

Bible Study Notes: 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Jude

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

1 Thessalonians 1

1Th. 1,1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

1Th. 1,2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Comments:

Who, When, and Where

- THESSALONIKA was an ancient city in Greece, now called Thessaloniki. The city was founded by Cassander of Macedon in about 315 BC. He named the city after his wife, who was the half-sister of Alexander the Great. The city became the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia in 148 BC. It became an early center for Christianity in about 50 AD, and was visited by the Apostle Paul during his second missionary journey. The church at this city received at least two letters from the Apostle Paul, 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, both of which became part of the New Testament.
- MACEDONIA is a geographic region between the Balkans and the Greek Peninsula, that borders the Aegean Sea, to the south. It became a dominant power in the region during the 4th century B.C., because of the military prowess of Alexander the Great. Later, the Romans divided Macedonia into four provinces, one of which was called Thessalonika, after the major city of the province. The region was visited by Paul frequently during his travels. Although most of the churches in Macedonia were quite poor, they had a reputation for generosity in Paul's day (1 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:15-17; 2 Cor 8:1-5; Rom 15:26-27).



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- **ACHAIA** is one of the regional units of Greece. It is located as part of the northwestern part of the Peloponnesian Peninsula, that includes the Biblical city of Corinth. For this reason, Paul often mentioned Achaia when referring to Corinth, although Macedonia was vaguely part of the region of Achaia, as well (2 Cor 1:1; 9:2; 1 Thes 1:7).
- **PAUL**: The Apostle Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia (see map, below), in about the same year as Jesus, or about 3 to 5 BC. His circumcision name was “Saul”, but he took the name “Paul” (which means, “small”) for his ministry work among the gentiles. He wrote this letter to the Christians in Thessalonika in about 52 AD. It may have been one of his earliest letters, perhaps preceded by **Galatians** by a couple of years.
 - He descended from the Jewish tribe of Benjamin. His father was a Pharisee and a Roman citizen, as was Paul. He could have been a man of some means, because Paul was highly educated, although some historians postulate that Paul was born into a family of freed slaves who later gained Roman citizenship. After completing his primary education in Tarsus, Paul studied under rabbi Gamaliel, in Jerusalem. Apparently, Paul remained unmarried (**1 Cor 7:8**).
 - We know nothing about Paul’s mother. His father was a Benjaminite and a Pharisee, who somehow gained Roman citizenship. One theory asserts that Paul’s family was forcibly exiled by the Romans to Tarsus, a city in modern Turkey, from their homes in Israel, followed the First Jewish Revolt, in 70 AD. They may have been enslaved as a result of this. Roman slaves could earn their freedom through faithful service. Sometimes, freed slaves were granted Roman citizenship when they were set free. This citizenship was highly prized and was inherited by subsequent generations in the family. Some commentators wonder if this kind of family history would have made Paul more accepting of slavery as a cultural institution. Historians estimate that about 15 percent of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves.
 - Paul had a sister, who warned him of a threat from a gathering mob (**Acts 23:16**). Paul apparently did learn the trade of tent making at one time in his life. He mentions other “kinsmen” in his writings (**Romans 16:7, 11**), who sometimes attended him in ministry and shared some of his hardships.
 - Paul, as a zealous Pharisee, became an early enemy of the Church, who approved of Stephen’s death and who sought further persecution of the saints. He was on the road to Damascus to organize his next campaign against Christians when he personally encountered the Lord Jesus, ultimately resulting in Paul’s salvation. Thereafter, Paul became one of the leading apostles in the Church, an apostle to the gentiles, and a major author of the New Testament. Please read the book of **Acts** for a more complete accounting of the life and times of Paul. According to church history, Paul died a martyr in Rome to the gospel of Jesus.
- **SILVANUS** was an alternative name for Silas. He was a leader in the church at Jerusalem. He was commissioned by the Council of Jerusalem to accompany Paul to bring the gospel to the people in the region of Syria (**Acts 15:22**). He was imprisoned with Paul, for a time (**Acts 16:16-39**). Silas also helped the Apostle Peter in his ministry of the gospel (**1 Pet 5:12**). Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition asserts that Silas was one of the seventy disciples that Christ sent out with his gospel message (**Luke 10**), although other historians believe this was another “Silvanus”. One tradition states that Silas became the first bishop at Corinth, although a different tradition states he was the first bishop of Thessalonika. Most of what we know about Silas is gleaned from the book of **Acts**.
- **TIMOTHY** was an early Christian evangelist, a younger, close traveling companion and disciple of the Apostle Paul, and the first bishop of Ephesus. He was born to a Jewish mother and a Greek father, probably in the Lycaonian city of Lystra, which is located modern Turkey (Roman province, Asia Minor), in about 17 AD - **Acts 16:1-3**). His mother’s name was Eunice; his grandmother’s name was Lois (**2 Tim 1:5**) — both of whom were Christians. Nothing else is known of his father. Timothy died around 97 AD. Most of what we know about Timothy comes from the book of **Acts**. Two epistles in the New Testament, written by Paul, bear Timothy’s name (**1 Timothy, 2 Timothy**).

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Noteworthy Points

- It is important to remember that this “book” in the Bible is really a letter — an “epistle” — written by Paul to Christians he has come to know and care about deeply. Paul’s love for these Thessalonians is clearly expressed in its words.
 - He blessed them and affirmed his affection for them in his greetings ([v.1](#))
 - He prayed for them ([v. 2](#))
 - He closely supervised their welfare, activities, and spiritual growth ([v.3-10](#))
 - He exhorted and encouraged them in their faith and faithfulness ([v.3-10](#))
 - As we will see later, Paul also corrected their errors and sought to protect them from false teachers who were seeking to lead them astray.
- The Apostle Paul commended the Thessalonians for “turning away from idols to serve the living God . . .” ([verse 9](#)). The pagan world was polytheistic and filled with idols, but apparently, Thessalonika was renown for this. Most pagan cities had their own patron “god”, presented by an idol. Thessalonika’s patron idol was “Cabrius”, that may have been an Egyptian god originally (See text box insert on Cabius).
- Paul was one of the Apostles who told the Thessalonians about God’s love for them through Christ. He did this with words and deeds. He lived among them, disciplined them, and spent his life for them. They heard and experienced the love of Christ through Paul.
 - It is natural for a person to care for friends in whom we have greatly invested much. But Paul’s love for these Christians was supernatural — it was empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 - Paul naturally expressed his love for these saints by sharing his life with them. This is the fellowship of friendship and community that all people need. But Paul also ministered to them through the Word of the gospel, which is supernatural. Both Word and deeds are needed if the truth of the gospel is to be made real to unbelievers. Both the natural and supernatural elements must be present to empower the testimony of the saint. This is the power about which Paul speaks in [verse 5](#). It is no different for Christians today.
- Paul witnessed the fruits of his labors in his Thessalonian friends. These are the fruits of faithfulness, born of obedience to Christ and the leading of His Holy Spirit. They should be evident in all saints. Among them, Paul mentions the following:
 - Their repentance from sin and adoption of new life in Christ ([v. 9](#)); they became imitators of Christ, as modeled to them by Paul ([v. 6](#))
 - Their work of faith ([v. 3](#))
 - Their labor of love ([v. 3](#))
 - Their steadfastness of hope in Christ ([v. 3](#))
 - Their supernatural, overcoming joy in the midst of tribulation ([v. 6](#))
 - Their reputation and testimony of faith and faithfulness to everyone who lived around them, and beyond ([v. 8](#))
- Recall that early Christians had no Bible to consult, churches were merely small

Thessalonika’s god: Cabrius

Thessalonika was founded during the Greek domination of this region, during the 3rd century BC. It had an appetite for “foreign gods”, which were worshipped through idols. In addition to Greek idols, many Thessalonians revered Egyptian and Roman gods. This adoption of foreign idols was a common practice in the ancient pagan world.

The city was located on the “Egyptian Way”, a key trade route that connected Rome to Egypt. The city also had a large natural sea harbor, opening its inhabitants to the beliefs and customs of people from around the region.

The city’s patron “god” was Cabrius, one of a class of gods called the “Cabiri”, who was the “martyr” god, who supposedly had been slain, but was expected to return again to deliver the city from its woes. The Cabiri were related to Egyptian gods, but originated in Greece. Cabrius himself was a “mage” — a practitioner of magic - who called himself the “Awakened”, one of seven supernatural races in the classical world of darkness. There was a lot of complicated and strange ideas in this cult, but it was particularly problematic to Christians because of the resurrection component of its mythology. Because of the Cabrius fairytale, some pagans in Thessalonika believed Jesus was a phony, “copycat” figure to be shunned. On the other hand, the legend opened the door to faith for other residents to the city, who recognized the unfair martyrdom of Jesus, identifying with his cause and purpose, and were preconditioned by this mythology to believe in the resurrection from the dead.

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home gatherings, and the major confessions of the Church were yet to be written. Christian theology and doctrine was not well-defined yet. Indeed, it would take centuries and several major meetings of church leaders to agree of an understanding of the trinity, the divinity and humanity of Christ, the nature of salvation by grace through faith, and other doctrinal issues. Even today, the church actively some theology, such as predestination versus free will and infant baptism versus believer's baptism. This may be because the truth of God is exceedingly complex, given His divine and eternal nature. On the other hand, our faith is so simple that we could explain it to a child; God love the world and gave His only Son for it. We must love God and love one another. This is the faith that sustained the early faith, as it should us today.

