but Satan hindered us. 19 For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

3 So when we could no longer endure *it*, we thought it good to be left alone at Athens,

"Your own countrymen" – Greeks. Unbelieving Greeks persecuted believing Greeks just as unbelieving Jews persecuted believing Jews. And as all other peoples of earth tend to persecute believers in Christ.

2:15 "Killed" – Roman soldiers did the actual killing, but the Jews handed Jesus over to the Romans and demanded His death, and so were responsible for it (Matt 27:1,2,22-25; Acts 2:23; 3:13-15).

"The prophets" – Matt 23:37; Acts 7:52.

"Persecuted us" – Acts 13:50; 14:2,5, 19; 17:5; etc.

2:16 "Gentiles" – Acts 13:45,50; 20:3; 21:27; 22:21,22.

"To the utmost" – compare Matt 23:35,36.

2:17,18 "Being removed" – Acts 17:10. He was in Thessalonica only a brief time and had to leave new believers before he had much opportunity to teach them. He loved them dearly (vs 7,11) and longed to visit them.

"Satan hindered us" – compare Rom 1:13. We do not know what circumstances Paul refers to here. But we do know that Satan is constantly opposing God's servants, and, it would seem from this verse, he can cause delays and disruption of plans. On Satan see 1 Chron 21:1; Matt 4:1-10; John 8:44.

2:19,20 See Phil 4:1. How proud he was of these who believed in Christ! What joy they brought to his heart!

"Crown" – he speaks of the reward of the soul winner. It is to see people in Christ's presence won through his (or her) efforts. Compare Ps 126:5,6; John 4:36.

3:1 "Athens" – from Thessalonica Paul and his companions went to Berea and then on to Athens (Acts 17:10,15).

3:2 "Timothy" – 1:1; Acts 16:1.

"Encourage" – he was always concerned

2 and sent Timothy, our brother and servant of God, and our fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, 3 that no one would be upset by these troubles. For you know that we are appointed to this. 4 For in fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we would experience tribulation – even as it came about, as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could no longer endure *it*, I sent to find out *about* your faith, *fearing* that perhaps by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labour might be in vain.

6 But now Timothy has come from you to us, and brought us good news about your faith and love, and *reported* that you always have good memories of us, and greatly desire to see us, even as we *desire to see* you. 7 So, brethren, we were encouraged about you in all our trouble and distress, because of your faith. 8 For now we live, since you stand firm in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we offer to God again for you, for all the joy we experience for your sakes in the presence of

that believers, especially new believers, be strong in the faith and encouraged to live for Christ. See v 13; 2:12; 2 Thess 2:17; Acts 14:22; 2 Cor 12:19; Eph 3:16; Col 1:11; 2:7.

3:3 "These troubles" – 2:14.

"We are appointed to this" – observe this truth very carefully and compare John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Pet 4:1,12.

3:4 Paul knew from the Word of God and from his personal experience what would happen, and he plainly told them so. When speaking of the blessings of the gospel he did not fail to speak also of the troubles that would come to believers. Compare Acts 20:20,27.

3:5 "Fearing" – compare 1 Cor 15:2; Gal 4:11. True faith in Christ enables believers to overcome trials, persecutions and temptations – John 10:39; 1 John 5:4,5; etc. Paul knew the Thessalonians were facing such difficulties. Was their faith real enough to stand the test? He was anxious to find out.

"The tempter" – Satan (Matt 4:1-10).

"In vain" – Gal 2:2; Phil 2:16.

3:6 "Faith and love" – 1:3.

3:7 "Encouraged. . .because of your faith" – he understood that their faith had passed the tests that came to it and so proved itself genuine (compare 1 Pet 1:6,7).

3:8 "Now we live" – Paul felt his life was bound up with theirs, that if they lived faithfully in Christ it made him feel alive. Compare 1 Cor 12:24-26.

"Stand firm" – 1 Cor 15:58; Gal 5:1; Eph 6:14; Col 2:5; Jam 5:8; 1 Pet 5:9,10.

3:9 "Thanks" – 1:2. These Thessalonians had come to Christ through his ministry, but his thanks were to God because he knew it was God alone who produced this good result.

our God, 10 night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and fill up that which is lacking in your faith?

