

Grace and Glory

# Lessons in Thessalonians

**THE BLESSED HOPE OF THE SONS OF GOD**

By A. S. Copley

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"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" - Titus 2:13. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" - Romans 15:13.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF THESSALONIANS - INTRODUCTION

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures" - Acts 17:1, 2. It was on Paul's second evangelistic trip, about 51 A.D., that a church was established in that heathen city. Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy (Timotheus) were with him; hence, the reason they join him in writing to the Church. It began in the midst of great persecution from the Jews. A rugged beginning tends to prepare the way for enduring a rugged career. A few Jews and a multitude of Greeks believed, which aroused the hot envy of the unbelieving Jews. The fight was so fierce that the apostles soon left for Berea. Dear Paul was so deeply exercised about them, lest Satan had tempted and discouraged them, that he sent Timothy back to learn of their state as he said... to know your faith" - I Thessalonians 3:5. Study Acts 17:1-9. The word "Thessalonica" means "victory over the tossing of law" or "victory over falsity." How expressive this is of the supreme triumph that full-fledged believers gain over every form and feature of legality and over the lie - Romans 1:25 A.V.; II Thessalonians 2:11 (Wuest) - that is, that the anti-Christ is the Anointed of God. Jesus Christ is "the Truth." As Jesus obtained the victory over the false claimant to the throne of universal dominion, so Thessalonian saints gain the victory through Him over the false claimant to the Queenship with Him. What a glorious hope is ours! Praise the Lord!

Five of Paul's epistles form a necessary quintet of equally balanced parts, all pertaining to the highest Christian attainments and fullest rewards. The EPHESIAN Epistle the soprano strain is in the lead, announcing our superlative place and wealth in "the excellent glory." She holds our seat there "in the heavenly places in Christ." PHILIPPIANS is the deep bass, giving firmness and steadiness to the other voices, while running like a transcontinental flier to win the Prize. Then follows the modest alto, oh, so necessary - COLOSSIANS - cautioning, correcting, and training.

Finally, THESSALONIANS, the tenor and high tenor bear us home to the loftiest heights of the eternal glory. We are moved to write especially of this last, believing that the coming of the Lord for His Bride draweth nigh. While these epistles are in some sense addressed to all believers, yet in a particular sense they are addressed to those only who can take them in. Jesus said, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" - Matthew 19:12. Accordingly, though this first epistle to the Thessalonians is addressed to the whole Church and describes the manner of the resurrection and translation of all the ranks, yet it refers in a special way to the first-rank overcomers. Note that the letters to the Corinthians are addressed "unto the church of God which is at Corinth"; that is, to all believers of this age, because they were written to set the Church the Body of Christ in order and keep it so throughout this age. But our study letter is addressed "unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ"; that is, a certain part of the great whole assembly or "Church of God." It is addressed particularly to saints who have accepted the Corinthian order, who enjoy Galatian liberty, who hold their Ephesian place, who run the Philippian race, and who yield to Colossian correction; hence, are being prepared to hear the first trumpet sound.

## OUTLINE OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

A PATTERN PEOPLE	I Thessalonians 1
A PATTERN PREACHER	I Thessalonians 2
A PATTERN PROCLAMATION	I Thessalonians 3:1 to 4:12
A PATTERN PROSPECT	I Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11
A PATTERN PREPARATION	I Thessalonians 5:12-28

## "PERHAPS TODAY"

"Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." - Malachi. iv. 2.  
"Behold I make all things new." - Rev. xxi. 5.

## SUNRISE

SOON will our Saviour from Heaven appear,  
Sweet is the hope and its power to cheer;  
All will be changed by a glimpse of His face,  
This is the goal at the end of our race.  
Loneliness changed to reunion complete,  
Absence exchanged for a place at His feet,  
Sleeping ones raised in a moment of time,  
Living ones changed to His image sublime.  
Sunrise will chase all the darkness away,  
Night will be changed to the brightness of day,  
Tempest will change to ineffable calm,  
Weeping will change to a jubilant psalm.  
Weakness will change to magnificent strength,  
Failure will change to perfection at length;  
Sorrow will change to unending delight,  
Walking by faith change to walking by sight.

ADA HABERSHON.

## A PATTERN PEOPLE - I THESSALONIANS ONE

Salutation. "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: - 1:1.

Silvanus and Timothy were with Paul on his second missionary tour; therefore, their names are mentioned in the salutation. They had a very warm place in his heart, because they imbibed his spirit of faith and imitated his yieldedness to God. Let all young ministers profit by their noble example. The triunity of God is plainly intimated in this first verse. Twice the Father and His Son are mentioned as two distinct Persons, each filling a distinct office. The Church dwells in both, and the blessing of grace and peace flows from both. The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, is mentioned in verse five. Thus, the very doorway of the assembly is stamped with spirituality and supernaturalness, which precludes all national and worldly relationships.

*Thanksgiving.* "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers" - 1:2. In this epistle, the apostle gives thanks for them with special emphasis. As we proceed, we shall see in what high esteem he held that assembly. Not one word of rebuke or blame is recorded against them in this letter. They were indeed a model church. It is found in the same faultless category with Smyrna and Philadelphia - Revelation two and three.

*Commendation.* "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father" - 1:3 R.V. Study the three underlying spiritual traits of those Thessalonian saints. They are the striking marks of full overcomers.

*One. "Your work of faith."* Their faith in God prompted and characterized all their service. They looked for no reward except from Him whom, and with whom, they served. Of course, they moved on in the "good works, which God hath before ordained" for them - Eph. 2:10. Nine hundred and ninety-nine per cent of so-called church work was never seen on their program.

They toiled for eternity, building "gold, silver, precious stones" - I Corinthians 3:12. The faith of that meeting was unique. Consider the following strong statements, which Paul would not dare to have written if they were not true. "In every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. Timotheus ... brought us good tidings of your faith ... Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith" - 1:8; 3:6, 7.

Nor was he fearful that they might be puffed up by his words of appreciation of them. Nay, rather, they were strengthened and encouraged in their faith. Tried faith will not be puffed up. There is a vast difference between shallow flattery and words of real appreciation.

*Two. "Labor of love."* There was nothing compulsory about their labor. It was prompted by an inward irresistible flame that sought to please the Lord and, for His glory, win the reward. They loved God and the people with a new creation fervor. A child loves her mother because she cannot help it. The musician sings and plays because he is full of melody; he loves music. Saints possess a "can't-help-but-to-labor" kind of life. The same unselfish life, that died for all men once to redeem them, still dies daily in believers to get men saved and build them up in Christ. It does not die daily to self and sin; for it died thus once on Calvary. It

does not labor to love, but it loves to labor - "without money and without price" - to bring many sons unto glory.

*Three. "Patience of hope."* This is the third one of these sparkling triplets of an overcoming career. It completes the triangle of a perfect Christian life. Model saints have turned to God from idols, not only to serve Him but "to wait for His Son from Heaven" - 1:10. It seems that the return of Jesus to reign received special emphasis in planting that church. The persecuting Jews accused the apostles of "saying that there is another King, one Jesus" - Acts 17:7. It is quite probable that Paul did not yet know, at such an early date, that the return of Jesus would be delayed. Indeed, both of these epistles read as if Paul expected Him to come in his day.

Therefore, these letters are adapted perfectly to those who will be alive when He does come.

How marvelous are God's ways and works. That church lived with eyes wide open and upturned, watching for Christ's advent. They "kept the Word of My patience" (Rev. 3:10); that is, they allowed nothing to dim their prospect of Christ's return in due time. That expectant attitude was one of the most commendatory facts concerning those saints. We do well to look deeply into it, and follow their steps. Our heavenly Bridegroom is preparing to return. It is "the day of His preparation" - Nahum 2:3. Hence, He is eager for us to be prepared. "Every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" - I John 3:3 R.V. Let us be Thessalonian saints indeed, filled with the "patience of hope."

Be it observed, that the walk and work of those saints bore the keen scrutiny of Jehovah's sensitive eyes. Their whole life was "in our Lord Jesus Christ" - a marvelous statement; and it was all "in the sight of God and our Father." The apostle did not pass his opinion upon their conduct and ministry; but God revealed to him the facts about them. Paul's testimony of them was the divine testimony. Like Enoch, they had this witness that they "pleased God." What mattered then, if others did find fault?

*Election.* "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" - 1:4, 5.

That was not a divine arbitrary choosing of those Thessalonians, which excluded others because they could not be saved. God has elected a new creation, and those who believe become that new creation. The Gospel is offered freely to all people, Jews and Gentiles; but those only, who accept it by faith in Jesus, are elected or chosen. That election was not national; for only some of the Jews believed, but a great multitude of the Greeks believed also - Acts 17:4. The day of grace for Israel as a nation was fast closing, because they rejected their Messiah; and the door for the Gentiles was opening wider and wider. See Acts 13:46 and 28:25-28. Today the tables are turning. The acceptance of grace by the Gentiles is lessening, and the Lord is turning to His ancient people. He warns the Gentiles against boasting, and assures them that Israel shall again have their original place - Romans 11:18-25.

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

The quartet manner of preaching the Gospel demands our attention. It was in word, in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. That made their election sure and wonderful. By some men, the Gospel is preached doctrinally correct and intellectually clear, but without power. It is cold and collected, calm and classical. It may convince the mind, but it fails to reach the heart.

Others speak the pure Gospel correctly with vehemence and persuasiveness, evincing a measure of divine power mixed with human eloquence and argument. Such speakers have not received the Holy Spirit, or they do not depend wholly upon Him. But the Pauline way is to give out the whole pure Gospel, correctly and plainly, in the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit. The message must be indicted by the Spirit, proclaimed under the unction of the Spirit, and driven home to the heart by His dynamic power. Thus the simplest message produces the most marvelous results. This is exactly Paul's meaning in I Corinthians 2:4. Of course, "much assurance" is the crowning effect of such preaching. The hearers are filled and settled with a full conviction that they heard the real Truth. The self-sacrificing conduct of the apostles went a long way to clinch the Word in the heart. For they said, "As ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." It is a burning shame how ministers today seek their own things, wanting a soft snap, an easy job, a prepared pastorate, a mansion. How few are willing to go into a new place and open fire in Jesus' Name and plant a new meeting. They want to build on another's foundation, or hold a campaign, get a collection, and skip. They like to preach, but have no real God-given love for souls.

*Fruitage certain.* "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" - 1:6. People follow other people; and thus they come to follow the same Lord whom the leaders follow, and in the same spirit. That is always the divine plan of ministry. The apostles compelled the people to come their way, not by force of arms or argument, but by force of heart

and love. Strangers must have faith in us, before they have faith in our Gospel and in our God. When they are persuaded that we seek their good, they will give heed, if they yield to the inward workings of the Holy Spirit. Then they receive the Word which we proclaim, for that Word does the work. The Gospel "is the power of God unto salvation" - Romans 1:16.

In spite of the envy and bitter persecutions from the unbelieving Jews (Acts 17:5-8), many believed the Word and became saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. The "much affliction" was powerfully offset by the "much assurance," and mingled "with joy of the Holy Ghost." If anyone imagines that Paul's converts - though "devout Greeks" and "chief women" - were calm, collected, cold, emotionless, and unfeeling, he is very much mistaken. They did not simply accept Christ as a religious form, nor take a stand for Christ and were baptized in water; but they obtained an experience. They received the same holy flame that blazed in the bosoms of the apostles. They were filled and anointed with the same blessed Holy Spirit whom the first disciples had received about twenty years before, and whom Paul himself had received over ten years before - Acts 9:17, 18. They were filled with the joy of the Spirit by being anointed with the Spirit of joy. Did they speak in other tongues? Most certainly. For tongues is the divinely-given distinguishing sign of the fullness of the Spirit. By speaking in new tongues, their great joy was expressed. Indeed, speaking in tongues is accompanied with a peculiar joy, which otherwise cannot be known. It greatly rejoices the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the one being filled; as well as all Spirit-filled saints who may hear it.