- Part of what makes Paul's letter to the Thessalonians canon — a part of our Bible — is the new revelation of truth that clearly comes from the Holy Spirit. In verse 10, Paul teaches us the following;
 1. Divine wrath (Greek: “*orgy*”) is coming to the world. This wrath results from God's judgment of the sin of the world, which now has grown reprobate, immune to the reach of God's grace. When grace runs out, there is nothing left by wrath from a righteous God.
 - This wrath is described, in detail, in Revelation, (e.g. “Trumpet Judgments” of Rev 8-11, “Bowl Judgments” of Rev 16) and elsewhere in the Bible. It was foreshadowed prophetically in the divine destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen19) and by the “Plagues of Egypt” (Ex 11-12, etc.). Notice this wrath is the consequences of the verdict rendered by divine judgment (Rom 2:5-8; Eph 5:6; Gal 3:6), often following a time of angelic visitation (“time ran out”).
 - The onset of divine wrath in the world is associated with the Second Coming of Christ (Rev 6:16, 17)
 2. Christ came to rescue His saints from this coming wrath, however (v. 10). Because the sins of the saints have been forgiven in Christ Jesus, we are not subject to God's judgment for sin, so we also are not subject to the wrath of judgment for sin. This is a key part of the gospel. It is explicitly repeated in Scripture.

“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him”. Rom 5:9

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” 1 Thes 5:9

3. Although Christ rescues us from the power of tribulation to overcome us (Greek: “*thlipsis*”, also, translated as “*trouble, pressure*”), He does not always shield us from the tribulation itself — yet, He does empower us as overcomers!
 - The Thessalonian Christians, though exemplary in their Christian faith and lives, were experiencing tribulation (“*thlipsis*”); their faith did not exempt them for this. Indeed, they were hated BECAUSE of their faith and devotion to Christ (see John 15:18-25).
 - The tribulation amplified the power of their testimony (v. 6), so that the gospel of Christ's love spread through their witness to the surrounding regions of Macedonia and Achaia, and beyond (v. 8, 9). By word of mouth, their testimony even made it to Paul, who was far removed from them at the time.
 - In spite of their troubles (“*tribulation*”), the Thessalonians were experiencing great joy (v. 6). Because of their faith, they had overcome their tribulation. This is exactly what Christ commends in His disciples (see Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 21:7).
 - Jesus said that we must “*Take up our cross and follow* . . . “ Him (Matt 16:24-26). The cross is a place of tribulation. Jesus promised His followers that “*in this world, you will have tribulation*” (John 16:33). By enduring tribulation with joy, saints prove their faith in Christ!

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- Tribulation not only amplifies the testimony of the saints for righteousness and proves their faith to a lost world, but it also refines the saints (1 Pet 1:7), making their faith more pure and dependable, and convicts the world regarding sin. When saints suffer for their faith, they enter into a fellowship with Christ that was borne of suffering and sacrifice; they too take up their crosses.
4. God postpones Christ's return during the Great Tribulation as an act of grace for the "lost", that they might have time to repent and accept the Lord because when grace runs out, only the "wrath of the Lamb", at the time of Judgment, will remain for them. The Church is delivered from that Judgment (and wrath) by Christ's shed blood and by His appearing. Thus, His Second Coming will rescue the saints from the annihilation of Antichrist during the "Great Tribulation" (see Matt 24:21, 27-31), not so much because of the tribulation itself, but because the world has become reprobate and the time of Judgment and Wrath is at hand.
 - Indeed, Jesus Himself teaches us that His Second Coming and our rapture/resurrection takes place "*immediately AFTER the tribulation of those days*" (Matt 24:29).
 - At the close of this Great Tribulation, the Church will be purified and refined, a spotless bride for the Lord (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:27; Rev 19:7), so that when we see Jesus, "*we will be like Him.*" (1 John 3:2)
 - For these reasons, and because of the clear testimony of Scripture itself as to the timing and purpose of the rapture, I have rejected a "Pre-tribulation Rapture" theory. In fact, Paul's letter to the Thessalonians clearly commends these saints for the tribulation they endured, teaching us about the power of faith to overcome tribulation, while saying that the saints will be rescued from wrath when Christ returns.
 5. As saints, we need not live in fear of tribulation. In fact, Jesus Himself taught us "*Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*" (Matthew 5:10-12) To be an "overcomer", Christians need to rely on the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. In fact, it was the counsel of the Holy Spirit that led Paul to Thessalonika in the first place. This is covered in the next section.

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1 Thessalonians 2

1Th. 2,1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, ² but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. ³ For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. ⁵ For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed — God is witness — ⁶ nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. ⁷ But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. ⁸ Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

Comments:

- The Apostle Paul came to Thessalonika after first having suffered tribulation in Philippi (**v. 1**). But it was as though God had used Paul's experience in Philippi to prepare him for his ministry to the Thessalonians. The account of this journey is miraculous and amazingly recounted in **Acts 16**.
 - (See map, below). Paul was traveling westward through Galatia and Phrygia, in central Turkey, towards the Roman Province of Asia Minor, in western Turkey. Then, the Holy Spirit commanded Paul not to go to Asia Minor, nor did the "*Spirit of Jesus*" permit Paul to remain in Bithynia. Instead, Paul was directed to travel into Macedonia and Greece, permitting him



to stop in Philippi. -In Philippi, they began to preach the Christ crucified and resurrected in the Jewish synagogues. There, he met a woman named Lydia, who accepted the Lord, founding one of the first churches in that city. -Meanwhile, the activities of a demon-possessed slave girl led to Paul exorcising

- the unclean spirits from her. With this, she lost the supernatural demonic powers of divination that rendered her valuable to her masters. They responded by provoking the city to arrest Paul and Silas, his traveling companion, beating them severely with rods, and imprisoning them in the inner dungeon.
- Filled with joy for having suffered for the gospel, Paul and Silas were singing hymns around midnight when a powerful earthquake miraculously released them from their chains and their

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- prison cell. The jailer, overcome with fear, received Christ as Savior and Lord, followed by an amazing outpouring the Holy Spirit and many people coming to Christ.
- Although Paul experienced severe opposition to preaching the gospel, including physical abuse and imprisonment, he experienced God's amazing deliverance and witnessed a rich harvest of souls for the Kingdom. Following all this, Paul came to Thessalonika, filled with boldness to speak the gospel, even though he experienced opposition to this truth in that city.
 - The power of the gospel message comes from the Word of God, spoken in obedience to the Holy Spirit with the pure intention of glorifying Jesus and building His Kingdom. Accomplished oratory, clever arguments, persuasive human logic, glitzy jingos, emotional manipulation, fancy programs, and personal ambition not only lack the power to lead others into the Kingdom, but they actually get in the way of achieving God's plan (v. 3-6). The effective witness for Christ must be humble, loving, patient, prayerful, attentive to the Spirit, and bold to obey the Lord's leading to speak the simple Word of Truth.
 - The love of God is obvious in the sacrifice of His Son. The power of God is proven by the resurrection of His Son. In the same way, the saints should manifest of the love of God towards others, and the power of a sanctified life of practiced obedience to the Holy Spirit. This is a life of self-sacrifice and joy. Paul was modeling both of these qualities to the Thessalonians, telling them they should imitate him (and hence, Christ - v. 7, 8).

1Th. 2,9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹ just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹² so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Comments:

- The disciple of Christ is a servant of the Lord and of others — not a Master. Paul came to serve the Thessalonians, not be served, in spite of his high Kingdom calling as an Apostle. This also should be the witness of a Christian. It is the way to lead others into God's Kingdom.
- Christians also have an affirmative duty to encourage and exhort one another. The life of faith in a hostile world presents many difficulties that are best overcome with the help of the saints. Also, we are accountable to one another so that we may remain useful to the Lord and to each other.

1Th. 2,13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. ¹⁴ For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵ who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, ¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

Comments:

- Witnessing the conversion of an unbeliever into a born-again saint is a great joy and privilege. It may only be a part of the Christian's witnessing experience, but it is the most affirming one.
- Integrity, a humble servant's spirit, joyful charity, and genuine friendship, all facilitate sharing your faith with unbelievers, but at some point, as witnesses for Christ, we must share "the Word of God"

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([y: 13](#)) - the gospel of Jesus Christ. Good deeds alone will not accomplish man's salvation. As the Holy Spirit provides the opportunities, the saint must be willing and able to invite others to "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved*".

- Following Christ's crucifixion, most in Israel experienced a hardening to the gospel of Christ ([Romans 11](#)). Like Paul, many Jews became enemies of the Church, hostile to spreading the good news to others. As a result, Israel would again experience the harshness of God's discipline. Christians must not be deceived, however. Paul reminds us that the gift and calling of God is irrevocable; Israel's stumbling opens to the door for God's grace to the gentiles, but one day "*all Israel will be saved*."

1Th. 2,17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while — in person, not in spirit — were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. ¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan hindered us. ¹⁹ For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

Comments:

- Satan is the Accuser of the Brethren, the Adversary, the Dragon, the devil, Leviathan (he has many names in Scripture). Although a fallen Cherub of the highest heavenly order, his ultimate defeat, judgment, and destruction is accomplished through the cross of Christ.
- Worldly riches, power, possessions, fame, worldly knowledge and skills, and acclaim are all passing away. These have no value in Heaven. Our eternal wealth will consist of the people we've helped and the souls we've led to the Lord. These are our "*crown of exultation*" ([1 Thes 2:19](#)) and our rich reward ([1 Cor 3:14](#); [Col 3:24](#); [2 Jn 8](#); [Rev 11:8](#); [22:12](#)) and hope at the resurrection and rapture.
- Notice that these eternal treasures are credited to the saints at the time of the Second Coming of Christ, "*in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming.*" ([y. 29](#)). This is the "*Judgement Seat of Christ*" ([2 Cor 5:10](#)) - a time of judgment "*without reference to sin*" ([Heb 9:28](#)), but for obedience service to the saints in Christ's name.