11 Now *may* our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. 12 And *may* the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love toward each other, and toward all *men*, just as we *do* toward you, 13 to the end that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness in the presence of our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

4 Finally then we urge you, brethren, and encourage *you* in the Lord Jesus, that as you have learned from us how you ought to behave and please God, *so* you would excel *in this* more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

"Joy" – 2:19,20. This was the joy that came because they had proved themselves to be genuine believers and strong in Christ. It was a joy like the joy of a father who sees his children turning out well – but it was doubtless greater than that kind of joy because it was a spiritual joy in God's fellowship.

3:10 "Praying" – 1:2,3.

"Lacking in your faith" – they had believed in Christ and stood firm in faith in the face of persecution. But Paul does not pretend that their faith was fully mature and perfect. They needed to grow in faith – compare Luke 17:5; 2 Cor 10:15; 2 Thess 1:3. For this they needed more teaching of God's Word – Rom 10:17; Eph 4:12-15. Paul longed to visit them and give them this teaching.

3:11 "Direct our way to you" – compare 2:18.

3:12 "Abound in love" – 4:9,10; 2 Thess 1:3; John 13:34; Rom 12:9,10; 1 Cor 13:1,13; 1 John 2:5,10; 3:11,14,16-18.

3:13 "Establish your hearts" – inner spiritual strength is the great need of believers, and Paul prayed in the will of God that they might have it. See Eph 3:16.

"Unblamable in holiness" – 5:23; 1 Cor 1:8; Eph 5:26,27; Phil 2:15; Titus 2:14; 2 Pet 3:14.

"Holy ones" – may mean angels or believers who have died, or both (4:14; Matt 25:31; Jude 14; Rev 19:14).

4:1 "Please God" – Rom 14:18; 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:10; Col 1:10. No believer should ever try to live in any other way. Pleasing God is our whole responsibility, and we should ask about everything we do "does this really please God?" Then we can become people according to God's heart, as David was – see the note at 1 Sam 13:14.

4:2 "By the Lord Jesus" – he knew he was an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor 5:20). Christ gave him the gospel he preached and the teachings he passed on to the churches – 2:13; Gal 1:11,12. So he could speak with all the authority of heaven behind him.

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality, 4 that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in holiness and honour, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God, 6 that no *man* transgress and take advantage of his brother in *this* matter; because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also warned you before and solemnly affirmed. 7 For God has not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness. 8 So he who rejects *this teaching* is rejecting not man but God, who has given to us his Holy Spirit.

9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need of my writing to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. 10 And indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all of Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel *in this* more and more, 11 and to aim to live a quiet

4:3 "Your sanctification" – 3:13; 5:23; John 17:17-19; Rom 6:19; 2 Cor 7:1; Heb 12:14; 1 Pet 1:15,16.

"Immorality" – 1 Cor 6:18-20; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5.

4:4,5 "His vessel" – the body is the vessel of the spirit of a person and he must learn to control this vessel and not let it control him.

"In honour" – immorality brings dishonor and shame.

"Lust like the Gentiles who do not know God" – see Eph 4:17-20.

4:6 Adultery is a wrong done not only to those who engage in it but to their marriage partners.

"The Lord is the avenger" – Rom 12:19. He will bring punishment in due time – Eph 5:5,6; Col 3:6; Heb 13:4, and believers will not need to seek revenge, and, indeed, they must not.

4:7 "Called. . .to holiness" – Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; Titus 2:14; Heb 3:1; 12:14; 1 Pet 1:15.

4:8 "Rejecting not man but God" – Paul's teaching was "by the Lord Jesus" (v 2), so to reject his teaching was the same as rejecting God who sent him.

"Holy Spirit" – 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13; John 14:16,17.

4:9 "Brotherly love" is the love believers have for one another. They are all spiritual brothers (and sisters) belonging to one heavenly Father, and should behave in accordance with this truth – John 13:34; etc.

"Taught by God" – compare Isa 54:13; John 6:45; 1 John 2:27. See Ps 25:4,5.