Some wise folk try to prove that people may be filled without speaking in an unknown tongue, because Paul says nothing about tongues in some of his epistles. For the same reason they claim that, when he grew into manhood in Christ, he dispensed with speaking in tongues. You may as well try to prove that he did not believe in the coming of Jesus when he wrote to the assembly, in Ephesus, because nothing is said in that letter about His advent. Be it remembered that the Holy Spirit, not the apostles, introduced speaking in tongues. They "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Isaiah prophesied that "with stammering lips and another tongue will He (God) speak to this people" - Isaiah 28:11. When men make light of this supernatural phenomenon as if it were childish or effeminate, they ridicule our wise heavenly Father and His Son.

*Congratulation.* "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" - 1:7.

A sample is of necessity of the highest grade. No flaw nor fault dare be found in it. It must be worthy of imitation. After establishing a big trade by sample goods, some business concerns drop from the high standard of the sample and put forth inferior products. This is exactly what Satan has induced ministers to do, by treating Paul's writings and his conduct superficially; and, therefore, they palm off a shoddy gospel on the public. The Thessalonian saints are set forth as an example to us also. We do well to view them from every angle. I have noticed prospective buyers of an auto. They walk around it many times, back and forth, scrutinizing it all over, inside and outside. They ask many questions about it. They want to be very sure that it is all that is claimed for it, before they invest their money and trust their lives in it. So let us do this epistle; and, to our certain joy, those Thessalonian saints will show to us the way of an out-translation to glory.

*Communication.* "For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing" - 1:8.

Those saints were not a mutual self-admiration society. They were not centripetal, nor flowing into themselves like the Dead Sea, and praying, "Lord, bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more." They were not so occupied with being in the Bride, that they were not useful in endeavoring to get sinners saved and believers filled with the Spirit. Their researches of the Scripture were not intellectual, but spiritual; hence, they flowed out in practical usefulness. They worked out their salvation to others, by fear and trembling. They were not all prophets and preachers, nor pastors and evangelists; but they all were ministers, waiting on "the Lord in the beauty of holiness" - Psalm 29:2. The purpose of the five official gifts was to perfect the saints unto the work of ministering.

Their usefulness was not limited to the two small countries named - "but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." "Faith without works is dead," said James. Real faith is demonstrated by works. A meeting that believes the whole range of the Truth will have results in all the "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" - Eph. 2:10.

The faith of that assembly will become known and effective beyond its own confines. God alone knows the extent of its usefulness. So widespread was the influence of that church, that Paul needed not to advertise it at all. Faith advertises itself by its good works.

*Conversion.* "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" - 1:9. The report of the persecutions which the

apostles - Paul, Silas, and Timothy - encountered when planting a church in Thessalonica, spread near and far. Likewise, some received the Word in much affliction, but with joy in the Holy Spirit - 1:6.

Their conversion is interesting. I say conversion, because they "turned to God." Conversion means a turning away from a wrong path to the right. It implies the new birth and the forgiveness of sins, of course. An intellectual assent to the Truth - mentally taking a stand for Christ and being baptized in water - is not the essential feature of a New Testament conversion. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" -

Romans 10:10. They turned with all the heart to God - not only with the head and lips. Compare John 1:12, 13. The spirit of the messenger has everything to do with the reality of the conversion of his auditors. If he is cold, argumentative, intellectual, and unfeeling, his converts will be like him. If he speaks out of a heart of experience - warm, fervent, and yet tender - and thus to the heart rather than to the head, his converts will be like him. They will be converted to God, because God speaks through the heart to the heart. Observe that Paul spoke "in power, and in the Holy Ghost," and his words caused the people to turn to God.

Observe, also, the exact order of the words here. They "turned to God from idols," because that is the way they were taught. They did not turn from their idols to God. Christian workers make a serious mistake when they talk to a sinner about giving up things. He loves his tobacco, the theater, the gambling hall, and the society ball. He knows nothing better. If you condemn these things, you make him either mad at yourself or miserable; but he is not converted. Offer him something that will engage his attention without him knowing it. If you try to snatch a razor or a mirror from a child which it has unwittingly gotten, you will probably provoke a scream, besides injuring the child. Offer him an orange, an apple, a spool of thread, or anything different; and he will drop the deadly weapon in reaching for the new attraction. "He that winneth souls is wise" - Proverbs 11:30. "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" - Matthew 10:16.

The apostle preached Christ - the One whom the real living God once anointed - the living Christ, the mighty Christ, the miracle-working Christ, the Christ of resurrection, the Christ in glory, the Christ who is coming again to reign over the earth and the heavens. Before the hearers were aware of it, their hearts were longing to meet this wonderful Personage who was both God and Man. They believed on Him. Their sins were pardoned. God regenerated them. They had a new spirit, a new life. In an instant, they became "a new creation." They turned from the idols unconsciously. When they looked at them, they despised them. They were surprised that they ever worshiped such lifeless, insignificant, powerless objects. A real vision of Christ blinds our eyes to the most alluring things of this world.

Service and hope. These were the two objective of the conversion of the Thessalonians. They turned to God from idols, and waited for His Son's return. These are the main attitudes of healthy Christians. Indeed they are twins. To separate them is unfortunate; but some saints do that very thing. The phrase, "patience of hope," is here explained. They served patiently, while waiting expectantly for Christ's return. Many people are very zealous in striving to get others saved; but, take little or no interest, in the Savior's advent. Hence, they erect great and expensive buildings for worship, Bible schools, and faith homes. They act as if they would remain long on earth, and that they do not want Jesus to come. Their service cannot be wholesome and in God's perfect will.

On the other hand, some believers are entirely occupied with the advent of Christ. They assume an attitude of lazy waiting, under the pretext of getting ready for His coming. They become visionary, give unsavory prophecies, and pose as super-pious. Such saints seek to see things that others do not know, instead of seeking to save the lost. They have no time to visit the sick and otherwise needy. They take no interest in helping others to be filled with the Spirit. They get supposed messages in tongues and put them in print, as if they were the voice of God. The dryness, lifelessness, and unscripturalness of such messages proves them to be spurious and the products of carnal minds. Jesus said, "Occupy till I come"; that is, be occupied in the "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" - Ephesians 2:10.

"That blessed hope." What was the particular hope in waiting for Christ to come? Did they expect to "be like Him"? - I John 3:2, 3. Yes. Did they look for "the redemption of our body"? - Romans 8:23-25. Ah, yes, and much more. The hope which emblazoned the Thessalonian sky was of the highest order. It was in the loftiest sense "that blessed hope," held out for "a peculiar people" (costly, treasured, select, specially chosen) - Titus 2:13, 14. This is what stamps the epistle with particular interest, at the present time. We shall see in chapter five that they were waiting not only for Christ to return, but they hoped to be translated earlier than the majority of believers. That is the blessed hope.

"And to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" - 1:10. How specific is God's Word. There could be no question as to whom they were waiting for. Two distinct facts proved His identity, and furnished a sure foundation for their hope: First, it was He whom God had raised from the dead, which was the infallible demonstration of His divine Sonship. If He

should tarry long, His resurrection was the pledge and power of the resurrection of their bodies also, in case they fell asleep.

Furthermore, the change wrought by translation has its root in Christ's resurrection. Second, it was Jesus the Savior, that very Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come. Having believed on Him, they would never "come into condemnation (judgment)" - John 5:24. "The wrath to come" or the coming wrath mentioned here, is the same as that named in 5:9, which refers to the seven years of world-wide trial and judgment out of which some saints hope to be kept because it is promised to us - Revelation 3:10.

THINK ...

Of passing from storm and tempest,  
To a calm harbor.  
Of stepping on shore,  
And finding it heaven.  
Of taking hold of a hand,  
And finding it God's hand.  
Of breathing a new atmosphere,  
And finding it celestial air.  
Of feeling invigorated,  
And finding immortality.  
Of an awaking,  
And finding it home!

#### **A PATTERN PREACHER - I THESSALONIANS TWO**

Repeatedly, the apostle mentions his ministry and that of Silas and Timothy, when they plowed up the soil and planted that church. This second chapter records their conduct while there. Paul proved himself an exemplary shepherd among them. Ministers may learn here how to tend the flock of Christ.

*Successful preachers.* "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain" - 2:1. Those apostles were led by the Holy Spirit. They went where and when God wanted them to go. As we saw in the first chapter, they gave forth the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel.

They spoke in the power of the Holy Spirit. Of course, they met with success. The Lord assured Joshua that meditation on His Word and obedience to it, and courage, would be crowned with prosperity and good success - Joshua 1:7, 8. Just so it was with Paul and his associates. Just so it is today, with Joshua-like and Paul-like workers.

*Courageous preachers.* "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention" - 2:2. The insults heaped upon them in Philippi are recited in Acts sixteen.

They were arrested, imprisoned, placed in stocks, and beaten; but God turned the tables there, and wrought a great victory for them. One of the choicest churches sprung up in that city, as a reward for their tears and toil. From that city, the apostles came to Thessalonica. They did not quit telling the glad tidings; neither did they compromise and step on the soft pedal. "We were bold in our God," Paul exclaims. Some folks are bold in themselves, which does not count for much nor glorify the Lord. Boldness in God implies a feeling of our own weakness and shrinking.

"When I am weak (in myself), then am I strong" (literally, "dynamited" in the Lord). When I am fearful in myself, then I am bold in the Lord. Just so it was with Peter and John, so that the Jews took notice that they had been with Jesus and learned of Him.

They proclaimed "the Gospel of God" in much conflict. What a message they had! It was "concerning His (God's) Son Jesus Christ our Lord," and called also "the Gospel of His Son" and "the Gospel of Christ (the Anointed One)" - Romans 1:1, 3, 9, and 16. The ministry, of those men was transparent, clean-cut, and outspoken. They taught as they understood, and believed what they taught. Their words went squarely against the practices of the old creation, which aroused contention. The apostle says, "For our exhortation was not of deceit" (many Christian workers are deceitful), "nor of uncleanness, nor in guile" - 2:3.

*Approved preachers.* "But even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the Gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts" - 2:4 R.V.

They "were allowed of God," as the Authorized Version says, because He had proved their hearts as well as their efforts. We are amazed at the emphasis placed upon the thorough sincerity of those brethren. Seven old creation traits are named in verses three to six, from which they were kept free - traits which are very common among ministers, and with which their followers become inoculated by contact with them. Paul was

teaching an overcoming life to an overcoming congregation; hence, he gives himself and his co-workers as an example to encourage them. One of these objectionable features is "pleasing men." What preacher holds the victory here, and yet is "gentle" toward his flock? Who pleases God only? How very few at no time use "flattering words," "nor a cloak of covetousness," which is a most subtle thing. The apostle declares that "God is witness" to their victory; and, because he tested and found them to be such noble characters in Christ, he entrusted them with his Gospel. I fear that many fellows are claiming to preach the Gospel today whom God has never called.

He says further, "Nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ" - 2:6 R.V.

The divine title which they bore gave them a right to expect honor from their converts and from all men. They did not style themselves nor one another as apostles. They were not elected to that office by men. God gave them that office. He bestowed on them that honor. But they never flaunted it before the people, and demanded them to bow and scrape at their feet. They blackened their shoes themselves. Like their Lord, they came "to minister" but "not to be ministered unto" - Matthew 20:28. Unselfish preachers. "For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God" - 2:9 R. V.

Paul and his co-workers were filled with the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, they regarded the saints as their "brethren," and not simply cold subjects over whom they ruled. Nay, they served them as their own flesh, purchased by the blood of the Lamb. Hence, he gives as a reason for their unselfish toil, this word - "because ye were dear unto us." They proved their deep love by being "gentle ... even as a nurse cherisheth her children" - caressing them when in pain, cheering them when downhearted, and tenderly correcting them if stepping aside. Fervent and solicitous was their ministry to the flock. They proved their love also by being "willing" or well pleased to impart to them not only the Gospel, but their own souls or lives. Indeed, everywhere they went, they hazarded their lives for the salvation of sinners and the upbuilding of believers.