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1 Thessalonians 3

1Th. 3,1 Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, ³ so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. ⁴ For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

Comments:

- Paul worked hard among the Thessalonians to teach and encourage them in their new-found faith in Christ. But he knew their situation was difficult. They lived in a sensuous pagan culture, dominated by idols and demonic powers, suffering persecution as they sought to live holy lives of faith in Christ. For these reasons, Paul worried about their continued welfare (v.1). This prompted him to send Timothy to Thessalonika to check on these “newly minted” saints and to encourage and teach them (v. 2). Paul's joy and relief resulted with the good report from Timothy about the Thessalonian Christians.
- Paul knew the power of Satan to tempt or coerce people into unbelief and disobedience. He called Satan “*the tempter*” (v.5, from the Greek word, “*peirazo*”, which could mean “*tester*”) — and apt name for the serpent, who deceived Eve's fall into sin. New believers can be very vulnerable to these attacks, but all Christians have vulnerabilities inherent in their nature against which they must be on guard.
- Paul also knew that the Thessalonians would hear reports about his difficulties and afflictions (v.4, “*afflictions*” is translated from “*thlibo*”, which can also mean “*pressure*” or “*tribulation*”). He worried that these reports would discourage them, perhaps causing them to stumble in their faith. Faith that saves is faith lived out in faithfulness. Although Paul was experiencing difficulties, his concern was for them, not himself.

1Th. 3,6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, ⁷ for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; ⁸ for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. ⁹ For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, ¹⁰ as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

Comments:

- Faith and love (v. 6). These were the essential elements of a healthy faith that Timothy was looking for in Thessalonika. Hearing of these qualities in these saints comforted Paul, giving him joy and relief, blessing him greatly. This was solid evidence that the Holy Spirit was in control! For this reason, he said “*now we really live*” (v. 8). Life consists of more than eating and drinking; it is animated and given depth and color by faith and love.
- Notice Paul's concern for his Thessalonian friends! He prayed for them “*night and day*” (v. 10), wanting to see them again. This is another way to love others - prayer! Paul, their “spiritual father in the faith”, knew he had much more to teach these new saints. He was hoping God would open a way for him to do this (v.10).

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1Th. 3,11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; **12** and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; **13** so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

Comments:

- Paul emphasized divine love — supernatural “*agape*” love (**v. 12**) — as the key ingredient for saints to pursue a life of holiness (**v. 13**). There is no law against this love. Indeed, all other law derives from it, which also was expressed by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross.
- Paul also taught that holiness sustains the Christian in their faith until the day Lord Jesus takes him or her “home”. From an end-times perspective, notice that at Jesus second coming, He brings “*all His saints*” with Him (**v. 13**). This verse supports the assertion that Christ come **FOR** His saints at the resurrection/rapture, before the divine Trumpet Wrath Judgments (**1 Thes 1:10; 4:16; 5:9; Rom 5:9; Matt 24:-31**), but returns **WITH all** (Greek: “*pantos*”) His saints to claim His earthly throne at the Seventh Trumpet. The time between the rapture and the second coming of Christ must be longer than five months because the Fifth Trumpet itself is five months long (**Rev 9:1-5**). The Mishna (Jewish commentaries on the Torah) say the plagues of Egypt (**Ex 7-10**) lasted about one year. These plagues may foreshadow the Trumpet Plagues of Revelation, giving us some clue as to their duration, but this is speculation. For people who believe there is no archeological evidence of the Plagues of Egypt, please refer them to the “*Admonitions of Ipuwer*”, Papyrus Leiden 344, which belongs to Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden (National Museum of Antiquities of Leiden). This document was written by an Egyptian scribe who lived roughly in the time of the Exodus. It describes the Plagues of Egypt in vivid detail from the perspective of an Egyptian who was experiencing them!
- To be clear, **Verse 13** tells us Jesus will return with all His “saints” (Greek: *hagion*, “*holy ones*”). From later verses in **1 Thessalonians**, we learn that Jesus will come again in the company of His angels and the believers who previously died in Christ. For this reason, it is not unreasonable to postulate that the resurrection and rapture of the saints will occur before, or at the same time, as His Second Coming.

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1 Thessalonians 4

1Th. 4,1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. **2** For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of the Lord Jesus*. **3** For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; **4** that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, **5** not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; **6** *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. **7** For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. **8** So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Comments:

- Paul and his associates “instructed” the fledgling Christians in the new church in Thessalonika, but not merely as lecturers or preachers. He lived among them, modeled a faithful lifestyle, shared in their burdens and hardships, rejoiced in their triumphs, and taught them the lessons of Scripture and the things of Christ through the issues of life. This is discipleship, the very thing Christ called every Christian to do. In this letter, Paul was exhorting the Thessalonian Christians to disciple others around them, just as they saw him do with them. The command to “*make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .*” was from Jesus Himself (**Matthew 28:19**). Therefore, Paul’s instructions to these new Christians had the authority of Christ. (Note: the phrase “. . . *the authority of . . .*” in the NASB translation is not present in the original Greek. It is implied by context, however.)
- God called us out of sin for “*sanctification*” (**v.3, 8** - Greek: *hagiasmos*, which also can be translated as “*purification, moral purity, dedicated, hallowed*” - Thayer, Mounce). Paul clarifies what he means by “*sanctification*” by listing some of the activities that Christians should NOT engage or contemplate. Among these, Paul listed “*sexual immorality*” (**v. 3**, Greek: *porneia*, from which we get the English word, “pornography”, although this Greek word also refers to all forms on unholy sexual behavior). Immoral sexual activities was an accepted part of the pagan world and culture. It was not only embraced as “normal”, but as desirable. Paul taught these Christians — and us — to be careful of this demonic trap!
- Other behaviors Christians must shun to pursue sanctification were listed by Paul, such as cheating and defrauding other people. The pagan world admired the man who could “cut a shrewd deal”, even if was a dishonest one. Winning by any means is not a godly virtue.
- Paul emphasized that, in the end, God will avenge those who harm others and dishonor Him. This was written as a warning to Christians! We are saved by grace through faith, and not from works (**Ephesians 2:8-10**), but there is accountability and discipline for our abuses of grace! (**Hebrews 12:4-11**)

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

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Comments:

- Almost everything we've learned in life came to us from other people or from the experiences of everyday life. But love for God's Church — "*love of the brethren*" (**v. 9**, Greek: *philadelphias*) — is taught to us by God Himself. This lesson begins when we realize that our Heavenly Father loved us so much that He gave His only Son for our redemption. And it grows when we consider that Christ calls us "*brethren*" (**Hebrews 2:11**) and that we are all family — brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Our testimony of "brotherly love" identifies us as Christians to the unbelieving world (**John 13:35**). It is what attracts others to Christ, resulting in them belonging to "the family", too. But inappropriate behavior, selfishness, and sin not only sullies the testimony of the saints, but it also obstructs the mission of the Church for Christ. For this reason, Paul teaches Christians to be productive, circumspect with respect to deportment, and charitable to those in need.

1Th. 4,13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. **15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. **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 ^awe who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The "Rapture"

In **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**, Paul explains that when Jesus returns, dead saints will be resurrected before the Great Tribulation Christians, those ". . . *who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air . . .* (**v. 17**). Thus, the final generation of saints may not experience death, but may be transformed when united with Christ. This is called the "Rapture". The Rapture is controversial in some Christian circles, but it is well-documented in the Old Testament. Both Enoch (**Genesis 5:24**) and Elijah (**2 Kings 2:1,11**) were raptured by the Lord. Some Christians argue that there is no Hebrew or Greek word for "rapture", thus rendering this concept invalid. But I do not believe this is true. **Hebrews 11:5**, says "*By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death . . .*" (NASB). The Greek word from which "*was taken up*" was translated, is "*metetethae*", which Thayer says means "*to transfer*" or "*to change or transform*". This is *exactly* what rapture means, in both senses of the word. When a saint is raptured, they are transferred from this world into the heavenly world and they are transformed or changed into their glorified body. Also, in **Hebrews 11**, this word is in the passive voice — Enoch got raptured, he did not actively achieve it on his own. This, too, fits the Biblical concept of the "Rapture".

Comments:

- These are key verses in understanding the resurrection and rapture of the saints. Apparently, there were false teachers at Thessalonika who were upsetting the church about this topic. In fact, Paul had to address this subject again in his second letter to the Thessalonians, to reassure them they were not "left behind" because the resurrection had already occurred (see **2 Thes 2**).
- The main points regarding the resurrection and rapture found in **1 Thes 4:13-18**, include
 - The resurrection would not happen until Christ returned again — something yet in the future. The Thessalonians were not "left behind".
 - The resurrection of the righteous dead would precede the rapture of the living saints.
 - Most commentators believe the resurrection and rapture will be nearly simultaneous events, since they all are united with Christ on the day of His Second Coming (**v. 15-17**). This is not an unreasonable assertion, but these verses do not specify the time gap between the resurrection and the rapture, if there is one at all; it merely defines the order of these events.

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- Although Paul used the word “*asleep*” (Greek: *koimao*) to refer to the dead, he was NOT advocating “soul sleep”, a teaching of Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah Witnesses, among others. Those who advocate “soul sleep” do not believe that our conscious spirits will inhabit Heaven immediately after death. Rather, they believe that the dead in Christ merely lapse into unawareness until their resurrection, when they are “awakened” and given new bodies. In my opinion, other verses written by the Apostle Paul make it unlikely that he intended to imply “soul sleep”. Consider these two verse written by Paul, both of which imply intimate, conscious fellowship with the Lord in Heaven after death.
 - “. . . we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” **2 Cor 5:8**
 - “But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.” **Phil 1:23**

Also, the teachings of Jesus regarding what is experienced in death before the resurrection are not consistent with the doctrine of “soul sleep”. See **Luke 16:19-31** and **Luke 23:43**. Indeed, the Apostle John actually saw the living, conscious souls of the saints martyred in the Great Tribulation, before they were resurrected (**Rev 6:9**). And of course, Jesus promised the repentant thief on the cross a place in Heaven that very day! (**Luke 23:39-43**) The teaching on “soul sleep” points out the problem with lifting a single verse out of context, without balancing it against the whole counsel of God’s Word.