4:10 "Macedonia" – Acts 16:9. Thessalonica was located in that province.

"More and more" – 3:12; 4:1. The Christian life should be a constant growth until Eph 4:12-15 becomes a reality.

4:11 "Aim" – people have many ambitions, sometimes very selfish ones (Gal 5:20; Phil 1:17; Jam 3:14). Paul shows us a good one to have. God has placed each of us where He wants us to be and has given each a work to do. Let us quietly get on with this

life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may behave honorably toward outsiders, and *that* you will lack nothing.

13 But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you do not grieve like others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, just so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we tell you by the word of the Lord: that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who

work, and not meddle in other people's business.

"Work. . . hands" – some people then (as now) thought that manual labor was demeaning and beneath them. The great apostle did not think so (2:9; Acts 18:3; 20:34,35), and he did not want any believer to think so.

4:12 "Lack nothing" – laziness and meddling in other people's business will not produce so good a result – Prov 24:29-34.

4:13-18 Other prophecies of Christ's second coming are at Matt 24:27-31,36; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor 15:23 (51-54); 2 Thess 1:7; 2:1,8; Heb 9:28; 1 John 2:28; Rev 1:7; 19:11-16; 22:12.

4:13 "Fallen asleep" – an expression sometimes used in the Bible to indicate death. See John 11:11,14; Acts 7:60. "Sleep" suggests that a time will come to wake from sleep – that is, the resurrection. In this "sleep" it is only the body which sleeps, not the soul or spirit. See Rev 6:9-11.

"Do not grieve" – believers can know that death is not the end, that there will be resurrection and reunion with those who have gone on before them.

"No hope" – people without Christ have no valid hope for the future (Eph 2:12).

4:14 "Died and rose again" – Matt 27:50; 28:6; Acts 1:3; Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 15:3-8.

"Just so" – if we really believe one thing God has revealed, we should also be able to believe the other things He has revealed.

"Asleep in him" – when He comes the Lord Jesus will bring with Him the spirits of believers who have died.

4:15 "The word of the Lord" – it is probable that the Lord Jesus revealed the following truth – the truth that the dead in Christ would rise first – directly to Paul as He did other truths (Gal 1:11,12). But it is possible that Jesus revealed it to His apostles while He was still on earth – though it is not recorded in any of the Gospels.

"We who are alive" – some will be living when Christ returns. By using the word "we" Paul did not necessarily mean that he believed he would be one of them. He is speaking more generally – at the time of the second coming some believers would be dead, some alive. Paul did not know the time of Christ's return any more than we do

have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive *and* remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be forever with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

5 But about the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write to you. 2 For *you* yourselves know perfectly *well* that

– 5:1,2; Matt 24:36 – and so could not assume that he would be alive. Later on he came to know that he would not be (2 Tim 4:6,7). Here he gives no hint whether the coming of Jesus for His people will be before the great tribulation (Matt 24:21) or after it.

"Not precede" – those who are still alive will not be changed and caught up into the air before those who have died.

4:16 "From heaven" – Acts 1:11; 3:21; Rev 19:11.

"Shout" – the Greek word means "a call" or "a summons" or "a shout of command." Jesus will call His believers from their graves, or from wherever they may be – see John 5:28. Compare John 11:43,44.

"Archangel" – Michael (Jude 9; Dan 10:13). Not Michael alone but many angels will come with Christ – Matt 16:27; 25:31.

"Trumpet" – see 1 Cor 15:52; Matt 24:31.

"Dead in Christ" – Paul says nothing about unbelievers rising at this time. Compare Rev 20:4-6; Phil 3:11.

4:17 "Caught up together" – in 1 Cor 15:52,53 Paul tells us what will happen at that moment. See also Phil 3:20,21; 1 John 3:2. Believers now sometimes refer to this event as the Rapture (this word is from a Latin word meaning "to transport" or "carry away").

"The clouds" – Dan 7:13; Matt 24:30; 26:64; Rev 1:7.

"Meet the Lord in the air" – compare Matt 24:31. Here Paul does not say what will happen after this – whether He immediately returns to earth with His people or not.