Did they receive salaries? No. The word "salary" is not in the Bible. The nearest to it is "Salamis," which means "surging," where Barnabas and Paul preached once - Acts 13:5. They who preach for salaries usually resort to much "surging" to get them. Nay, the apostles, though they were apostles - the most authoritative title of ministers - earned their board by hard toil.

Why? "Because we would not be chargeable (or, burdensome) unto any of you," they said. They kept their eyes off of people's bank accounts, fine homes, and limousines. "Well," says one, "it is written, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Yes, that is what Paul taught. But Paul led his converts up to the knowledge of that truth; for all truth comes to people by revelation and gradation. They cannot learn it all at once. In the meantime, he was demonstrating to the uttermost by his self-denial, that he had the real Gospel of God. Therefore, he wrote to the Corinthians, saying, "I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself" - II Corinthians 11:9. Here he calls the saints and God to witness - "How holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe."

*Paternal preachers.* "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children" - 2:11.

The Revised Version says "each one," indicating that personal attention was given to the flock. He who shows a particular concern for each individual establishes a nearness and fellowship - the value of which cannot be estimated. This verse expresses the conduct of a true prophet of God, and compares beautifully with I Corinthians 14:3 - "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Thus, those dear men were apostles, prophets, and fathers. Oh, to walk in their footsteps of unselfish zeal for the good of believers and the glory of God. What was the purpose of that threefold fatherly instruction? "That ye would walk worthy of God." Is that not an impossible proposition? Yes, to the unbelief of the old creation it is, even as Jesus said about a rich man going through the eye of a needle - "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" - Matthew 19:26. Since we are a new creation in Christ, and Christ is our life, it is possible to "walk worthy of God." Since the Holy Spirit has come into our bodies to teach and guide us, and Christ is interceding before the Father in our behalf, such a walk is gloriously possible. Indeed, it is the only walk that pleases God.

To "walk worthy of God" is to walk worthy of "His kingdom and glory," into which He called the Gentiles as well as the Jews. In distinction from Satan's kingdom of darkness and death, we have been called into one of life, light, liberty, and endless glory. The various degrees of glory in God's kingdom (I Corinthians 15:40, 41) are not intimated in I Thessalonians, for any place in the realm of light with Jesus Christ will be glorious. Observe II Thessalonians 2:14 - "Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." As believers, those saints were already rightful citizens of God's kingdom - "For the

kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" - Romans 14:17. But, there is a specific glory in the kingdom which is not ours simply because we believe on Jesus unto the forgiveness of sins. That particular glory comes by vigorous faith and a living hope. "So run, that ye may obtain," or overtake and possess. The apostle pointed out that glittering prospect to the Thessalonian saints, and they started after it. All his words of comfort and caution, entreaty and exhortation, urged them on in their pursuit. He left no stone unturned that might help them on the way. All of this was written also for us.

*Appreciative ministers.* "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing" - 2:13.

Paul was sorrowful, but not always sorrowful. Instead, he was "alway rejoicing." He and his helpers preached with such faith and fervor that their words were manifestly effective. They watched with interest the working of the Holy Spirit, and praised God for it. They also noted with deep appreciation and thankfulness the attitude of the people to the Message. Nor did they hesitate to express their appreciation. Flattery puffs people up; but appreciation encourages honest hearts. He said, "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God." How did the apostle know that?

Because it "effectually worketh also in you that believe." The power of God's Word proves its divinity. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." It is sad that so few people love the Bible. Perhaps it is because they have not eaten enough of it to learn its value in practical life.

Paul knew by another evidence, that the Thessalonians had received his message as the Word of God rather than as the word of a man. They "became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus" - 2:14. Those assemblies in Judea were planted by Peter and his associates. They were not denominations; but they were distinct congregations or assemblies of believers on Jesus. Therefore, they were "churches (assemblies) of God," in distinction from civic or worldly congregations. They were "in Christ Jesus." There is not the least indication that they were organized or is assumed any sectarian title. They were also in fellowship with the assemblies which were planted by Paul and his co-workers in other cities. None of them sought to have jurisdiction over the others, as is so sadly common today.

*Persecuted preachers.* "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" - 2:14-16.

Jewish believers were persecuted by their own people, and Gentile believers were persecuted by their own. Jewish opposition to the Truth was very severe in those days. They slew their own Messiah and prophets, and made themselves obnoxious to everybody. They tried persistently to hinder Paul from preaching Christ to the Gentiles, and went full length in their rebellion - "to fill up their sins always." See Acts 17:10-14, which records the Jews' hatred of Paul. But God does not overlook men's hatred against His Truth and followers. Of the Jews it is said here, "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." This is doubtless a prophecy of the seven years' siege of Titus, the Roman general, against Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Josephus informs us that it was so terrible, that the inhabitants of the city slew and ate their own kin. Many thousands perished in the siege. That chastisement was an earnest of the unparalleled tribulation days yet to come - Matthew 24:21.

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

The apostle was led to leave Thessalonica because of the wrath of the Jews, which he did by night. However, his love for them never ceased. He was taken from them "for a short time in presence, not in heart." Unlike many evangelists of today, he endeavored the more abundantly to see them again "with great desire"; but Satan hindered him. We should not think it strange then, if the devil hinders us. The more faithful and loyal we are to Jesus and His Word, the more our adversary will try to block our way. If possible, he will make us sick in body or cripple us. He will start false reports about us. He will make some Christian people critical and faultfinding of our conduct and teaching. If we walk in the light, we need not fear that we will be lifted up with pride. Satan will be allowed to give us enough raps over the head to keep us dependent upon the Lord.

*Hopeful preachers.* "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy" - 2:19, 20.

Again we stand aghast at the richness, clearness, fullness, and positiveness of God's Word.

Jesus declared that the Spirit should "guide you into all Truth ... and He will show you things to come"; and, He is doing so, as we read the written Truth with unbiased minds. Brother Paul termed the Philippian saints his "joy and crown," because they were running with him "for the Prize of the high calling" - Philippians 4:1;

3:14. He labored to make them Prize winners; and his labor was not in vain. Now the Thessalonians were not only his "joy and crown" but more, even his hope and glory and crown of exultation when the Lord would be present in the air. They were waiting for Him from out the heavens (1:10); that is, they were waiting for the moment when Jesus would arise from His Father's throne and come down with a shout of command and set up His own throne in the air or first heaven. They hoped to arrive there from the earth the moment Jesus would arrive there from the highest Heaven, exactly as John in his vision entered the open door in Heaven just in time to see the throne as it was being set.

This is the goal which Paul saw, and which he set before his followers. The Philippian and Thessalonians aimed for it. The relation of these epistles is this - Thessalonian saints are Philippian, or lovers of the race, while running toward the goal; but Philippian saints will be Thessalonian, or full-fledged victors over all falsity, when they reach the goal. Paul will be there with them. They will be the fruit of his toil and tears. His labor will not have been in vain. They were his hope and joy then; they will be his eternal joy and glory and crown of exultation. They will be crowned together with him in the first rank. Glory! GLORY! GLORY!

Dear Reader, do you hope to be a Thessalonian victor? Are you longing to add to Paul's rejoicing "in the day of the Lord Jesus"? - II Corinthians 1:14. All who believe are saved according to his Gospel; but full overcomers will be the occasion of Paul's exultation in Christ to the uttermost. They will share with Christ in His glory exceedingly. Paul and his company, having filled up "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" here (Col. 1:24), will be filled up with inexpressible joy and glory yonder and crowned with superlative honor and exultation. The test of love: Jesus said, "... If a man love me, he will keep my words:" - John 14:23

### **A PATTERN PROCLAMATION - I THESSALONIANS 3:1 to 4:12**

"Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone" - 3:1. This third chapter indicates the sore tribulation that those saints suffered, and the overmastering love which consumed the apostle in their behalf. Timothy and Silas had fled from Thessalonica with him, and had gone to Berea. Being followed and persecuted by the envious Jews at Thessalonica, Paul made as if he would go to the sea but went to Athens instead. The other brethren remained at Berea until they received urgent word from their spiritual father to come at once to him. After a vigorous and hot campaign in Athens, especially emphasizing the death and resurrection of Jesus, they moved on to Corinth. There they preached and taught, amidst many discouragements, for over a year and a half. It was from Corinth evidently, and during his first year there, that he wrote this letter. He sent Timothy to them to inquire concerning their faith.

After his return to Paul, this epistle was written. Compare verses two and five of this chapter. The words of this portion speak deeply to my own heart. May they speak to the reader also. Note seven facts here about the apostle's message.

*THE PATTERN MESSAGE ESTABLISHES THE SAINTS.* "And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the Gospel of Christ, to establish you" - 3:2.

Though he was evangelizing in a great and needy city, yet his heart turned continually to those Thessalonian babes in Christ. He had forewarned them of sure tribulation, which came upon them; and which invariably visits those who trust in Jesus for salvation, and go on with Him. Paul feared that they might be moved or jostled seriously by the afflictions. Satan will trip people if he can; and the apostle could not endure the thought of his labor for them being in vain. How his attitude should speak to ministers who are carried away with "a passion for souls" as they call it, and have little or no concern for souls already saved. Men will be surprised at how much selfishness is mixed with their evangelistic zeal, when the divine searchlight is turned on their consciences. Oh, the pitiful cries that come to us from those who would be starving, if it were not that our literature feeds them. Oh, for more shepherds with a true shepherd's heart like Paul had.

"Sinners are going to hell. We must have a revival. Revivals, revivals, evangelize; hurry up, the Lord is coming soon." Such is the outcry on every hand. But what about the thousands of sheep who have no shepherd, or the sheep whose shepherd furnishes no fodder? What about the Great Shepherd's command? "Feed My lambs ... feed My sheep" - John 21:15-17.

Why did Paul send Timothy and, in writing to the saints, mention three relationships about him?

He thereby showed his more fervent concern for them. The disciples in Thessalonica knew Timothy, and had confidence in him. He had a closer place in Paul's heart than any other minister associated directly with him. When Paul died, Timothy became his successor. Perhaps the saints did not know how highly Paul esteemed his spiritual son. He impressed upon them the facts that he was his brother and their brother - "our brother." How warm and tender are these words. He was also a "minister (deacon) of God." Some ancient authorities say, "Fellow worker with God," which is an intimate title indeed. It agrees with I Corinthians 3:9 - "We are laborers together with God," which includes the third title - "our fellow laborer in

the Gospel of Christ." Why send Timothy, and such a Timothy! It required such a true and tried fellow, with a real shepherd heart, to establish those tempest-tossed and wind-rent children in grace. Timothy was successful; but, it remained for Paul to go in person later, to confirm their fixedness of faith "unblamable in holiness." See 3:10, 13.

*THE PATTERN MESSAGE COMFORTS CONCERNING FAITH.*"... and to comfort you concerning your faith" - 3:2.

Five fiery facts about faith are found in this chapter. That church lived by faith - the first great principle in God's domain - Habakkuk 2:4; Galatians 3:11. When Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat, Jesus prayed that his faith should not fail. Accordingly, Paul was exercised about the faith of his late converts. He said, "I sent to know your faith." Most people would ask, "Is it a big assembly? What kind of folks are they? Do they pay well? Are they intelligent, or just common folks?" Nay, nay, not so; but how about their faith? Are they tempted and persecuted? Do they need comfort? Timothy shall go and comfort their faith. Let us do likewise - go and establish and comfort the children of God as to their faith.

*THE PATTERN MESSAGE RECEIVES COMFORT FROM THOSE IT ESTABLISHES.* "We were comforted over you in all our affliction (tribulation) and distress by your faith" - 3:7.

Timothy brought back a splendid report - 3:6. Their faith was active and their love fervent. They had not forgotten their spiritual father, but longed to see him. Thus he was encouraged to press the battle on. The measure of Paul's interest in those saints and the degree of comfort which their faith brought to him are seen in verse eight - "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

Beloved, do you fathom that statement? Brother minister, is your life bound up in the steadfastness of your flock? Few if any portions of Scripture are more tender, affectionate, appealing, and melting than this chapter. Paul felt that, if those, Thessalonian saints miscarried in their faith, it would break his heart. His bondage in stocks in Philippi, his imprisonment in Caesarea for two years and in Rome twice, were light afflictions compared with the possibly conquered faith of his children. Oh, for Paul's consuming, constraining, daily-dying love for the saved. Such love never forgets the need of sinners. And here is more marvel.