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1 Thessalonians 5

1Th. 5,1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. **2** For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord ¹will come just like a thief in the night. **3** While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. **4** But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; **5** for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; **6** so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. **7** For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. **8** But since ^awe are of *the day*, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. **9** For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Peace and Safety

In **Thessalonians 5:2, 3**, the Apostle Paul explains that unbelievers in the end-times will think they are finally free from the dangers of God’s judgments when they murder the two prophet-saints of **Rev 11**. They even will celebrate this deed, leaving their bodies unburied while they celebrate and exchange gifts (**Revelation 11:10**). These two “Tribulation Martyrs” will bear witness against Antichrist, and like the prophets Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, will pronounce the divine “Trumpet Judgments” (**Revelation 8 & 9**) against this wicked world (**Revelation 11:6**). Three days later, however, the Tribulation Martyrs will be resurrected and the Kingdom of Christ will be announced (**Revelation 11:11-15**), ultimately leading to the demise of all ungodliness (**Revelation 19-20**). Paul stressed that this fate will catch *unbelievers* unaware because they live in darkness, but saints will “see it coming” because they have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Comments:

- These are key verses that inform us about the resurrection and rapture. Paul makes several important points.
 1. Although no one knows the exact day or hour that Christ will return (**Matt 24:36**), saints will know the time when His return is at hand (**v.2, 4; Matt 24:32-35**). This is because God’s faithful servants will be attentive to the business of the Kingdom (**Luke 12:35-48**), immersed in the Word of God (**Prof 8:33**), looking for deliverance from intense persecution, aware of the signs of the time (**Luke 21:25-28**), and guided by Holy Spirit (**John 16:33**).
 2. Faithful saints are likened to those who are awake (**v. 5, 6; Matt 25:1-25**). Even in the midst of the greatest tribulation (**Matt 24:21-22; 29-31**), the saints have great hope and joyful anticipation of deliverance (**v. 10, 11**).
 3. The pagan world, on the other hand, lives in the darkness of their own unbelief (**v. 5; 2 Cor. 4:3-4**). The end-times world will not only thoroughly reject God, but also they will embrace wickedness (**Eph. 4:17-19**) and hatred of the Church completely (**John 15:18-25**). Paradoxically, just when they think they are finally free from God’s judgment, their destruction is at hand (**Rev 11:10**).
- Paul compared being a Christian to being a Roman soldier on active duty (**v. 8; Eph 6:11-17**). Many sermons have been preached on “the full armor of God.” (**Ephesian 6:11-13**) The main point to this illustration is to remind Christians that we are engaged in the spiritual warfare that rages all around us, in both the seen and unseen realms. As soldiers, we must be equipped and ready to fulfill our duty.
- **Verse 9** states that (a) the wrath of God will not be inflicted on the saints (also, see **1 Thes 1:10; Rom 5:9**), and (b) this is because we have been saved from our sins by Jesus Christ (**v. 10, 11**). This

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wrath first appears upon the earth immediately after the 7th Seal of the Scroll ([Rev 8:1](#)), as seen by the Apostle John. Thereafter, the judgments of the scroll will come forth as Trumpets ([Rev 8-9](#)), but the saints will be rescued from this wrath because the 6th Seal had been broken previously, leading to their deliverance ([Rev 6:12-17](#)). The signs accompanied by breaking the 6th seal match the signs that Jesus taught accompany the resurrection and rapture of the saints ([Matt 24:15-31](#)). Thus, the surviving remnant of the Church should anticipate a post-tribulation, pre-wrath redemption.

1Th. 5,12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, [13](#) and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. [14](#) We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. [15](#) See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. [16](#) Rejoice always; [17](#) pray without ceasing; [18](#) in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. [19](#) Do not quench the Spirit; [20](#) do not despise prophetic utterances. [21](#) But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; [22](#) abstain from every form of evil.

Comments:

In these verses, Paul teaches the saints how to conduct themselves in the fellowship of the church.

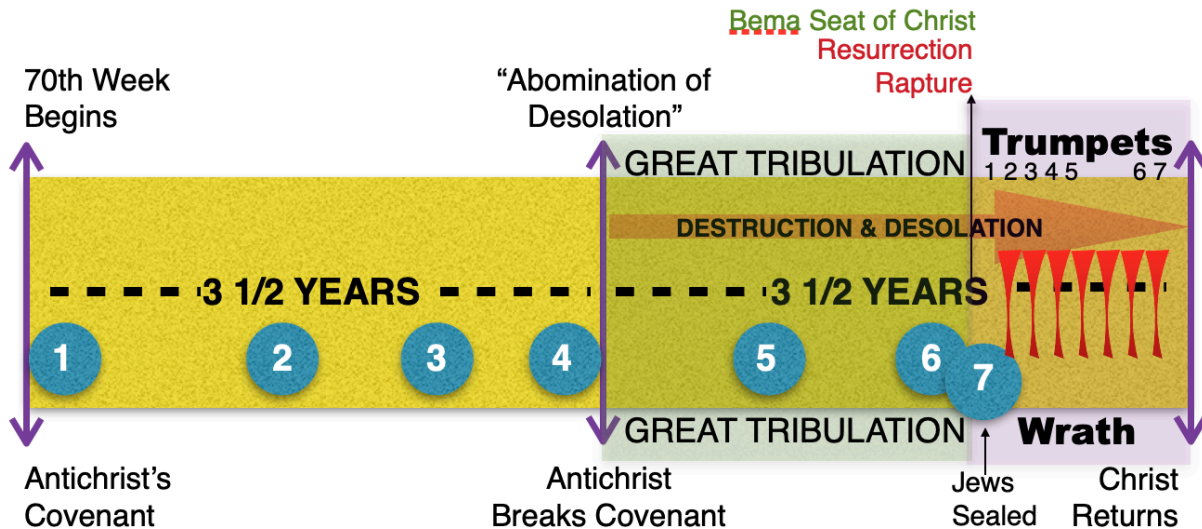
1. Appreciate, esteem, and love pastors, teachers, and leaders in the church. The Greek word translated as “*appreciate*” ([v.12](#), NASB) is *oida*, which connotes “*related by blood or family*” (Thayer). The word translated as “*esteem*” ([v. 13](#), NASB) in Greek is *hegeomai*, which connotes “*weighing or making a judgment, based on facts*” (Thayer). The “*love*” that Paul urges the saints to have for their leaders is the divine *agape* love.
2. Notice that pastors and church leaders have been given “*charge over*” ([v. 12](#), NASB) the Church. The phrase comes from the Greek, *proistemi*, which means “*to set over*” (Thayer). These are positions of service ([v. 12](#)) imbued with divine authority and responsibility.
3. Live in peace with one another ([v. 13](#)). Peace is a necessary component of the testimony of the Church to the world. It is a witness for love ([John 13:35](#)).
4. Maintain church orderliness, encourage people who need help, and be patient with everyone ([v. 12](#)). See Paul’s instructions in [2 Thes 3:14-15](#), for disciplining unruly people in the church. These instructions are detailed and explicit. They follow the directions provided by Christ in [Matt 18](#).
5. Vengeance is not appropriate for saints ([v. 15](#)) - it belongs to the Lord alone ([Deut 32:35](#); [Rom 12:17-19](#)) Indeed, Christ commanded saints to love their enemies and to pray for those who harm us ([Matt 5:44](#)).
6. Continual devotion to the Lord is a vital component to “*abiding*” in Christ. This devotion manifests itself in prayer, rejoicing, worship, and thanksgiving ([v. 16-18](#)), Any saint seeking to do God’s will must do these things!
7. “*Do not quench the Spirit.*” ([v. 19](#)) The Holy Spirit should guide each saint through His wise counsel and divine empowerment. In this way, the Spirit also animates, empowers, and guides the fellowship of saints, Christ’s Church. When we deny the Holy Spirit of His influence, we resort to our own resources and become disengaged from the power and witnessing presence of the Lord. Scripture attests to several ways that we can “*quench the Spirit*”.
 - a. We can refuse to believe prophetic utterances inspired by the Holy Spirit ([v. 20](#)).
 - b. We can refuse to carefully examine things that people claim are prophetic words from the Lord ([v. 21](#); [Matt 7:15-20](#); [1 Cor 14:32](#); [1 John 4:1-6](#); [1 Pet 1:20-21](#))
 - c. We can neglect the things of the Spirit, becoming focused on profane things and the things of this world ([Eph 4:22-24](#)).
 - d. We can engage in habitual, willful sin. ([v.21, 22](#); [2 Thes 2:13,14](#); [2 Pet 3:17](#); [Heb 6:4-8](#))

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- h. **Figure 1**, below, shows the Trumpets Wrath of the Lord follows the Resurrection/Rapture, which ends the Great Tribulation.

Figure 1: The Sequence of Events in 70th Week of Daniel



1Th. 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. **25** Brethren, pray for us. **26** Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. **27** I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. **28** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Comments:

- The word translated as “*sanctify*” (**v. 23**, NASB) is from the Greek word, *hagioazo*, which means “*to be pure*”, “*to be separated unto God*”, “*to be cleansed*” (Thayer). This word is closely related in meaning to “*to be holy*” or “*to be sacred*”. Scripture talks about sanctification as though it is both an instantaneous outcome of faith in Christ and a process of growing in grace through obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Many books have been written and many sermons have been preached about sanctification. “Entire sanctification”, a term commonly used by Nazarenes, results when we surrender to the Lordship of Christ and the sovereign authority of the Holy Spirit. This is a vital concept in Christian theology. Please consider reading and studying the following Bible verses for a more in-depth understanding of sanctification.
 - **Rom 6:19-22** ~ use you body for righteousness, not fleshliness
 - **1 Cor 1:30** ~ no long a slave to flesh but to God, resulting in salvation
 - **1 Thes 4:3-7** ~ is a work of Christ and wisdom of God, resulting in redemption
 - **2 Thes 2:13** ~ abstain from sexual immorality to manage your body with honor
 - **Heb 12:14** ~ is required for salvation
- The work of salvation culminates in redemption, which is more fully realized at our resurrection or rapture, when Christ returns. Redemption does not just save our spirit, but it also restores our physical body and soul to the pristine, sinless, state of man’s original creation. We become like Christ (**1 John 3:2**). We become like Adam or Eve, only free from the power of sin and death (**1 Cor 15:26**).