"Forever with the Lord" – this is the glorious goal to which every believer moves (5:10; John 14:3; Col 3:4; Rev 21:3; etc).

4:18 "Comfort" – or "encourage" – the Greek word means both. The truth expressed in these verses is an encouragement and comfort to God's people in every grief that can come to them on earth, in every kind of disappointment, trial, difficulty, persecution, and suffering.

5:1 "Times and seasons" – Matt 24:36; Acts 1:6,7.

5:2 "The Day of the Lord" – Acts 2:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10. The phrase is taken from the Old Testament. See Isa 13:6,9 (2:12-18); Joel 1:15; 2:31.

the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

3 For when they say, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come on them, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you like a thief. 5 You are all the children of light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night; and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But let us who belong to the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to

obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that, whether we are awake or asleep, we should live together with him.

11 Therefore encourage each other, and edify one another, just as you are doing. 12 And we urge you, brethren, to pay attention to those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to regard them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, *to* warn those who are unruly, *to* comfort the fainthearted, help the weak, *and* be patient with everyone. 15 See that no one pays back to anyone wrong for wrong, but always follow what is good, both for yourselves, and for everyone.

It is distinguished in the Bible from the great tribulation which comes before it. See notes on Matt 24:29 and Rev 6:12-17, and compare these two Scriptures. In 4:13-18 Paul wrote of the resurrection and catching up of believers (the Rapture). Here he indicates that while writing to them of that event he was speaking of the "Day of the Lord." It seems then he was teaching that the return of Christ for believers occurs at the beginning of the period of time called the Day of the Lord.

"Thief in the night" - Matt 24:43,44; Luke 12:39,40; Rev 3:3; 16:15.

5:3 "Peace" - compare Jer 6:14; Ezek 13:10.

"Sudden" - compare Prov 6:15; 29:1; Isa 29:5,6.

"Destruction"-Phil 3:19; 2 Pet 3:7. 2 Thess 1:8,9 reveals what this destruction will mean - eternal banishment from the Lord's presence. "Labour pains" strike suddenly. So will the destruction that comes on the Day of the Lord.

5:4 In this verse Paul seems to be teaching that Christian believers will be on earth up to the very time that the "day of the Lord" begins. If he did not believe that some of them would be here why would he speak of their not being surprised by its coming? And if he believed that none of them would be here at that time here was a good opportunity to say so, instead of urging them to "watch" (v 6).

"Not in darkness" - Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 4:6; Col 1:13.

"Overtake you" - those who are on the lookout for a thief will not be surprised when he comes. Believers are in the light and are waiting for the revelation of God's Son from heaven - Titus 2:13. If so, they cannot be surprised when it occurs. They should not attempt to set dates, but the Bible gives some signs of the coming end of this age so that believers can see its approach (Heb 10:25; 2 Thess 2:3,4; Acts 2:20; Matt 24:29,33).

5:5 "Children of light" - Eph 5:8; John 12:36; Matt 5:14.

5:6 "Let us not sleep" - sleeping people do not know what is going on or what is going to happen.

"Watch" - Matt 24:42,43; 25:13.

"Be sober" - the Greek word may also mean "self-controlled" - compare Acts 24:25; Gal 5:23; 1 Pet 4:7; 5:8; 2 Pet 1:6. **5:7** Rom 13:13,14; 2 Pet 2:13.

5:8 "Who belong to the day" - v 5. Believers belong to the new day that will dawn when Christ comes - 2 Pet 1:19; Rev 22:16. They already walk in the light of that day.

"Breastplate" - compare Eph 6:14 where the "breastplate" is righteousness. All Christian qualities are intimately connected. All are "put on" by putting on "Christ." See Rom 13:14. Notes at Eph 4:24; 6:13.

"Helmet" - see Eph 6:17.

5:9 "Wrath" - note at 1:10. "Wrath" is put in contrast with "salvation" (not with some supposed escape from the great tribulation). The one means God's anger on sin and sinners, the other means deliverance from sin and therefore deliverance from God's wrath that comes on sin.

5:10 "Died for us" - John 10:15; Rom 5:8; 1 Pet 3:18. Here "awake or asleep" means alive or dead (3:13).