*THE PATTERN MESSAGE REACTS UPON ITS PUBLISHER WITH INTOXICATING, HILARIOUS, JUBILANT JOY.* "For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?" - 3:9.

Paul was certainly beside himself (II Corinthians 5:13) - out of his natural senses, as men would say - when he heard Timothy's report from Thessalonica. He rejoiced for their sakes before God. He rejoiced with all joy, so that he enjoyed his own wild rejoicing over their faith. Not content with all that, he exclaims, "What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?" As Jesus did, he must have rejoiced exceedingly and leaped much for joy - Luke 10:21. The adverb "again" implies that he rejoiced before God and gave Him thanks over and over; then cried out, "What thanks can we render to God?" The pronoun "we" suggests that Timothy and Silas were also enjoying the holy hilarity with Paul; for they were heart and soul with him in all his sorrows and joys, trials and triumphs. That period of inexpressible adoration and exultant rejoicing did not stop with thirty minutes, as witness the next verse. Evidently those three brethren had a prolonged prayer and praise meeting.

*PERFECTED FAITH RESULTS FROM THE PATTERN MESSAGE.* "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith" - 3:10.

In the light of chapter one, we would not expect such language as this. There the apostle gives thanks to God always for their "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope," Because of their faith, they were examples "to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." The Word of God was sounded out from them, and in every place their faith was broadcasted. What more could be done for their faith? Ah, Paul know that their mountain-moving faith had not yet been tested from every angle. Being still young in the Truth, they might make shipwreck of faith. They needed to be established; and he saw a lack of some sort that must be perfected. Their faith needed educating, lest it run in a groove. The faith of some saints may be active and strong in certain directions, but frail and wanting in others. God would have us live by faith concerning all things, that we "may grow up into Him (Christ) in all things" and ultimately "be filled with all the fullness of God" - Ephesians 4:15; 3:19.

The developing and perfecting of our faith is no small item. Hence, Paul prayed night and day, that the Lord would permit him to visit that congregation and minister the Word to them in person; and he adds yet this - "Now God Himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you" - 3:11. The Holy Spirit alone can make us realize the importance of possessing perfect faith in God. This logically calls for another fact.

*ABOUNDING LOVE RESULTS FROM THE FULL PATTERN MESSAGE.* "And the Lord make

you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you" - 3:12.

He said later to the Corinthians, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing" - I Corinthians 13:2. Faith, love, and hope are an inseparable triplet. They live and thrive peaceably in the same house, and are indispensable to one another.

This excelling increase of love comes by pouring over God's precious Word until we are saturated with it as a cloth with oil. Pondering the love which moved Jesus to suffer and die in our stead produces it. Pondering the love which surged in Paul's bosom produces it. Hence, he said, "Even as we do toward you." He exhorts us to possess and show the same fervent unselfish love as he did. Love seeketh not her own, but another's happiness and comfort. Love pities its neighbor, not only with the eye but with the hand.

People want to excel in their gifts and achievements, in their prayers, testimonies, and addresses. That is, the flesh likes to be seen and heard and highly commended. It chuckles when its face and name appear in print. But, here, we are instructed to excel and abound in mutual love as saints. We are to look after one another's welfare. In times of increasing want, we have plenty of opportunities to demonstrate this rare gift. We, who have, whether little or more, must divide with our needy brethren. If we heed Paul's message, we will abound in love in the most practical manner. This grace culminates in one more.

*THE PATTERN MESSAGE ESTABLISHES IN HOLINESS.* "To the end He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" - 3:13.

Every chapter in this epistle closes with a reminder of the coming of Jesus. This outlook calls for full development in Christ. The climax of readiness for that day is this - that our hearts be established blameless. If our hearts are full of faith Godward and abound in love manward, we will enjoy a fixedness of hope toward Christ's appearing. We will maintain a settled and firm heart attitude, toward the world and its present unsettled conditions. We will have no fellowship with it in any sense. Our fellowship will be sweet and unbroken with the Father and His Son. Our one occupation will be to bless mankind, especially those who are of the household of faith, though we be compelled to work with our hands for our physical sustenance. We will look steadfastly to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of the faith, for all things; and await His summons upward as the blessed hope.

#### **FOUR WALKING STICKS**

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

The manner of our walk is the theme of the first twelve verses of this chapter. The first verse announces it, and the twelfth verse confirms and climaxes it. The saints had been taught before how to walk; but here we have a fourfold exhortation concerning how to abound in that teaching practically.

*WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY.* "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" - 4:3.

It is a common thing among the people of the old creation, "the Gentiles which know not God" (4:5), to walk after "the lust of concupiscence" or passion of lust. It was so then; it is so now. Men follow their own depraved inclinations. The new birth does not change those tendencies, but holds them in check as we yield to God - Romans 6:11-13. Though we are a new creation by faith in Jesus, we still have the old nature to combat. Hence, Paul wrote, "Mortify (make to die, treat as dead) therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" - Col. 3:5. The apostle teaches a practical sanctification. Let us not expect sin to be taken out of us - "root and branch" - as we have heard it taught, but expect the Holy Spirit to give us victory over it; then we will not be disappointed. Though sin dwells in the flesh (Romans 7:17; 8:3), "sin shall not have dominion over you" - Romans 6:14. Though we may have great faith, and be commended for it; yet there is a possibility of failure here. Therefore, Paul said, "We beseech you ... and exhort you by the Lord Jesus," even as we taught you before by word of mouth. He emphasized this matter.

If ministers and assemblies would study his instructions in all his epistles on this subject, there would not be the failures that we hear of today. Victory is provided for individuals and for congregations.

The exhortation is given to the individual, because the victory begins with the individual. "That each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor. That no man transgress (overreach) and wrong his brother in the matter" - 4:4, 6 R.V. This is the negative side of sanctification. Let each fellow stay within his own rightful bounds. If he does not, he will suffer for it. Men may think that they can live loosely and satisfy their old desires, now that they have eternal life; but the Lord takes a hand in it. He is "an avenger in all these things" - 4:6 R.V. Of this, Paul had forewarned them and told them plainly. Later, in Corinth, a brother was severely chastised as an example of God's judgment - I Corinthians 5. Since

each brother figures Christ as the Head of His Body, fornication reflects against Him, as if He were not true to His people.

Jesus is jealous of His own Name and honor. He does not flirt with the world; neither should His brethren dishonor their own bodies by defrauding their fellows. "Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth His Holy Spirit unto you" - 4:8 R.V. There is no excuse; for we have, dwelling within us, the requisite power to overcome. Refusing the victory is not rejecting Paul nor his successors, but it is rejecting God.

*WALK IN LOVE.* "But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" - 4:9 R.V.

The preceding plain portion speaks of the negative side of sanctification, the things from which to abstain; but here we read of the positive side. Victory over the flesh is not achieved by gritting one's teeth, stamping the feet on the floor, and resolving not to yield; but it flows out from a heart full of love. In the new birth, we have a love life which seeks the good of others. God speaks to that new life. It is as if Paul were saying, "Why should I instruct you to do something that you are doing already toward all the brethren in all Macedonia?" "But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more" - 4:10. Elsewhere he says, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" - Galatians 6:9.

Saints are want to let down in doing good to others. Instead, let us abound exceedingly. Love is practical. It lives in shoes and travels on wheels. It is patient and longsuffering. Do not stuff yourself, and let your brother starve. Forego your extravagant attire, and relieve your brother of his shabby dress. Take someone to meeting in your fine car. Stay and pray and sing with seekers at the altar. Do not hurry away when meeting is over. Cast about, if perchance you can motor someone home. Do not take all the bread on the plate for yourself and family, then tell in meeting that you expect to be in the Bride of the Lamb. Show your love by being courteous and kind to others of the household of faith.

*WALK BUSILY.* "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded (charged) you" - 4:11.

The exhortation here is similar to that given to the women, to "learn in silence" and "be in silence" - I Timothy 2:11, 12. The Greek word here translated "quiet" is "silence" there. In I Timothy 2:2, it is "peaceable." If then Paul meant for women not to preach and teach, he also meant the same concerning the men; for here he speaks to the brethren. Of course, he speaks to all. In II Thessalonians 3:11, 12 we find a sidelight. Among them were some who walked disorderly, not working at all, but were buybodies; that is, meddling in other folks' affairs. He exhorted - "...that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" - II Thessalonians 3:12. As it was then, so it is now. Some are too lazy to work. Some refuse to work but sponge on others, under the guise of living by faith. Such are always busying themselves where they are not needed and, of course, not wanted. They are active, but in a critical, feverish, presumptuous, obnoxious spirit and manner.

They are restless, not peaceable. To such is this admonition given - "Study to be quiet."

The verb "study" means "be ambitious," "make it your aim," "esteem it an honor to be quiet." In Romans 15:20, the same Greek word is translated "strived." Paul was ambitious, made it his aim, "to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named." In II Corinthians 5:9, it is rendered "labor." Paul labored, earnestly endeavored, esteemed it an honor, to "be accepted of Him (God)." Only in these three places is the word used. It follows then, that the quietness here enjoined is of no small account, as well as that enjoined upon the women in I Timothy two. The effectual way to quietness is to do your own things. Let other folk attend to theirs. If they need you and want you, they will call for you. "Work with your own hands." A peaceable or quiet life does not work by proxy. It employs its own hands. It would rather work than boss. Only those, who themselves are good laborers, are capable of directing others. The writer learned to set type at the age of forty-eight. He began editing "Grace and Glory" by setting the type, feeding the press, stapling, trimming, and mailing it out. When the work grew so large that others had to do the mechanical part, I felt badly about it. I would rather work today than direct others. It is a great honor to be quiet, do one's own part, and work with one's own hands.

*WALK HONESTLY.* "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" - 4:12. The Holy Spirit would have us void of offense toward God and all men. The Christian is the sinner's Bible. He reads all professors of religion. If he reads Christ in us, he may be drawn to believe on Him. It behooves us to walk as He walked, Part 13 because we represent Him in this world. Then God will make the world serve us. He can draw on all creation to supply our needs. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" - II Chronicles 16:9. Over twenty years ago, this verse was definitely whispered into the writer's heart by the Holy Spirit. Though its meaning was not clear then, I rested upon it, expecting it to be fulfilled

sometime if necessary. To our great joy, this is being fulfilled literally.

### **ABIDING IN HIS PRESENCE**

Mary M. Bodie

I'm abiding in His Presence,  
Dwelling in the secret place;  
Underneath are arms of power,  
And above a throne of grace -  
For the vision calmly centers  
In my savior's face.  
I'm abiding in the sunshine,  
Which His glory sheds on me;  
And my soul is all transported  
E'en with heav'nly ecstasy -  
Walking in the Spirit's power In glad liberty.  
I'm abiding, yes, I'm staying  
In the ocean of His love;  
And why should my heart be straying  
From the wooing of the Dove?  
For I'm carried on the pinions Of His wings above.  
I'm abiding and confiding  
In the fulness of His grace.  
Oh, how can I ever falter,  
Or give questions any space?  
For He keeps me o'er from failing  
In this pilgrim race.

### **A PATTERN PROSPECT - I THESSALONIANS 4:13 to 5:11**

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" - 4:13, 14.

The last six verses of this chapter announce the manner of Christ's second advent, and the first eleven verses of the fifth chapter indicate the time.