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2 Thessalonians 1

2Th. 1,1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ²

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Comments:

- The Apostle Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia (see map, below), in about the same year as Jesus. His circumcision name was “Saul”, but he took the name “Paul” (which means, “small”) for his ministry work among the gentiles. He descended from the Jewish tribe of Benjamin. His father was a Pharisee and a Roman citizen, as was Paul. He must have shown great promise as a young man, because Paul was highly educated. After completing his primary education in Tarsus, Paul studied under rabbi Gamaliel, in Jerusalem. He was a rising star among the Pharisees, the strict Jewish sect that sought legal holiness. Nothing is known about his mother. Paul had a sister, who warned him of a threat from a gathering mob ([Acts 23:16](#)). Paul apparently did learn the trade of tent making at one time in his life. He mentions other “kinsmen” in his writings ([Romans 16:7, 11](#)), who sometimes attended him in ministry and shared some of his hardships. Paul, in early adulthood, became an enemy of the Church, who approved of Stephen’s death and who sought further persecution of the saints. He was on the road to Damascus to organize his next campaign against Christians when he personally encountered the Lord Jesus, ultimately resulting in Paul’s salvation. Thereafter, Paul became one of the leading apostles in the Church, an apostle to the gentiles, and a major author of the New Testament. Please read the book of [Acts](#) for a more complete accounting of the life and times of Paul. According to church history, Paul died a martyr in Rome for the gospel of Jesus.
- Silvanus is an alternative name for Silas. He was a leader in the church at Jerusalem. He was commissioned by the Council of Jerusalem to accompany Paul to bring the gospel to the people in the region of Syria (“Aram”, [Acts 15:22](#)). He was imprisoned with Paul, for a time ([Acts 16:16-39](#)). Silas also helped the Apostle Peter in his ministry of the gospel ([1 Pet 5:12](#)). Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition asserts that Silas was one of the seventy disciples that Christ sent out with his gospel message ([Luke 10](#)), although other historians believe this was another “Silvanus”. Tradition states that Silas became the first bishop at Corinth. Most of what we know about Silas is gleaned from the book of [Acts](#).
- Timothy was a man, born to a Greek father and a Jewish mother, who lived in Lystra, where he first met the Apostle Paul, during his second missionary journey. Because of Timothy’s mixed heritage, he was not circumcised yet when he met Paul. When Timothy became Paul’s disciple, he underwent circumcision to avoid misunderstanding when ministering in Jewish communities ([Acts 16:1-6](#)). Timothy’s mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, were Jewish Christians when Paul arrived in their town ([2 Tim 2:5](#)), so it is probably that Timothy also was a Christian. Later, Timothy accompanied Paul on his journeys throughout the Roman Empire. In time, a special relationship developed between the two men that was forged by the shared hardships and their common faith. In many of Paul’s epistles, he lists Timothy as his loyal coworker ([1 Cor 4:17; 16:10-11; Phil 2:19-22; 1 Thes 3:1-6](#)). Timothy also was the recipient of Paul’s letters, in which he encouraged and gave advice to the your church leaders ([1 & 2 Timothy](#)). After Paul’s execution in Rome, Timothy settled in Ephesus, where he became the city’s first bishop, where he died c. 97 AD, at the hands of an angry mob when he tried to stop a procession of honor to the goddess Diana, in the city streets.

2Th. 1,3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; ⁴ therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. ⁵ This is a plain indication of God’s righteous

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judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. ⁶ For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. ¹¹ To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

Comments:

- The defining characteristic of God is love. Christ's love is a humble, sacrificial, long-suffering, gentle, forgiving, love that puts others before Himself. He wants Christians to be like Him in love and obedience to the Father, which is why He requires us to deny ourselves, renounce selfishness, and follow Him (**Luke 9:23**). Humble self-sacrifice is an “unnatural” act of faith — especially in the face of persecution and afflictions. The power of divine love becomes most evident when we choose to love our “enemies” as well as our friends (**Matthew 5:44**) — it can miraculously transform the lives of others and alter the course of history!
- In the opening verses of this letter from Paul reminds the Thessalonians of these facts. His exhortation was necessary because the cross of Christ requires perseverance and endurance, even though it is the way of blessing and eternal life.
- God extends grace to everyone in many ways, but there are dire penalties for refusing or abusing it. About this there are many Biblical warnings. Paul reminds us that Christ reserved His sternest criticism for those who claim His name, and yet to not “*obey the gospel of Christ*” (**v. 8**). Notice that unfaithful “Christians” can expect the same “*retribution*” as unbelievers. The word translated as “retribution” (NASB) is “*ekdikesis*” (Gr: ἐκδίκησις), which also could be translated as “*avenge*” or “*revenge*”. (Thayer). Retribution is NOT the job of the Christian, however! We are called to be ministers of grace, while remaining standards of truth through love. God alone is the Avenger (**v. 6, Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:17-19**).
- The “Way of the Cross” sometimes is not an easy one. The Second Coming of Christ does deliver the remnant of the Church from Great Tribulation, but more importantly, it spares all saints from the wrath of God, when Christ comes to bring this vengeance. Paul also emphasized this elsewhere.

“. . . how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. **1 Thes 1:9, 10**

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” **Rom 5:8,9***

- When will this happen? Jesus Himself tells us He will return with His holy army “. . . *immediately after the tribulation of those days . . .*” (**Matt 24:21-29**). The Greek word translated as “*after*” (NASB) is “*meta*” (μετά), which Thayer says means “*among, in the midst of, amid*” — not “*before*”! The clear testimony of the whole counsel of God's Word is that the saints will suffer tribulation because of their faith (see **John 15:20; 16:33; Matt 5:10-12; 10:16-18; Mark 10:29-30; Rev**

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2:10-11; 2 Cor 12:9-10; Gal 4:29; 1 Pet 4:12-14, etc.). Christians will not be judged for sin and will be spared the wrath of God's Judgment (John 3:18, 36; Is 54:17; Rom 2:12; 6:23; 8:1-2; 2 Pet 2:9, etc.).

- For all these reasons, in my opinion, the theology of a pre-tribulation rapture is not consistent with Scripture. In fact, God uses the tribulation of the saints to amplify His message of Love and Power to a lost world. How can the saints claim to be overcomer otherwise? God has chosen His saints to be faithful witnesses, empowering us with His Holy Spirit "to fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power." (v. 11). In this way, He is glorified in us and us in Him (v. 12). Indeed, if you are a Christian, this is your purpose ("*calling*") — it's why you exist!

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2 Thessalonians 2

2Th. 2,1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, **2** that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. **3** Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, **4** who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. **5** Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? **6** And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.

“Required” Events Preceding Christ’s Return

1. Apostasy - a substantial falling away from the faith
2. Temple rebuilt
3. Antichrist is revealed when he sits in the Temple claiming to be God

2 Thessalonians 2 appears to refute the claim that Christ will return at any moment, with no prerequisite conditions, as has been claimed by some Bible teachers, such as Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye. The saints will know that the time of Christ’s return is at hand, but the unbelieving world will be caught totally off-guard. This is the clear teaching of Scripture.

Comments:

- These verses clarify what events will precede Christ’s return. Apparently, false teachers in Thessalonika were claiming that the resurrection and rapture already had occurred (the Thessalonians were “left behind”! - **v.1, 2**). Paul reassured these saints that “*the day of the Lord*” had not yet come. In fact, Paul wrote that two circumstances, both of which would be readily apparent, were anticipated before the Christ would return.
 1. Apostasy (**v. 3**) - a general “falling away” of saints from the faith must first take place. (**v. 3**). This condition is taught in other Scripture (see **1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 4:3-4; 2 Pet 2:3:3-6; Jude**).
 2. Antichrist (“*man of lawlessness*”, “*son of destruction*”, **v. 3**) is revealed. This “final Antichrist” will be Satan incarnate, a powerful dictator who only will be revealed clearly when “*he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God*” (**v. 4**). The “*temple of God*” refers to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, which has not yet been rebuilt since its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D.. The prophet Daniel teaches that Antichrist will not be revealed until half-way through the last seven years (the “70th Week of Daniel”), before the earthly return of Christ (**Dan 9:24-27**). Jesus taught that this “*abomination*” would unleash a sequence of events resulting in Great Tribulation of the saints and “*desolations*” that would precipitate God’s wrath (see **Matt 24**). Since the saints are not destined for the wrath of God (**Rom 5:9; 1 Thes 1:19; 5:9**), they are delivered by rapture, “*immediately*” (Greek: εὐθεὸς - “*etheos*” - “*without delay*”) afterwards, preceded instantaneously by the resurrection of the righteous dead (see **Matt 24:29, 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thes 4:13-16**).These two “pre-conditions” for Christ’s return alone make the pre-tribulation rapture scenario unlikely, in my opinion, since this viewpoint demands a “Doctrine of Immanency” (as they call it), which states that Christ will return at any moment, without specific pre-conditions. In my opinion, it is better to prepare for great tribulation and not experience it than presume an exemption from suffering for Christ and be overcome by it.
- Regarding **verse 6**, here are many opinions about who restrains Satan and Antichrist from rising to earthly power. Some commentators say the “restrainer” is the Archangel Michael, citing **Revelation 12:7-10**. Others assert it is the restraining power of the Holy Spirit, acting through the Church that blocks Antichrist (**v. 8**). They support this by pointing to the apostasy of believers as easing the way for Antichrist to emerge from obscurity. Still other commentators claimed the power and authority of the Roman Empire restrained Antichrist, an unlikely scenario in our era. In my opinion, it is Christ’s

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authority as Lord that restrains Antichrist; He alone is able to break the seals on the scroll seen by the Apostle John, as written in [Revelation 4-6](#). Each of these broken seals releases increasing tribulation, but paves the way for the judgements writing on the scroll.