"Live together with Him" - living believers share Christ's life and fellowship even now (Rom 6:5-8; 1 John 1:3). Believers who have gone to heaven do so face to face with Him - 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23.

5:11 "Encourage" - 4:18. This is a duty and privilege of every believer.

"Edify one another" - Rom 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor 14:3-5,12,17,26; Eph 4:29.

5:12,13 "Over you" - 1 Tim 5:17; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1-3.

"In the Lord" - the authority of church elders comes from the Lord, and must be used in the Lord.

"Be at peace" - Mark 9:50; Rom 12:16; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:3; Phil 2:2; Heb 12:14.

5:14 "Fainthearted", "weak" - local churches will have all sorts of believers. None should be belittled or neglected.

"Weak" - Rom 14:1.

5:15 "Wrong for wrong" - Rom 12:17-21.

16 Rejoice always. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test everything, hold firmly what is good. 22 Keep away from every form of evil.

23 And may the very God of peace sanctify you completely. And *I pray God that* your whole spirit

and soul and body be kept blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you *is* faithful, and he will also do *it*.

25 Brethren, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27 I charge you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

5:16 "Rejoice" – Phil 3:1; 4:4; Rom 12:12; Hab 3:17,18.

5:17 Paul did more than instruct others to do this. He did it himself – 1:3; 2:13; Rom 1:9,10; Eph 6:18; Col 1:3; 2 Tim 1:3. He knew the power and privilege of prayer, and always kept his heart in tune with the Lord regardless of what work he may have been doing. When one is occupied with other activities it will not always be possible to formulate a prayer or speak one audibly. But prayer is lifting the heart to God even if no words are spoken with the lips. Notes and references to prayer at Gen 18:32; Matt 6:5-13; 7:7-12; Mark 11:24; Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8; Rom 8:26,27; Eph 1:17; 6:18; Phil 4:6,7; Col 1:9; Heb 11:6; Jam 1:5-8; 5:16-18; 1 John 5:14,15; Ps 66:18.

5:18 Heb 13:15; Col 3:17; Phil 4:6; Eph 5:20; Ps 50:14; 113:1; Lev 7:12,13. "In everything" means all things without exception, whether the circumstances are pleasant or unpleasant, safe or dangerous, smooth or rough. There are always things to thank God for in every circumstance of life and we should all learn the practice of thanksgiving.

"This is the will of God" – we may not know God's will about some things, but we know it in this matter of thanksgiving.

5:19 "Do not quench the Spirit" – God's Spirit gives warmth, light and burning zeal to the hearts of believers. But it is possible to quench His fire in us by sin, neglect, prayerlessness and ingratitude. Compare Eph 4:30.

5:20 "Prophecies" – he means prophecies

uttered by those in the church who then had this spiritual ability. See Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10,28; 14:3.

5:21 "Test" – 1 Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:1. Not every prophet or prophecy is from the Lord – Matt 7:15; 2 Pet 2:2; Jer 14:14. Every word men speak must be tested in the light of the Word of God.

5:22 Some people are good at avoiding evil things they do not want to do, but fall into those evils which are pleasing to them. Believers have no business doing any kind of evil.

5:23 "God of peace" – Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor 14:33; Phil 4:9; 2 Thess 3:16; Heb 13:20.

"Sanctify" – note at John 17:17-19.

"Completely" – of course Paul would not pray for their partial sanctification, nor should we desire such a thing for ourselves or for any believer. To be only partly holy is to be partly unholy. Compare Matt 5:48; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 7:1.

"Blameless" – references at 3:13.

5:24 "Faithful" – Deut 7:9; 32:4; 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Thess 3:3; 2 Tim 2:13; Titus 1:2; 1 John 1:9.

"He will also do it" – see 1 Cor 1:8,9; Phil 1:6. This word, this promise, is spoken to all the believers in Thessalonica (and to all now), not just to the exceptionally holy and mature.

5:25 Rom 15:30; Eph 6:19.

5:26 "Kiss" – Rom 16:16.

5:27 All the family of God still need the truth revealed in this letter, and the instructions of the apostle.

5:28 Rom 1:7; 16:20.