*THE RESURRECTION.* When Jesus comes, some folk will be raised out from among the dead. Who will be raised? Only those who will have fallen asleep in Jesus, or died in the faith. Sinners can have no hope, because they do not believe. Faith always precedes hope and paves the way for it. The wicked dead will be raised at the end of the Millennium - Rev. 20:12, 13. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pledge and guarantee of the resurrection of the believing dead. He is "the Firstfruits of them that slept" - Lev. 23:10, 11; I Corinthians 15:20. This is the logic set forth in I Thessalonians 4:13. We are grieved when we lay our friends into the cold grave; but not as the unsaved, who have no hope. We wonder how they can bury their loved ones and not despair. But believers look up through their tears and see a bright rainbow of hope. They shall meet their departed friends in the air. Believers under the old covenant entertained this hope. They expected a resurrection of their believing dead. When Jesus announced to Martha that He would raise her brother, she said to Him, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then He taught her a new truth, saying, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" - John 11:23-25. Then He called Lazarus from the tomb to prove His statement. C o m p a r e Daniel 12:1, 2.

*THE POWER THAT RAISES THE DEAD.* "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout (of command), with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" - 4:16. The Lord shall come down from His throne into the air. His word of authority, like to that of a sea captain, will awaken those in their graves and lead them out. Some people imagine that Gabriel will blow a trumpet, supposing him to be the archangel or chief messenger. Michael only is termed the archangel - Jude 9. This simply means that the Voice of our descending Lord will be very powerful and authoritative like that of a chief messenger. He Himself will be that Chief Messenger. Compare the "Mighty Angel" of Rev. 10:1, 8 who will then begin to take control of everything in heaven and on earth as the Supreme Generalissimo. The Greek word for "trump" means a war trumpet. It occurs also in I Corinthians 14 and 15

and in Rev. 8 and 9. Doubtless, it will peal forth as a prolonged blast. I Corinthians 15:52 indicates that there will be more than one distinct trumpet call; for the phrase "last trump" implies one or more blasts before it. Oh, the solemnity and majesty of that day. The "shout" and "voice" and "trump" suggest the fullness of the power and authority of the Trinity vested in the Lord Jesus Christ at that time. His descent then will introduce Him with His five prophetic titles of "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" - Isaiah 9:6. At that momentous moment, our Lord Jesus will exclaim, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth" - Matthew 28:18 R.V. Though He uttered those words to the disciples soon after His resurrection, He has not yet used that authority, because He is not yet enthroned as King. He is still sitting by the side of His Father on His Father's throne, as an intercessor in our behalf - Hebrews 1:3; 7:25; Rev. 3:21.

**RESURRECTION OF THE SAINTS.** Jesus' first act of authority will be over death. He will command sleeping saints to arise from the tomb. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." Oh, glory! What a hope! The authority and power over death, which He evinced by raising Lazarus, have been suspended during this Church Age; but He will soon resume them. That will be the final and invincible proof of the eternal Sonship and Deity of Jesus Christ. His own resurrection demonstrated that, at the beginning; and all who have believed it will share, in some measure, in His glory. His resurrection has become history, and Christ is in the glory. But the world must yet be convinced that Jesus is who He claimed to be, and that He is in Heaven from whence He shall return. His power to open the graves and lead their captives out will prove these things. The dead will not be raised secretly, as was Moses, with no trace of where their bodies lay. The devil cannot dispute with Michael about the bodies of the resurrected saints, for he will be tremendously conscious of their presence in Heaven.

Immediately after the tombs are unlocked and their inhabitants are out and changed, those saints who are alive will be changed - "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The apostle said, "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (be in the graves), but we shall all be changed...The dead (in Christ) shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible (body in the tomb) must put on incorruption, and this mortal (death-doomed body, yet alive) must put on immortality" - I Corinthians 15:51-53.

**TRANSIT TOWARD HEAVEN .** "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" - 4:17. Oh, what a meeting that will be! Resurrected ones and living ones, all changed, will ascend together. As Enoch, Elijah, and Moses know one another instantly and instinctively, so the sleeping saints will know one another and recognize the living ones. From every century of the Church period and from every country, "clouds" or crowds of glorified saints will fly like lightning through the atmosphere. They will go in the right direction for, as a magnet compels needles or other particles of steel to leap up and grab it, so the mighty translating Voice and attraction of our heavenly Lover will pull us up unto Himself. As I write, "I feel the pull," as a boy said when flying his kite. It was so high that he could not see it, but he knew it was there by the pull.

**OUR ETERNAL HOME.** "So shall we ever be with the Lord" - 4:17. We do not read here exactly where that will be, but we will be with the Lord. To be in His company is the important matter, wherever that may be. Heaven would not heaven be, if Jesus' face I could not see. We shall then be joined to the Lord as our eternal Head. Now we are joined only by faith; then by sight. The meeting place will be in the air; for there is no spot on earth large enough to accommodate such a vast innumerable throng. But our destination will be - "Upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north ... above the heights of the clouds" - Isaiah 14:13, 14. John saw - "a throne was set in heaven" - Revelation 4:2.

### **PERIOD OF THE PAROUSIA**

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" - 5:1, 2.

The coming of the Lord covers a space of nearly seven years. Hence, it is also called "the day of the Lord," as in verse two. Two Greek words are employed with reference to the two advents of Jesus. "Erchomai" means to "come" or "go." It is used in speaking of Christ's first appearing, and rarely of His second coming. The phrase, "Ho Erchomenos," means "the coming One," or "He who cometh." "Parousia" is the word chiefly used in speaking of Christ's second coming. It occurs twenty-two times in the New Testament; and it is always with reference to Jesus' second advent, except four times - I Corinthians 16:17; II Corinthians 7:6, 7; Philippians 1:26. Jesus and His disciples employ the word four times - Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39. James uses it twice - James 5:7, 8. Peter uses the word three times - II Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12. John uses it once - I John 2:28. Paul employs it six times in I and II Thessalonians, as we shall note. "Parousia" means "a being present, a being along side of, a presence." Its second meaning is "arrival" or "coming," as it is rendered in the Authorized Version.

The second coming of Jesus is not to be regarded as simply an arrival, and then a disappearing. We are not occupied with the fact of His coming chiefly, but with the fact of His "parousia"; that is, His protracted Presence. His "parousia" or "Presence" will extend from the catching away of the Church to His revelation unto Israel, a period of over six years. A careful study of all the twenty-two citations in which the word is found, and especially the eighteen which refer to Jesus' coming, carry this meaning plainly. Observe Jesus' sayings (Matthew 24), where the word is introduced.

The disciples said, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming (parousia), and of the end of the world (consummation of the age - the Millennial Age)?"

They understood its meaning, and were the first to use it. They saw that His Presence should reach to the end of the Millennium. The Lord explained that His "parousia" should be like the flashing of the lightning which is not simply one lone flash, but which continues "Cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west" 24:27. Also, "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming (parousia, or Presence) of the Son of Man be" - 24:37-39. "The days" of Noah covered a lengthened period of time.

Study the four citations in this letter - 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23 - where the Greek word translated "coming" is "parousia" or "Presence." Note also II Thessalonians two. "Our gathering together unto Him" (2:1), demands His prolonged Presence; for we will not all be gathered at the same moment. "The brightness of His coming" or "Presence," will not be limited to one flash of light; and the "coming" (parousia) of "that Wicked" one will continue three and a half years - II Thessalonians 2:8, 9; Rev. 13:5. Returning to our study chapter we note the phrase, "the times and the seasons," which refers certainly to the extended days of Christ's advent. That period (those times and seasons) is termed "the day of the Lord," which day is declared by various Old Testament prophets to be "a day of darkness and of gloominess," "wrath," and "anger" - Joel 2:2-11; Zephaniah 1:15; 2:3.

### **CAUGHT AWAY IN SECTIONS**

We shall now see why "the coming," the "parousia," of Jesus extends over many days. The whole Church will not be taken up at one and the same moment. The dead in Christ will be raised in ranks, or cohorts - "Each one in his proper rank, Christ, a Firstfruit, afterwards those who belong to the Christ in His coming" - I Corinthians 15:23 Wuest. (En te parousia autou, Greek). I Corinthians 15:38-42, which speaks of different glories, teaches the same truth. These verses culminate by the clinching words - "So also is the resurrection of the dead." The translation of the living must correspond with the resurrection. The revelation of Jesus given to John on Patmos affords unanswerable evidence of this tremendous truth. The catching away to Heaven will certainly be in different deportations. We read of the first deportation, in Revelation four and five, called the living ones and the twenty-four elders. We read distinctly of an innumerable company in Revelation seven; but those of chapter four are already in glory when they arrive. In chapter seven, we read also of the sealing of a vast company from the twelve tribes of Israel; but they are not seen in Heaven until in chapter fourteen. Besides these, in chapter eleven we learn of "two witnesses" - "the two olive trees" - who shall prophesy for 1260 days then be slain; and, "after three days and a half," ascend "up to heaven." Whether they be two individuals only, or not, is not clear. Being called "the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth," suggests that they may be two congregations of believers led by two strong persons. Be it so or not, here is a company of saints distinct from all the others and caught up at a time distinct from the rest. Let us revert to I Thessalonians four. The resurrection and translation described here is, no doubt, the manner in general of the catching away of each rank of believers - each in its own order and time. But those verses (13 to 18) have particular reference to the resurrection and ascension of the full overcomers, which must meet Jesus in the air before He can place His throne in Heaven - Revelation four. The word "bring" in the clause "will God bring with Him," is rendered "lead out" in the Diaglott, which is correct. As God led Jesus out of the grave or raised Him up leaving other believers there, so He will lead out the Thessalonian overcomers while others remain for a later resurrection. Further, in my Greek-English Lexicon is found this remarkable use of the Greek word "ago," here translated "bring" or "lead out." "Agesthai (from "ago") gunaika," referring to a father, means "to choose a wife for his son." Exactly so - God the Father will "lead out" of the tombs a company of believers who, with a like company of living saints, will constitute the Bride of the Lamb. Hallelujah! "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." These two companies are represented also by the Smyrna and Philadelphia churches - Revelation 2:8-11 and 3:7-13.

### **TIMES AND SEASONS**

The opening verses of chapter five are unanswerably convincing that the above words refer to a select prepared company and not to all the Church, as if all should be caught away at the same moment. The entire chapter conveys the same truth. The Greek word for "time" here is "chronon," which has an exact time value. According to Rev. 12:6, 14 with Daniel 12:4, 7 it is exactly one year of 360 days. A "season" is, of course, three months. "The times and the seasons" which Thessalonian saints know accurately

("akribes," Greek) embrace the seven years, called by some prophetic students "the last week of Daniel" - Daniel 9:27. John's vision of darkness and judgment (Rev. 6 to 19 inclusive) will be fulfilled during that prophetic week. The Jewish clock, being run down for 2520 years, will begin to tick at the opening of that period; for the Supreme Jew, our adorable Lord Jesus, will assume control of affairs in heaven and on earth. From the commencement of those times and seasons, the national rulers will be regarded as usurpers, because Christ will then be due to reign. The Jews will not accept Jesus as their King, but will accept overtures from usurping world powers. The vast majority of the Church, by failing to qualify for the out-translation, will be to that extent out of divine order. For these three solemn reasons, as I Thessalonians five indicates, that will be a period of destruction, darkness, night, drunkenness, and wrath. Note 5:3, 4, 5, 7, 9. This agrees perfectly with Old Testament prophecies - Jeremiah 25; Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18.

"Peace and safety" will be announced by the united world and church league. That will be the moment of the white horse and his rider of Revelation six. They will flatter themselves that they are bringing in the Millennium - "the Golden Age"; but, God terms it, "the Night." That will be very brief. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" - 5:3. No, indeed; the judgment of God will surely fall. His Son must have the dominion. If the world will not yield to His rulership willingly (and they will not), He will obtain it by almighty and just force. To a Christ-rejecting world and to wanton Christians, that day comes "as a thief in the night."

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" - 5:4, 5 R.V. Paul does not call the Thessalonian saints "children" ("teknois," Greek) but "sons" ("huios," Greek) - R.V. He puts them on a par with himself, saying "we," meaning them and himself. Thus, those addressed in this first epistle are found at the front of the race, running side by side with Paul. We read no words of reproof; but, instead, the warmest words of wooing, praise, and appreciation. It is a fact, that he employs the endearing term "brethren" herein, more than in any other epistle of its size. Thus he shows that this is indeed his brotherly-love letter.