2Th. 2,7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Comments:

- In these verses, Paul personifies lawlessness, saying it was a mysterious spiritual dynamic at work in the world ([v. 7](#)). The testimony of Scripture asserts that Satan, and those who obey him, are responsible for global lawlessness. When Satan and his minions are evicted from Heaven during cosmic war, they take their last stand on earth, knowing their time for divine judgment will be soon (see [Rev 12](#)). At this time, Satan will possess a man, called “*that lawless one*” ([v. 8](#)), whom we call Antichrist. He will be granted unprecedented power and influence in the world, will overcome the saints in Great Tribulation, and will do as he pleases until He is ended by the Second Coming and command of Christ (“*breath of His mouth*”).
- Because Antichrist will be imbued with supernatural Satanic powers, he will be able to produce supernatural wonders and signs that will deceive many people, causing them to think he is God, causing them to give him their total devotion and obedience. The Great Apostasy of many professing Christians must precede this “Great Swindle” because the testimony of a vibrant, faithful Church advocates truth and love, which definitely restrains wickedness ([v. 9, 10](#)).
- Paul outlined the steps leading many who claimed Christ away from their faith in [verses 10-12](#). It is a frightening scenario that forewarns every believer about the perils of presuming on grace to pursue willful sin. Because some people will “*take pleasure in wickedness*”, they will refuse the truth offered to them by the testimony of the Word and by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit ([v. 12](#)). Having rejected the truth, the wayward person will be deceived by wickedness, leading to their demise. When someone rejects Truth, they reject God. Resolute in that rejection, God eventually gives them over to what they seek. Indeed, in the end, having persistently rejected God’s, He then sends them “*a deluding influence*” ([v. 11](#)), sealing them as reprobate. When grace runs out, all that remains for the sinner is judgment. Saints avoid this terrible peril by pursuing sanctification through faith in Christ - see [2 Thes 2:13-16](#).

2Th. 2,13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴ It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

Comments:

- Recall that this letter from Paul later became part of the New Testament. Indeed, the saints of the Apostolic era lived while the New Testament was still being written. Although the early saints had the

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Old Testament as the Word of God, most people in at the time, and for centuries afterward, were illiterate and unable to read it for themselves. Educated pastors and teachers in the small gatherings of the saints — typically “house churches”, early on — would read and explain Scripture to others. But the doctrines and dogmas of the Church remained to be defined and codified. For this reason, church traditions were vital standards of Christian living and conduct in the Church. These traditions were initiated by Jesus and passed on by His disciples and apostles, although other traditions arose in the church later on. Examples of these tradition include, but are not limited to, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, confession of sin, charity, and forgiveness.

- Many of the traditions of the Church took on ceremonial form, which changed over the years to reflect the culture and conditions in society at the time. Given man’s tendency to error, some traditions had to be questioned by saints, who were able to read and understand the Bible. This led to disputes and factions within the church as these issues were debated and contested. For example, the Protestant Reformation was a reaction to some church “traditions” that were unbiblical. As a result of this dynamic, Protestant denominations emphasize the Word of God over tradition in deciding issues of church practice, while the Roman Catholic Church continues to value church tradition roughly on a par with Scripture.
- Since “religion” consists of the practices, ceremonies, and traditions of a group of like minded people who share a common faith, Christianity is a religion design to support and reinforce our faith in Christ. To whatever extent our understanding of our faith in Christ differs, we will practice different religious traditions. Religion becomes harmful when it leads people away from God — a charge Christ made against the religious leaders of Israel. As Christians, we must be diligent to ensure that our traditions reflect Christ’s truth and love.

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

Comments:

- The Church is Christ in the world today. Saints are witnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ through the testimony of their own lives. Each of us must encounter and embrace the Risen Savior! We carry the Word of God in our testimonies and in our conduct. The “*good work and word*” (**v. 17**) of this ministry strengthens our faith, sustains us in grace, and reassures us of God’s power and pleasure in our lives. The “assurance of salvation” is the comfort and hope that saints receive in faithful obedience, even in the face of great tribulation. It activates and sustains us in our times of need (**Hebrews 6:9-12; 10:19-25**). These too, are gifts to us from Christ Himself and from God, our Father, which we must appropriate through obedience.
- It should be noted that saints must encourage and exhort each other (**v. 17**) in every good work and word as part of the ministry of Christ. The process of redemption must take place in the Church too, not just in the World.

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2 Thessalonians 3

2Th. 3,1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; **2** and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. **3** But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. **4** We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will *continue to do* what we command. **5** May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

Comments:

- The gospel of Jesus Christ was spreading rapidly among the gentiles in the Roman pagan world. The claims of the gospel were spectacular; God raised His Son from the dead so that humans could be sons of God! It did take faith to believe this. Paul understood this kind of faithful was supernaturally endowed by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, he asks the saints to pray for Him and His ministry of the gospel. What Paul is saying has implications for us. Do you have a friend or loved one who is indifferent, or even hostile, to the gospel of Christ? If so, your prayers are the first thing that you can do to help this person find Jesus.
- Being a witness for Christ was dangerous, even as it can be, today. Paul was beaten many times, endured long journeys endangered by robbers and highwaymen, he was falsely accused, imprisoned, suffered hunger, thirst, exposure, and sleepless nights, was ship-wrecked and cast adrift in the sea, and was finally executed in Rome under Emperor Nero (see [2 Cor 11:23-28](#)). The persecution Paul experienced was from “*perverse and evil men*” ([v. 2](#)) — the very men Paul was seeking to reach with the gospel. This is another reason why Christ’s teaching to pray for your enemies makes so much sense ([Matthew 5:44](#)). These were men without faith in Christ ([v. 2](#)), who naturally made themselves his enemies. But there is more meaning hidden in these verses than is readily apparent. The Greek word translated in the NASB as “*perverse*” ([v.2](#)) is “*atopos*”, which means “*out of place*” (Thayer). Paul was treated by his persecutors as though he was inappropriate and “out of place”, when in fact, this was the problem with unsaved, evil men. Why? Because Jesus Christ purchased the world back for man through His obedient death on a cross. This transaction was certified when God raised Christ from the dead. Now, the world belongs to Christ and everyone who believes in Him as Lord and Savior. On the Day of the Lord, Christ will come and evict Satan and sinners from this world, but until then, God’s grace prevails, allowing them time to repent and join the family of God. They get to live in Christ’s world among the saints. The Church is a witness to God grace; our job is to extend the invitation to surrender to Christ to the rebellious “hold outs”. But those who are evil and without faith do not really belong in Christ’s world now — they are “*out of place*”.
- The only way for saint to show the hospitality and patience of God towards the “out of place” men is through supernatural love. This IS the testimony of God’s grace that can woo so many of them back to the Lord. This supernatural love is “*the love of God*” ([v. 5](#)), which is a ministry of the Holy Spirit in us and through us. It makes the words of the gospel truth compelling.

2Th. 3,6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. **7** For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, **8** nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; **9** not because we do not have the right

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

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to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. ¹¹ For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. ¹³ But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

Comments:

- Recall from before that the early church did not have the completed New Testament to guide it; that was still being written. Although the books of the Old Testament were available and used by the church, most people were illiterate, books were copied by hand and were prohibitively expensive, and the various books of the Old Testament were not collected into a single volume yet. For this reason, the major tenets of the faith were preserved and communicated by mouth and by tradition. Tradition, for this reason, was an important standard of belief and conduct in the church, even as it is today. Church traditions include assembling for worship, prayer, and preaching on Sundays, the Lord's Supper, baptism, confession, charity, and service. The main tenets of the Christian faith were beginning to be documented in creeds, or "confessions", within the first generation following the resurrection of Christ. These creeds became church traditions, too. Evidence of these early creeds is found in the New Testament, which preserves them for us to read today. An example of an early creed is recorded by Paul in his letter to Timothy, [1 Tim 3:16](#).

*"Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion:
He was manifested in the flesh,
Vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory."*

Another early church creed preserved by Paul can be read in [Philippians 2:5-11](#).

*"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
But made himself nothing,
Taking the very nature of a servant,
Being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled himself
And became obedient to death –
Even death on a cross.
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
And gave him the name that is above every name,
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
In heaven and on earth and under the earth,
And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the glory of God the Father."*

Early creeds were based on the Old Testament scripture, the teachings of Christ, the testimonies of the disciples and early saints, and the consensus of the saints, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (Also, see [Matt 16:16](#); [John 1:49](#); [6:68, 69](#); [Rom 10:9, 10](#); [1 Cor 8:6](#); [15:3-7](#), etc.). The church was still learning to understand the amazing work of Christ centuries after His resurrection. This understanding was hard-earned through discussion and debate in church meetings, resulting in new creeds and confessions of faith that are part of the church today. For example, the "Nicene Creed" was not written until 325 AD. The "Apostles Creed" originated in the third century A.D., but did not reach its final form until the 6th century (Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*).

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2Th. 3,14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. ¹⁵ Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Comments:

- “Shunning” was embraced as discipline by the church early in its history. In shunning, Christians would disassociate themselves from people who indulged in willful, unrepentant sin, disrupted the life of the church through unruly behavior, embraced and/or espoused unbiblical teachings, failed to heed the admonishment of duly-appointed church leaders, or sullied the testimony of the saints to a lost world. Although shunning may seem to be unkind or “unchristian”, its purposes were several-fold.
 1. Preserve the testimony of the Church to a lost world. In essence, Christian shunning testifies “this is the Church, this is not”.
 2. Preserve the teachings and truths of the Christian faith. False teachings and teachers were not embraced.
 3. Protect people from the predations of false teachers and dishonest charlatans.
 4. Facilitate peace and order in the Christian fellowship.
- Paul outlined the Biblical due-process that should be followed before shunning should be invoked. First, the church was not to regard wayward believers as enemies. Instead, it should “*admonish*” that person as a “brother” (**v. 15**) — a member of the family.
 - The Greek word translated as “*admonish*” (NASB) is “*noutheteo*” (Gr: νουθετέω), which more literally means “*put in mind*” (Thayer). This approach to church discipline assumes the miscreant had good intentions, but mere wasn’t misinformed. A stubborn heretic who willfully chose to continue to disobey church leadership and refuse Biblical teachings would be shunned.
 - The word “heretic” ultimately derives from the Greek word for “choose for oneself”, which reflects the selfish, willful nature of heresy that the church sought to avoid. Truth is not a matter of personal opinion, but of objective reality established by God and witnessed by the testimony of His saints.
 - Christ outlined the proper process to follow when there is a dispute between Christians (**Matt 18:15-17**); Elements of this process are inherent in what Paul teaches about church discipline, which primarily, should seek to be redemptive and should only become punitive as a last resort, and then, after proper due process. S

2Th. 3,16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! ¹⁷ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. ¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Comments:

- Peace is the outcome of faithful obedience in Christ. This kind of peace is supernatural; it can be experienced in the midst of terrible circumstances. Paul was not just wishing the best for his friends at Thessalonika. He understood that Godly peace was an important component of the Christian testimony. It is proof of the governing presence of the Holy Spirit. It is what the world greatly yearns for but will never attain apart from Christ.
- There is evidence that Paul dictated his letters to an amanuensis, or a scribe, who may have been one of Paul’s companions. It seems that Paul wrote the greeting of his letters, and perhaps the blessing, at the end of the letters, in his own hand. Paul’s handwriting would have been different from that of the scribe. This was more than a personal touch by Paul — it also guaranteed the genuineness of his letter and instructions.

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Jude

Jude 1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: 2
May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

Comments:

- The book of **Jude** is so packed with theology that sometimes it is easy to forget that this is a letter. It opens with the typical “From-To” format of a letter, specifying the author and his intended audience. The exact date when the letter was written is unknown — letters were not dated then — but most authorities believe it was written around 65 to 85 A.D. **Jude** is written to all Christians.
- The identity of **Jude** today is disputed, though the tone of his letter shows his contemporary readers knew him well. He clearly identifies himself as “Jude” (Greek: “*Judas*”, a Greek transliteration of a Hebrew name) and the content of his letter shows that he knew the Old Testament and was probably Jewish, but the rest is uncertain. Candidates for Jude might include (a) Judas, the half-brother of Jesus Christ and brother of James (**Matt 13:55; Mark 3:18**), and (b) Judas, a leader in the early church at Jerusalem, who was also called “*Barsabbas*” (**Acts 15:22-33**). Historically, the early church embraced this letter is being written by Judas, the half-brothers of Jesus (Eusebius, *Church History*, III. 19-22), the brother of James; (**James; Gal 1:19**). Both of these men led in the early Jerusalem church. The tone and logic of Jude’s writing style seems to be very similar to those of James, also. Tertullian, in his “*The Galatian Decree of Receipt and Non-receipts*”, called Jude “the zealot”, known to be the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus,. Clement of Alexandria (c. 200 AD) also asserted that Jude was the half-brother of Jesus, in his “*Comments on the Epistle of Judas*”.
- Notice that **Jude** said that Christians are “*kept*” (**v.1**) for Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated as “*kept*” (NASB) is “*tyreo*” (τηρέω), expressed grammatically as a perfect middle participle, which implies that Christ is the One who guards the saints for Himself. With that in mind, Jude announced a blessing of “*mercy and peace and love*” (**v.2**), knowing this promise to be more than mere words.

Jude 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Comments:

- Notice that Jude wrote “*about our common salvation*” (**v.3**) The Greek word translated as “*common*” (NASB) is “*koinos*” (κοινός), which Thayer says means “*common people*” and Mounce says can mean “*belonging equally to several*”. This idea communicates our equal share in salvation because of Christ. Christianity was not a religion of elites, even in the Roman Empire.
- Although God is always doing new things, the faith of the church has not changed over the millennia; the tenets of our faith were handed down, “*once for all*”, to all believers. Our faith is so simple that it can be explained clearly to a small child; love God with all your heart; love your neighbor as yourself. This Divine “*Law of Love*” governs right conduct, just as the faith required to live it is sustained by God’s grace, which comes from His Divine Love and our relationship with Christ.
- Because the Bible must be explained with more words than it contains, we create theological models of the truths it reveals to help us understand it. Our faith may be simple, but the Truth is exceeding complex. This is because the Truth **IS** God (**John 14:6, 7**), who is a profound mystery to humans, except as He has revealed Himself to us.
- The word of the Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant in its expression of spiritual truth, but our theological models are man-made and can be inadequate, at times, to explain all aspects of this truth, however useful they may be to understand parts of it better. For this reason, we must be humble and

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acknowledge the limitations of our theology, never allowing it to cause us to violate the Law of Love or to serve the agenda of human pride.

- This does not mean that we cannot reliably know the truths found in God's Word. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher. A consensus about our essential Biblical doctrines has been forged over the centuries for us by Church leaders, who were guided by the counsel of the Holy Spirit. These essential doctrines of Christianity often are expressed in our "Confessions of Faith" (e.g. "The Apostle's Creed, The Nicene Creed, etc.). The essential doctrines define what Christianity is and what it is not. They define the "once-for-all, handed down to the saints" truths for us to embrace.
- Interestingly, many of our doctrines and confessions of faith were forged in the controversies that arose when some church teachers and leaders began to espouse new ideas about the Bible. The debate these new ideas provoked forced the Church to assemble, discuss, explore, and refine its understanding of the Bible. New teachings that were determined by these councils of the church to be false were determined to be "*heresies*" to those who chose to contend for them thereafter. The word "*heresy*" comes from a Greek word that means "*choice*" or "*the thing chosen*", which implies that someone had "chosen a different or wrong way". The person who stubbornly clings to a teaching that the Church judged to be a heresy is called a "heretic". Many different heresies have arisen over the centuries, but most of them seem to assert false ideas about the person of Christ, either denying His perfect humanity or His perfect divinity.
- **Jude** rightfully reserved severe condemnation for people who stubbornly advocated doctrines that served their fleshly nature. For example, the early church had people who believed that God's grace freed them from any moral restraint; they thought they were saved so they could sin! This heresy is called "antinomianism", because it claims freedom from all legal restraint. Sin is a violation of the Law of Love because it is an affront to God and it endangers or harms other people. Since Christ Himself taught us to obey God and love one another, these apostate heretic actually denies the lordship of Christ.
- It is vital for saints to remember that there is no such thing as a "private sin". Our sins "cast a long shadow" that darkens many aspects of our own lives and the lives of others in ways we often cannot foresee. Sin thrives in darkness, under cover of secrecy. For this reason, Jude seeks to expose it in his letter, just as we are encouraged to confess our sins as we repent of them.

Jude 5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that ¹the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

Comments:

- Jude is not saying that Christians are omniscient and have no questions (**v. 5**). Rather, he is saying everything we need to know to live a righteous life already has been made plain to us through God's "Law of Love", through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Law of Love is exemplified by the sacrifice of Christ; Jesus is God's proof of this Love. This "Law" compels us to love Him and others and to practice that love faithfully. Obedience requires the faith that makes Jesus Lord and ratifies our citizenship in the Kingdom of God and our place in His extended family.
- The phrase "*once for all*" (**verse 5**) is translated from the Greek word, "*hapax*" (ἅπαξ), which Thayer says means something like "*done so as to be of perpetual validity and never in need of repetition*". **Strong's Greek Concordance** says this word means "*one time (numerically conclusive)*". Mounce translates this Greek word as "*once, forever*". This Greek word certainly describes the once-for-all work of Christ on the cross! This Greek word is also used in **Hebrews 9:26-28** and **1 Peter 3:18**, to

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affirm the “one-time, all-sufficient” nature of the cross of Christ for those who also take up their crosses and follow Him.