Again the seven years above mentioned, are termed "night" and "darkness," because the luminaries in the world (Eph. 5:8) will be gone. "Ye are the light of the world," said Jesus to the

Jews (Matthew 5:14); but, they hid their light under a bushel, engrossed in business. Hence today, wholehearted growing saints, "the sons of God, without rebuke," are the light-bearers. To these, the apostle says, "Shine as lights (luminaries) in the world; holding forth the Word of life (for that is the way to shine); that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain" - Philippians 2:15, 16. By his labor, he sought for them to be in the first rank. If they heeded his counsel, his toil would not be in vain. Hence, when the overcomers shall be taken, the light will be gone; the sons, the full-orbed luminaries, will be called Home. Of course, night and darkness will ensue. When the first rank ascends, the night begins. As one rank after another goes, the night will grow darker; even unto thick darkness, just before the revelation of Christ to the Jews. Do you say, "That is visionary and farfetched"? Harken a moment.

The night watches. Jesus, speaking of His return, remarked, "And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so (watching), blessed are those servants" -

Luke 12:38. Certainly, He was not speaking of night watches of only three hours in length. Surely, He used the night watches, to illustrate corresponding periods during the night that is coming on the world - called the "great tribulation." In Matthew 14:22-33, we find a very significant use of "the fourth watch of the night" (in which) "Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." What can this mean typically, but that Jesus will come to deliver Israel from the international storm that will rage after the middle of the seven years? And who can abide it? As the disciples exclaimed when He had rescued them, "Of a truth. Thou art the Son of God" - so Israel will exclaim, "This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" - Isaiah 25:9. Compare also Isaiah 21:11, 12 - "Watchman, what of the night?" - which points directly to that time.

How wonderfully these several night watches agree with John's vision of the catching away of different companies at different times. The full overcomers, represented by the four living ones and twenty-four elders which correspond with the Thessalonians, meet the Lord in the air before the night sets in or the two witnesses begin to prophesy; and before Isaiah 21:6 is fulfilled - "Go, set a watchman." Then the countless company of Revelation seven (Rev. 7:9-17) - commonly called tribulation saints - ascend in the first watch. No mention is made of that company in Matthew - no first watch is noted - because he does not write of Church happenings but of

Kingdom things, nor does he speak of the first rank group. But Jesus must take to Himself the "man child" (Rev. 12), the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1-8) or wise virgins, even in "the second watch" - for at midnight the cry is heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" - Matthew 25:6. Then there are those on the sea of glass in "the third watch" (Revelation 15:2, 3). These last two being distinctly Israel, Jesus

intimates His coming for them in the second and third watches - Luke 12:38. Finally, in the fourth watch, He will be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire, destroy the man of sin, and make Himself known to His brethren. The nation of Israel will be born in that day - Isaiah 66:8. The fourth watch merges into Millennial glory.

Some saints will sleep. "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night" - 5:6, 7. It is evident that "the times and the seasons," of verse one, refer to the seven years of world-wide spiritual night from which full overcomers will have fled. Hence, the sundry admonitions in this fifth chapter. We are to walk in harmony with our high calling and blessed hope. The "others," who sleep, are not sinners but drowsy saints. Sinners are nowhere in Scripture said to be asleep, but dead; even "dead in trespasses and sins." Jesus said, "Let the dead (the unsaved) bury their dead (physically dead)" - Matt. 8:22. The exhortation, "Awake thou that sleepest," is addressed to believers - Eph. 5:14. It is easy to see that many really saved people are not awake to present conditions. They are religiously indifferent. They seem to be dreaming instead of watching, except they be watching others' faults or the weather. They are not sober, but drunken with the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life" - Luke 8:14. Many of them "walk ... disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" - 11 Thessalonians 3:11. How solemn the words - "sleep in the night"; that is, those believers who are indifferent to the happenings of the present moment are counted as belonging to the night of sorrow about to be ushered in by the universal compact between church and state. Therefore, the further entreaty -

### **ARMoured FOR TRANSLATION**

"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" - 5:8.

Earlier in experience, when contending for our place in the heavenlies, we take "the breastplate of righteousness" and "the shield of faith" and "the helmet of salvation" - Eph. 6:13-18. Now as the end is nigh, our contention is for the out-translation, that we may possess the highest and most glorious possessions in the heavenlies. We have no time for loitering or trifling. Vigorous faith, burning love, and sparkling hope, is the triangle that triumphs. With Enoch, we must steadfastly believe that God has spoken this unspeakable truth to our hearts though others scoff. Thus, we "please God," and shall be rewarded for our persistent faith. Our love is to increase and abound toward one another and to all (3:12, 13); and especially, as a part of the impenetrable "breastplate," our love for Jesus' soon coming should wax hotter and hotter. Our love should grow into a consuming flame until, like the Shulamite, we exclaim of our Solomon, "His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me" - Song of Solomon 5:16; 7:10. Our unquenchable love for the Bridegroom's speedy summons will overcome Him as He visits "the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded"; and, before He knows it, He will be mounted upon the translation chariots of His princely people and bear us away into the air - Song of Solomon 6:11-13.

Hallelujah! This stalwart faith and fervent love are the double breastplate which shield the heart against all the fiery darts of the foe.

"The helmet of salvation." Now "salvation" here does not mean conversion or the new birth. That was settled long ago. It is not a salvation from sin, nor from hell; but it is salvation or deliverance from the night, from the hour of world-wide trial, from the unstinted and just wrath about to be visited upon a Christ-rejecting race. See Revelation eight to eighteen. Peter exhorts Israel to "hope to the end" ... to "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13); but Paul entices us to look "for that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), which shall be enjoyed nearly seven years before Peter's hope. Satan will bombard your brain with blasting logic against this "blessed hope," if he can; hence, we need the "helmet" or headshield - "the hope" of being translated before "the times and the seasons," or the night of storm and sorrow bursts forth upon the world.

It is a tremendously solemn fact that the masses of even Spirit-filled people are ignorant of, or indifferent to, this truth and the situation. A deep sleep is upon them. After the Bride is caught away, many will be awakened. Jesus informs us of the virgins, half of whom will have oil in their vessels; that is, they will have received the Holy Spirit. Doubtless, sometime after the overcomers have gone, these will be awakened by the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." Will you believe it? Some are actually looking past the "blessed hope," and are counting on being among the wise virgins. A man said to me recently, "I am one of the 144,000." I answered in Jesus' own words,

"According to your faith be it unto you." Oh, fellow saint. Let us look up; let us bring Him nigh; let us accept the proffered "crown of glory"; let us keep the Word of His patience, and escape the coming darkness.

Final fire escape. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" - 5:9.

The "wrath" mentioned here refers to the fires of judgment coming upon the people during the nearly seven years of darkness - "the hour of temptation," the "great tribulation" - Rev. 3:10; 7:14.

Full overcomers will escape those days by means of the out-translation. This is the distinctive promise to the Philadelphia saints - "Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep thee from (out of) the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" - Rev. 3:10. The Cross made full provision for this; for Christ "died for us, that, whether we wake (are alive) or sleep (in the grave), we should live together with Him" - 5:10. This agrees with 4:17. Then follows the closing word of this division. "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify (build up) one another, even as also ye do" - 5:11. The special "comfort" is the "blessed hope" of being caught away at the sounding of the first trumpet. Be not dismayed by those who may oppose this hope of an out-translation. You will observe that, when people are not in a certain advanced rank or do not want to be, they fail to see or refuse to see others there. For example, religious folk who have no assurance of salvation but cling to a theory, insist that no one can know that he is saved till at death or the judgment day. Likewise, those who have not been divinely healed and do not want divine healing, declare that the age of miracles is passed. Such as are ashamed of speaking in tongues and of the manifest power of God, relegate Pentecost to the apostolic days, or push it forward to the return of Israel to their land. The same principle holds with many, concerning the rapture of the saints. The Thessalonian life is too strenuous, the sacrifice is too great, the separation is too serious, the running required is too rapid, and the company is too small. Many prefer to flatter themselves that they will be in the Bridehood anyway, no matter how they live. Alas!

Let us be encouraged, not only by our beloved Brother Paul's teaching, but also by his example. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark (the goal) for the Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He was sure of the heavenly calling, but was running to win the Prize - Christ as the Bridegroom. He wanted his body to be conformed exactly to the body of Jesus' glory, for Jesus will be the Star of the highest magnitude and brightest glory. The Bride group will share in that supreme sun glory. Compare Philippians 3:13, 14 with I Corinthians 15:40, 41.

#### **A PATTERN PREPARATION - I THESSALONIANS 5:12-28**

The closing verses of chapter five are all particularly in view of our glorious hope. Let us study them with this in mind. Everything that might hinder our free and happy preparation for the first rank rapture must be discarded, be it ever so lawful or innocent. We find in these seventeen verses, twenty earnest exhortations. They fall into five groups. These are accompanied with words of final instruction and comfort.

*ATTITUDE TO PASTORS.* "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" - 5:12, 13. The devoted apostle refers here to true and faithful ministers of the Gospel; not to such as seek their own ease and honor, nor to those who deceive, mislead, and divide the flock of God. True ministers are God's anointed and appointed ones. They "labor among" the saints. They are not loafers. Theirs is a strenuous, unselfish, burden-bearing career. The love of Christ constrains them to carry blessings to the people - bind up their broken hearts, heal their sick, pray for their unsaved and incorrigible ones, and teach them the perfect way of life and victory.

The Greek word for "over" in the phrase "over you in the Lord" is "proistamenous," which is derived from Giproistemi," meaning "to set before, to put forward, to be set over, to be the chief, to be put in front as protector." Thus, we learn what a solemn and responsible place a God-sent preacher occupies. The same word is rendered "ruleth, rule, ruling," in I Timothy 3:4, 5, 12 where it is applied to a bishop or overseer. In Romans 16:2 it is translated "succorer," in reference to Phoebe's important and useful public ministry. It seems that the translators were prejudiced against women having any official place, for the word "succorer" hides the real meaning of the word. It means more than simply an aid, a helper, a reliever from distress. She was chief in her sphere as "a servant (deacon) of the church." Some saints do not want their shepherds to oversee them in any sense. Nevertheless, Paul said, "Remember them which have the rule over you ... obey them ... salute all them" - Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24. Of course, the office of a true shepherd is in love and with tenderness though with firmness, because it is "in the Lord." They "admonish" their assemblies. That is, they bring truth to their minds, warn them, advise them, and chastise them with the Word.

The apostle exhorts "to know them," for they bear acquaintance. Try them out by accepting their doctrine. You will find that they live what they teach, because they live by what they teach. They eat their own messages. Thus, by eating at their spiritual table, you have fellowship with them in divine things; for really to know one, is to have fellowship with him.

"And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." This is a very full and comprehensive

statement in the original. It means that the work and toil of faithful ministers, such as Paul and his associates, is of so high a grade, so rare, that they deserve to be held in exceedingly high regard. The esteem due them cannot be overdone. The Greek for "esteem" signifies "to lead out, to believe, to regard." It is as though Paul were saying, "You Thessalonians are qualifying for Jesus' coming. Then you should lead out in giving your bishops the highest and warmest place in your hearts; for you know that they bring to you "the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ". None can compare with them. To follow their teaching and example is the basic item of preparedness for the first-rank trip to glory." Oh, fellow ministers, what the Great Shepherd expects of us, and what an honored place have we! And, dear sheep, how your faith in us in the love of the Lord, strengthens, encourages, and sustains us in our responsible place. **ATTITUDE TO OTHERS.** "And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" - 5:19-15. Seven items are named in this group:

*First.* "Be at peace among yourselves." Colossians 3:15-17 shows us how to do this. "And let the peace of God rule (arbitrate) in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." This is no unimportant exhortation. There is great need of heeding it. The turmoil and divisions among God's people today are sad indeed. Evidently the Word of God is not permitted to dwell within from every viewpoint. Folk want their own way.