- The salvation made available to us through Christ does not release us from a duty of godly obedience. Jesus is not just the Savior; He also is Lord! Jude listed how some people who profess Christ, only to deny Him by their actions. They actually desecrate their sacred trust by squandering their eternal privileges and divine blessings. Jude reminds us that God saved all of Israel from slavery in Egypt, having revealed Himself and His salvation to them through miracles that should have annealed their faith and secured their unwavering love and respect. But Israel’s heart remained in Egypt, so they betrayed the Lord and rebelled against His appointed leader, Moses. As a result, the apostates were denied the blessings of their Promised Land and forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, where they all perished. Their original state in election, from man’s perspective, did not guarantee their final fate; they “had a hand in it”.
- Even the most exalted members of God’s family, the angels, are not exempt from obeying God’s Law of Love. **Jude 6** may be referring to the mysterious events documented in **Genesis 6:1-4**, which states that some angels violated their sacred place as ministering spirits to mankind by leaving Heaven to cohabit with women on earth, to sire an unclean progeny who became the hybrid offspring called the “Nephilim” (Hebrew: נְפִלִים), which the HALOT says refers to “giants” or “those who are cast down”.
 - There has been a lot of speculation about the Nephilim, but Scripture seems to imply that they were a violent and powerful race, a corrupted version of humanity that God was prompted to destroy through a global flood (**Genesis 6:5,6, 11-17, etc.**). Only Noah was found to be pure before God (**Genesis 6:9**), yet God, in His gracious love, also saved Noah’s sons (**Genesis 6:10**), their wives, and animals from every species, to repopulate the earth after the flood (**Genesis 7**).
 - Another part of the “Nephilim mystery” is documented in **Numbers**, which states that well after the flood, even after the exodus from Egypt, Israel again encountered the Nephilim, some of whom were said to be the “sons of Anak” (**Numbers 13:33**). If all the Nephilim were exterminated by the global flood, how did some remain on earth after it? One theory asserts that “blood line” of Noah’s sons and/or their daughters still was tainted with the “Nephilim influence”. Some of their offspring may have inherited “nephilim traits”, but this is speculation.
 - Some commentators believe the “*rafah*” (Hebrew: רַפָּה), or “giants” (NASB,) mentioned in the Old Testament, also may have been survivor-descendants of the Nephilim (**1 Chron 20:4, 6, 8**). The *rafah* remained enemies of God’s people throughout the Bible; Goliath was numbered among them.
 - The apocryphal book of **Enoch** also may address the events of **Genesis 6:1-4**. The book of **Enoch** is not part of the Hebrew, Roman Catholic, or Protestant Bibles, but it was well known in Jude’s day and it is considered to be canonical in Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches and to Ethiopian Jews. Some commentators believe that **Jude** was referring to the book of **Enoch** in these passages about the wayward angels. The book of **Enoch** can be downloaded from the internet for free. A complete discussion of this book is beyond the scope of this handout. Interestingly, **Enoch** actually gives the names and numbers of “fallen angels” and goes on to assert that demons are the spirits of departed Nephilim who perished in the flood. The fallen angels themselves are imprisoned in darkness awaiting their final judgment. **Enoch** also details the events leading up to the end-times, which is quite consistent with the Biblical accounts, though the book is not judged to be authoritative by most Christians and Jews. If you choose to read **Enoch**, I recommend that you get the commentary on this book by Dr. Michael S. Hieser, called *A Companion to the Book of Enoch*, published in 2019, by Defender’s Publishing (available on Amazon, 2021).
- The main point of **Jude 5-6** should not be lost; being numbered among a privileged or “covenant” group does not exempt one from the requirement to faithfully obey the Lord! Nor does it spare one from righteous judgment for transgressing God’s Law of Love. Even a public confession of faith will not render one exempt from divine condemnation if that confession is not lived out in obedience to God. **James** reminds us the demons believe in God, but they know and fear their coming judgment because of their disobedience (**James 2:10**). A profession of faith, by itself, is not exculpatory. For

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this reason, the Bible emphasizes the need for believers to live out their faith through good works (see Matthew 8:29; Acts 19:19; 1 Corinthians 10:5-10; Hebrews 3:16ff, etc.). Indeed, Ephesians 2:10 clearly states that the purpose of our salvation is for good works, though we are not saved by them.

- Notice that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, though not identified as God's people, also were subject to judgment. Jude 7 hints that Sodomites even pursued sexual relations with "strange flesh" (NASB). The Greek word translated as "strange" in this verse also means "other" (Greek: "heteros", ἕτερος) perhaps implying relations with other species — such were the depths of perversion into which they had descended. The lesson here is that God is impartial; He rightly will judge unrepentant sin in whomever He encounters it. An unrepentant "saint" is not better off than an unregenerate sinner (and may not be a saint, at all).

Jude 8 Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ⁹ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. ¹² These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Comments:

- Men go astray in their "dreams" (thoughts and desires) before they sin by their words or deeds. When unrestrained by faith, the sinful outcome can be outrageous and foolish (v. 8). Jude says that some men actually reject powerful angels, against whom no human rebellion can stand!
- Alluded to by Origen (2nd C. A.D. - De principis, Book III, Chapter 2, Number 1) and Gelasius of Cyzicus (5th C. A.D. - verse 2, 21, 17), Jude 9 references a now-lost section of an apocryphal book called The Ascension of Moses. Only a fragment of the book exists today, written in Latin, and this fragment is missing the section that discusses Jude's example here. According to Jewish tradition, God sent the archangel Michael to dispose of Moses' body, because Moses had died alone on Mount Nebo, having seen but not entered the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:1-6). Satan laid claim to Moses' body, possibly because of Moses' transgression at Meribah-kadesh (Deuteronomy 32:51). Apparently, Michael, based on God's judgment and authority, denied Satan's legal claim to Moses, but did not do so disrespectfully. Jude's point is that if even an archangel must render proper respect to even a fallen angelic power, what must a mere man do? Jude states that only an "unreasoning animal" (v. 10) would make such an error.
- Jude 11-12 lists other examples of wayward men who knew God personally. Cain was jealous of his brother, Able, and not respectful of God. As a result, Cain's offerings to the Lord were not esteemed and Cain murdered his brother (Genesis 4:5-9). Balaam was non-Israelite prophet of God who, because of greed, attempted to curse God's people for money (Numbers 22-24; 31; Deuteronomy 23:4; Joshua 13:22; 24:9; Nehemiah 13:2; 1 Peter 2:15). Korah was a Levite who grumbled about Moses and organized a rebellion against God's anointed leader (Numbers 16), though he had witnessed God's miracles and benefited from Moses' faithfulness and courage. These examples hammer home the point that knowing God and witnessing His miracles do not secure His blessing or salvation; faithful obedience does.

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Jude 14 *It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” ¹⁶ These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.*

Comments:

- **Jude 14** referred to the Second Coming of Christ, which Jesus Himself taught (**Matthew 16:27; 24:30, 31**). Although Jude again refers to the apocryphal book of **Enoch**, the testimony of the Bible is consistent with this message. Christ is not returning so much as Savior, but as Lord of the Army, or “Host”. Jude tells us Christ’s army consists of “*many thousands of His holy ones.*” (**v. 14**). He definitely will come to judge the “*ungodly*” (**v. 15**), but He also comes to deliver the tribulation saints from complete extermination during Great Tribulation (**Hebrews 9:28; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Romans 5:9**). I also believe Christ’s Second Coming will rescue the repentant but beleaguered remnant of Israel from extermination, an assertion best discussed when studying other Scripture (see **Revelation 12-14; Zechariah 12:10-14; Hosea 6:1-3, etc.**).
- Notice that the NASB translates the word “*ungodly*” three (3) times in **verse 15**. This is translated from the Greek word, “*asebaes*” (ἀσεβής), which Thayer says means “*destitute of reverential awe of God*”. In essence, the “*ungodly*” do not fear God, so are unrestrained in their appetites and impulses. The “*godly*”, on the other hand, act wisely because of their reverential awe of God, whom they also love and seek to please (see **Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9; 34:11; 111:10; Proverbs 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; etc.**).
- The human experience acquaints us with the many ways sin manifests itself. We count theft, adultery, murder, lying, deception and blasphemy as being egregious, but notice that **Jude** highlights grumbling, fault-finding, boasting, and flattery in **verse 16**. The word translated as “*finding fault*” (NASB), is from the Greek word “*mempsimoiros*” (μεμψίμοιρος), which Thayer says “*discontented, complaining of ones lot*”. The idea here is that godliness acknowledges the blessings of God, being thankful and satisfied with His provision, whereas the ungodly are thankless, ungratified, and greedy. It is important for Christians to recognize these traits as sin also!

Jude 17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸ that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” ¹⁹ These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on some, who are doubting; ²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

Comments:

- **Jude 18** affirms the Scriptural teaching that godlessness will be amplified in the end times (“*in the last time*”). The Church also will experience this change and even become part of it, because of apostasy (see **2 Thessalonians 2**). Jesus told His disciples that “*savage wolves*” will enter the church to deceive the saints (**Matthew 24:10,11; Acts 20:29**). The Apostle Paul taught us that this assault on the saints will be part of these “*difficult times*” (**2 Timothy 3:1f**), and apostasy within the church will render it more vulnerable (**1 Timothy 2:1-4; 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:3**), and less influential for godliness.

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- Unsaved people are not guided by the Holy Spirit, nor are they restrained by the disciplines of sanctification. We know that Christian values and godly living are foolishness to the world (2 Corinthians 2:14. James 3:15). The world should be expected to be profane. But **Jude**, along with other Scripture, says the “*last time*” will be exceptional and extraordinary in its wickedness. It will not be simply “naturally” ungodly; it will be “supernaturally” evil because of the growth in Satanic and demonic power (2 Thessalonians 2:9). In part, this happens as God will give people over to what they stubbornly seek. In the end-times, God will remove the “*restraining influence*” that now moderates wickedness in the world. This allows Antichrist to come to power, resulting in Great Tribulation, a debased culture, and divine judgment — “*difficult times*” for all. (Romans 1:28-32; 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12).
- **Jude** also provides the concerned Christian with the “antidote” to the demonic influences in any age, including the end times. We must keep ourselves “*in the love of God*”, continue to pray “*in the Holy Spirit*”, and remain faithful to wait for the mercy of Jesus (v. 20), who delivers us from difficult times (Matthew 24:29-31). But Christ warned the Church not to let our love grow cold during this time of lawlessness (Matthew 24:12). It is not our job to judge the world. It is our job to be Christ’s ambassadors of love, mercy, and truth. If we choose to hate anything, it should be our own fleshly weaknesses (v. 23).

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

Comments:

- Although **Jude** paints a grim picture of the last days, we must remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who will sustain us and empower us to be overcomers. He is our Great Confidence. He is able “to keep us from stumbling”.
- Our great reward at the end of a life well-lived in faithfulness is to stand “*in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy*” (v. 24). Amen