Peace can be had and maintained only by bearing and forbearing. If we want people to put up with us, we must be willing to put up with them also. This does not mean that we must compromise the Truth; but we must yield our own preferences and tastes. Christian workers should set the example before the assemblies in this respect.

*Second.* "Warn them that are unruly." Some are too free to do this in a harsh spirit, which makes matters worse. Warning and reproof should always be with tenderness and pity, though with earnestness and firmness. The same word, here translated "unruly," is translated "disorderly" in II Thessalonians 3:6, 11. It also means that those who refuse to work are "busy-bodies" in other men's matters. Such are to be warned of the present demoralizing results of their conduct, and that they will receive no reward but shame for their evil works.

*Third.* "Comfort the feebleminded," or rather the "faint-hearted." Some saints have little faith. Either they are young in experience, or have not taken in the Word which alone begets faith.

Hence, they fail quickly in a battle, yield to temptation easily, and faint by the way. We who have learned to be comforted by the Lord should console such, lest they fall and be overthrown by the foe.

*Fourth.* "Support the weak." This is akin to the preceding. Lack of a heart-knowledge of the Truth results in weakness. In every meeting, there are some of this sort. They never seem to take in the Word, though they hear it over and over. Can they not grasp it? Or, are they lazy in their minds? At any rate, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" - Rom. 15:1. In Romans fourteen, the "weak" are explained to be such as observe days, months, and seasons; or, who are unduly occupied with eating and drinking. See also Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16-23.

*Fifth.* "Be patient toward all men." If we would be overcomers, we find abundant opportunity to exercise every member of our spiritual man. We need not pray for patience, nor for the providences that call forth its exercise. If we take Christ to live in us, that very Christ-life will be tested to the uttermost. We will have plenty of occasion to prove our possessions. Patience is not an act, but an attitude - "BE patient." It is a "be" without a stinger. We cannot convert the world, the moment we get filled with the Spirit. Our first and second testimony may not impress an auditor. Speak again, and let God have time to work, and give your friend time to think, ponder, read, and decide. Patience is God-like. God bore with Israel for hundreds of years. How long has He borne with us, who are now running in the race?

*Sixth.* "See that none render evil for evil unto any man." Here is mutual protection. Each brother looks out for all his brethren. If one is evil spoken of, he defends him, instead of agreeing with the critic. He takes the part of a "big brother," who always watches over the weaker and younger children. In a typical family, squabbles may arise now and then; but no outsider dare raise his voice against any of its members. He will be told where to get off. So it is in a well-ordered spiritual family, or an assembly of Christ. Its members stand together, maintaining unselfish interest in one another, though others may call them clannish.

*Seventh.* "But ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." This is the last of the interesting group of attitudes to others, which began with mutual peace and ends with universal pursuit of

good to all. This will keep us out of mischief and from being busybodies.

Laziness will have no quarter among us. Selfishness will be a stranger. No one can say, "I have nothing to do," or "I have no gift." If folk are idle, it is generally because they are unwilling to do the little perhaps menial thing which stands up before them. Maybe it is something the doing of which is not noticed by others. The seven-year itch is always stalking around. People want to be in the limelight. They itch to be public performers. Well, be it remembered, that only good private hidden performers ever become adepts in public. If we saints desire to be partakers with Christ in His heavenly revelation and glory, we must be partakers of the little practical everyday exercises outlined in these verses. Indeed, they prepare for the next group of four entreaties.

*ATTITUDE TO GOD.* "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit" - 5:16-19. This is fourfold:

*First.* "Rejoice evermore." Of course, we are to rejoice in the Lord. In these closing days, men are rejoicing in their discoveries and carnal attainments and achievements. Glory be to man, glory be to me, spells the spirit of the age. Folks are so occupied with what men are doing, that they cannot see God's wonderful works and ways nor hear His sweet Voice. But believers are to give all the glory to Jehovah. Especially, do Thessalonian saints glory in Christ Jesus who died for our sins, arose for our justification, ascended for our sanctification ("ever liveth to make intercession" for us), and is coming again for our glorification. We "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," which is the climax of our rejoicing.

*Second.* "Pray without ceasing." This does not mean that we must be on our knees continually.

Some folk speak of their being called to a life of prayer, and they seclude themselves from others like the hermits of centuries ago. If God thus calls them, they will not boast of it; neither will they neglect to assemble themselves together as the manner of some is but exhort one another, and so much the more as they see the day approaching - Hebrews 10:25. Such people, always end up in a holier-than-thou spirit, who judge everybody but themselves. They become self-centered and self-righteous, and make themselves obnoxious to others and useless to God. All of us are called to pray. It is the privilege and duty of all. The disciples, who marveled at their Lord's prayer life, said, "Lord, teach us to pray." He did; for after Pentecost they said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" - Acts 6:4. That is the way to become prayer warriors - give ourselves to prayer. Thus is cultivated an attitude of communion with the Lord, and we are never out of His Presence. That, also, is the way of preparation for ministering the Word. Observe that the apostles put prayer first. Some saints' testimonies and some ministers' sermons, are insipid and powerless because they do not pray. They read and think much, but fail to commune with and worship God. Doubtless, more believers would become public speakers, if they gave themselves continually to prayer. Let us read papers and books less, and the Bible more which inspires prayer.

*Third.* "In everything give thanks." What is the difference between rejoicing and giving thanks?

Well, the former is general and universal; the latter is specific and particular. Rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks are a beautiful triad corresponding to the Trinity. We "rejoice in Christ Jesus" - Philippians 3:1 & 3. We pray to the Father - "Our Father which art in Heaven." We give thanks through the Spirit. Paul said, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all" - I Corinthians 14:18.

Hence, giving thanks seems to refer especially to exultant praise in another tongue. The Greek word "eucharisteite," translated "give thanks," has for its root "charis," which means "grace, favor, good will, gratitude, thankfulness." It is strengthened by the prefix "eu," which means "well, good." Our English word "Eucharist" - the Lord's Supper - comes from this word, because God's grace gave birth to Christ's atoning death for us. Therefore, in everything, in every circumstance - in pain or pleasure - we should express our hearty gratitude to God for redemption and salvation; and edify ourselves in another tongue as the Spirit gives us utterance. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift" (II Corinthians 9:15), which cannot be told nor reckoned in full. "For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." And do we not wish to perform His perfect will?

*Fourth.* "Quench not the Spirit." Here the Holy Spirit is referred to as a flame. It is interesting to note that this exhortation comes immediately after giving thanks, as if there was a tendency not to give God the thanks due to His Name. If the Spirit is allowed His full liberty in us and in our midst, doubtless, Jehovah will receive much more exultant hilarious praise and expressions of deep gratitude than we render to Him. An indescribable sublimity and glory pervades an audience when the Holy Spirit as a bright blazing flame bursts forth in adoration to God, especially when the saints speak and sing in other tongues. The fourteenth chapter of I Corinthians speaks freely of praying and singing unto the Lord and of praising Him. Most Christian people are afraid of fanaticism; therefore, the tendency is to refrain from yielding to the Holy Spirit. Of course, formalism which folks generally do not fear is sure to set in. It is a greater foe than fanaticism. This grieves the Spirit. Let us yield and abandon ourselves to the power and promptings of the Holy Spirit,

trusting Him to shield us from going too far. Where the Word of God is learned and emphasized, there is little danger of fanaticism and there need be no formalism.

*ATTITUDE OF OPERATIONS.* "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" - 5:20-22. Four are here named:

*First.* "Despise not prophesyings," or prophecies. By a careful study of I Corinthians fourteen, we learn what is meant by prophecies. Some people imagine that they mean messages in other tongues, as if God were speaking infallibly through an individual. Such messages are considered more sacred than the written Word of God and as supplementary thereto. The interpretation is always in the first person, as if they were actually the Voice of the Lord. Hundreds of typewritten pages of such supposed messages from God have been sent to us for distribution. We cannot receive them. In fact, having read several copies, we refuse to waste time reading any others.

There is no warrant in the New Testament for such addresses. There is no need for a "prophetic word," as a supplement to the Scriptures. Generally, such messages put forth unscriptural statements, which proves that they are simply men's thoughts and not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the language of such supposed heavenly messages is not at all akin to the Word of God. They lack depth and sublimity. They are dry and lifeless. They abound with vain repetitions.

They are usually a burlesque on the Voice of God. In a number of places, much harm has been wrought, because the saints accepted what they were told was the Word and Voice of the Lord. Of course, confusion soon reigned.

The prophecies, that Paul exhorts us not to despise or set at naught, are the expositions of God's written Word. "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" - I Corinthians 14:3. If he speaks in a tongue and interprets it, or another gives the correct interpretation, he is a true Scriptural prophet of God. His address builds up, exhorts, and comforts the hearers. If it does not, his message is spurious and he is not God's mouthpiece. In I Corinthians fourteen, the apostle emphasizes prophesying - not simply as telling future events, but as teaching doctrine also. Eight times in that chapter, he speaks of edifying or building up the saints. I am prophesying now through the printed page, because I am writing in harmony with the Word and explaining it. But the clear full preaching and teaching of the entire Scriptures is exactly what people are despising today. They who speak in tongues, giving forth what they term "the prophetic word," also despise real Scriptural prophecy; but, instead, flaunt upon the public the cogitations of their own minds. What will the harvest be? A great heap of ashes; for the work of those who build wood and hay and stubble shall be burned. Oh, beloved reader, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" - Galatians 6:7.

*Second.* "Prove all things." Beyond a doubt, this refers to the preaching. We must weigh what we hear and read, in the scales of divine Truth. Is it Scripture, or at least Scriptural language? If it is according to the Word of God, it will also be practical, especially if the prophesying is concerning doctrine and experience. Does the message edify and comfort? Does it enable the saints to grow in grace, and get victories over the flesh and the devil? Are the saints fed, as with the finest of the wheat? Or are the people simply entertained, or detained? Is there nothing more than a lively time, or a solemn weeping time produced? Are the self-righteous or those strong in themselves only strengthened, and the weak made to feel sad? Are the pious (?) fortified in their make-believe piety? My friend, have you noticed that often a message may have some truth in it, but it produces no conviction? Most folk are afraid of conviction. They are content with what they see and know and possess. A true divinely commissioned prophet brings a message that convicts his audience, in view of leading them on further in God. The next exhortation follows naturally.

*Third.* "Hold fast that which is good." This plainly implies that we reject all that is spurious and unscriptural. Because men claim to be sent from God, many timid saints imagine that they must accept all that they teach and endorse and support them, whether they speak scripturally or not. Oh, no! We should be as bold in rejecting false teaching and refusing to support such teachers, as they are bold to push their wares on us. Truth honors God, and makes men free from sin and the world. We cannot afford to hold to anything except the Truth. Ninety percent of what is spoken and written today is spurious and injurious. We are compelled to weigh by the Scriptures, all that we hear and read.

*Fourth.* "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Evil will appear on the scene as long as the evil one is still "the prince of the power of the air" and of this world. Evil appears in religious guise and in Spirit-filled meetings. It appears in godly homes, but we are admonished not to yield to it. Turn away from it, spurn it, denounce it - whether it be evil doctrine or conduct.

#### **AN OASIS IN THE DESERT**

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will

do it" - 5:23, 24.

There are three stages of "peace": "Peace with God," "the peace of God," and "the God of peace."

The sinner obtains "PEACE WITH GOD" when he is justified - Romans 5:1. This is the first wonderful change which comes into a person's life. It is no small item to be at peace with the Judge of all men. In GOD, which passeth all understanding, shall keep (guard or garrison) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Satan tries to trouble our hearts and confuse our minds, but God's peace stands guard around about them.

We have the climax - "THE VERY GOD OF PEACE." How greatly we need Him in this time of "rumors of wars," and while social unrest reigns everywhere. He shall sanctify us wholly. All the warring of our own flesh and fleshly mind ceases, when we are thus sanctified. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." So said Isaiah to God in prayer. Then he exhorted the people, saying, "Trust ye in Jehovah for ever; for in Jehovah, even JEHOVAH, is an everlasting Rock (a Rock of ages)" - Isaiah 26:3, 4 Revised Version.

Our spirit, soul, and body are embraced in this entire sanctification. When did we need it more than now? The Holy Spirit works in us to choose complete separation from this present evil age.

An inward deliverance from its fashions, customs, religiousness, and glitter is wrought by the Spirit's power. Then God Himself sets His garrison of peace all around us, and makes a great separation between us and the world. We are on translation's side of every condition.

However, Jehovah does not separate us, and then go off and leave us to our own wisdom and strength; but He preserves us. This is indeed a timely word - "preserved blameless." Our SPIRITS may be preserved from religious defilement which abounds on every hand, for this is a religious age. Our SOULS may be preserved from carnality, and our BODIES from the reign of death through disease. Abundance of grace deigns to reign in us, in view of the eternal reign with Christ in the ages to come. We bring to Christ the highest glory, by believing for preparedness for translation and by trusting the Lord for health and vigor in our bodies till the trumpet blows. Even though age may be stealing over us, He can preserve us unto that glorious day. Note the exact language - "preserved blameless unto the coming (the parousia, Presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Christ in you, the hope of glory," by the power and faith of the Spirit, is our slogan. The death of a saint now seems like defeat, seeing that the end is so very near.

Finally, this powerful promise - "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." What greater encouragement, what sweeter inspiration, could be given? He is pledged to set us apart completely and preserve us entire, until the upward summons. If we are having a trial in the body, it is no proof of unreadiness. Rather, it is an evidence that Satan has laid siege against us, to hinder us from making the last lap of the race and prevent us from translation. Elijah was sorely tempted in his spirit. The devil aimed to hinder him from translation; hence, he prayed the Lord to let him die. But, he found that it was not so easy to die, while filled with so great an earnest of the life of glory. Ten years later, the chariot of fire swooped down, opened its door, and took him in and up to be forever with the Lord. Just so it will be with us. Our Heavenly Bridegroom will not let us fail - neither in spirit, nor soul, nor body.

### **PAUL'S LAST CHARGE**

"Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren" - 5:25-27.

*First.* "Brethren, pray for us." Verse seventeen exhorted to unceasing prayer; but this one is in behalf of a specific object, even the writer of this epistle. Jesus Christ was the only Man who did not need the prayers of others. He was able to answer the petitions of other men, and all petitions to the Father had to be offered in His Name. Jesus Christ is the ever available channel of blessings from God to humanity. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me," He said. But the apostle, though filled with the Spirit of wisdom and power from God and though entrusted with the mysteries of the new creation, yet coveted earnestly the prayers of God's people. No saint, while in a body of humiliation here below, gets beyond the need of the believing prayers of others.

Jesus intercedes for us in Heaven, and the Holy Spirit repeats those intercessions through His people on earth. "Helping together by prayer," was a principle of Paul's - II Corinthians 1:11. He did not request prayer that he might hold out faithful, or go on with the Lord; but that the Word might be effectual in those who hear it - I Thessalonians 2:13.

*Second.* "Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss." A kiss is an expression of affection. In the spiritual, it expresses mutual love in Christ. Observe how the wording of the exhortation guards from loose, shallow, carnal kissing, which genders trouble. "A holy kiss" only is granted.

*Third.* "I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." If any were absent from the meeting, it should be read again, or read in their homes, or elsewhere. All should hear it. The

importance of this letter cannot easily be exaggerated. It contains so much truth, especially pertaining to the last days. Let us see to it also that, as far as possible, other saints may hear it and learn its rich lessons. Finally, it closes with the usual benediction from Paul - "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

### **DYING AND BEHOLD WE LIVE!**

Giving as the morning that flows out of Heaven;  
Giving as the waves when their channel is riven;  
Giving as the air and the sunshine are given –  
Lavishly, joyfully, utterly with glee.  
Not the waste drops from thy cup overflowing;  
Not the faint spark from thy hearth ever glowing;  
Not a pale bud from thy June roses blowing –  
Give as God gave you, abundantly, free.  
Pouring out thy love like the rush of the river,  
Wasting its waters forever and ever  
O'er the burnt sands that reward not the Giver,  
As silent or songful it nears the great sea.  
Pouring out thy life as the summer rain pouring.  
What if no bird thru heavy shower is soaring?  
What if no flower looks upward adoring?  
Pour out as God poured His great love upon thee.  
What if the hard heart gives thorns for thy roses?  
What if on stony ground thy body reposes?  
Sweetest the music with minor key closes,  
Fairest the vines on ruins where they be.  
Thus the wild wind strews its perfumed caresses,  
Tho' evil and thankless the desert it blesses;  
While rough are the trees its soft breezes presses,  
They bring good in disguise to you and to me.  
Soon will the days of our giving be over.  
As from the grass, dies the bees from the clover,  
Thou wilt have vanished from friends and thy lover.  
What will thy longing avail in the grave?  
Give as the heart gives whose fetters are breaking,  
All thy life, love, and hope, dreams, and waking.  
Soon as life's river all thy soul-fever slaking,  
Thou shalt meet God and the gifts that thou gave.

### **THE SECOND EPISTLE OF THESSALONIANS - II THESSALONIANS ONE**

"We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth" - 1:3 Revised Version.

The salutation, the first two verses, is verbatim the same as in the first epistle. It is Paul's usual pronouncement of grace and peace upon the assembly. The eulogy is slightly different from that in the other epistle. He commends their faith, love, and patience; but the "patience of hope," a vital item in full overcomers, is omitted. They, who are steadfastly qualifying for the out-translation, hope with triumphant patience for Christ's soon coming. They admit of no compromise. With them, no interest or event is paramount to Jesus' advent.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels" - 1:7.

Observe that the first epistle speaks of Jesus' coming in the air, and of our being caught up to be with Him; while the second epistle speaks of the revelation of the "man of sin," and of Jesus Christ the Anointed of God. Both of these epistles set forth special facts in relation to each of these. We saw in our former study, that the first epistle announces the preparation and the rapture of the full overcomers. Now, in this lesson, we shall see that the second epistle is addressed particularly to saints who are here after the Bride has been caught away to meet the Lord. The evidences of this interpretation are plain in this epistle itself, as compared with the first epistle.

1. What is the meaning of "your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure," coupled with "the righteous judgment of God"? What is the meaning of the "trouble" mentioned repeatedly, for which God will "recompense tribulation" to the troublers, if this language does not point to the troublous times which shall come on the world after the Bride company is gone? Surely, the saints who do not ascend with the first cohort will need great comfort till they do ascend. Our introductory verse conveys the same thought. It sounds like Paul was writing from a place of rest; and as if he and those with him were a different company from those addressed in this letter. Indeed, he was already enjoying the glorious rest by faith. "His mighty angels" are none other than the unflinching Gospel messengers who declare the whole counsel of God now, and who shall have such a prominent part in judging the world. They are "the seven angels" of Revelation 8:2 who are simply redeemed and saved human beings who have reached the highest order.

2. In 1:10, two classes are mentioned - "His saints" and "all them that believe." II Corinthians 7:1 calls for a full cleansing, and "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." All who believe have a holy standing in Christ; but all do not bring their state up to their standing by heeding II Corinthians 7:1. They who "continue in the faith grounded and settled" will be presented "holy and unblamable" in God's sight - Col. 1:22, 23. In a very special sense, Jesus will be "glorified" in such believers as are here termed "saints" or holy ones; but He will be "admired," or wondered at, "in all them that believe."

3. Paul's leverage for writing - "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him" - 2:1. These two facts are expressed and amplified in chapter four of I Thessalonians. Here again, the apostle writes to one company as if they were different from the company of which he is a part. "Our gathering together" does not include those to whom he now writes. If it did, he should have said, "Your gathering with us."

4. The most powerful proof - "Be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" - 2:2. Paul taught as did John (Rev. 3:10) that the Church need not go through the tribulation. But it seems that some false teachers troubled that assembly by asserting that Jesus had come and had taken away the ready ones, and that they would never be caught up. Paul here assures them that he never said or wrote such a thing; and then proceeds to repeat in writing that what he had taught by word of mouth must come to pass before the Lord can be revealed. However, here is proof positive that those "shaken in mind" and "troubled" are not full overcomers. They who look for and qualify for the out-translation cannot be "troubled" or "shaken in mind" about it. They have a view so clear, and a conviction so deep, and a hope so bright, that no spirit though it seem angelic, no word or letter though they seem Pauline, can disturb their equilibrium. God has spoken; they have heard His Voice; they understand His program; they are, calmly waiting for the Director to call the names of the performers in their respective orders. Therefore, we find no such words of comfort in the first epistle; for there they were not needed. What follows in explanation of the events to take place after the Bride company has gone was not necessary in the former letter, because the full overcomers fully understand these matters. God be praised! Paul had taught them plainly, and they received them heartily.

5. "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" - 3:11-15.

Such language is not found in the first epistle. The eulogies pronounced in favor of the Thessalonian saints there are so many and so powerful, that the casual reader would not see any fault in them. It is addressed especially to the Smyrna and Philadelphia company of believers. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" - Matthew 19:12. It is a very solemn fact that God speaks all His Word to all men; but only some receive it. Fowls snatch away the seed from wayside hearers; persecution withers the growth of the seed which falls on stony-ground hearers; money, pleasures, and cares choke the growth of the seed sown in thorny ground, and render it unfruitful. Then, among the fruitful ones, there are three degrees of fruitfulness - thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. I declare that these are stubborn facts which cannot be contradicted. - "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" - Revelation 2:7.

6. What about the commendatory words in this second epistle? They simply teach that as Pergamos missed the best - the highest Ephesian reward - and yet gained a better place and reward than Thyatira (Rev. 2), so also these have the hope of a better translation than some of their number though they miss the best. They failed to take their place with the "sons of the day" (I Thessalonians 5:5 R.V.), so as to wholly escape the night and darkness; hence, they are passing into the period of tribulation, trouble, darkness, and judgment, when it seems as if the Lord had been revealed and they had missed it all. Therefore, these words of hope will be a special comfort to the great bulk of believers after the first trumpet sounds.

7. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" 2:13, 14.

Should we be astonished that the definite article in the Greek is omitted before the word "glory"? No, for this second epistle is addressed to believers who shall share in some measure of Christ's glory, but not in the fullest measure. The Greek reads "a glory," not "the glory." This agrees with Hebrews 3:1 R.V. - "a heavenly calling," not "the heavenly calling" as in the Authorized Version.

Also, Hebrews 9:1-5 points out that "the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat of which we cannot now speak particularly" will constitute the company who entertain the highest hope - even "the hope of THE glory" - Colossians 1:27 Wuest.

"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power" - 1:11. The apostle and his associates never failed to intercede in behalf of the saints, that they might enjoy God's very best. This is the spirit of every true Gospel minister today, that he "may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" - Col. 1:28. If the people do not heed his warnings and yield to his wooing, his conscience is clear. He does his part. He will not be blamed if any miss the best.

"That the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" - 1:12. This was the controlling motive of the prayers and preaching of the apostles - that the Name of the Lord be glorified. Let us, who minister today, imitate them. Such a lofty motive will keep our service of God among the people, pure, noble, and spiritual. A soulish service will have no place. Simple, sublime, and heavenly will be every meeting. Nor is this condition difficult to bring about, for abundant grace will be present always. "The God of all grace" reveals Himself gloriously where His Son's Name is honored.

### **THREE PERSONS REVEALED - II THESSALONIANS TWO**

"And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire" - 1:7 Revised Version.

This is the great climactic event for which the groaning earth waits. Problems which men are attempting to solve by their puny reasoning's will then all be solved to the astonishment of angels and men. But, before that day can come, all other claimants to honor and power and rulership must be proven false. Hence, God allows Satan and his abettors to reach the utmost limit of their endeavors and achievements. The national world in a huge international union, led by "that man of sin" and the apostatized religious world in a like gigantic interchurch union led by the lawless one or false prophet, will together ascend the highest pinnacle of wealth, power, fame, prosperity, peace, and splendor. For a brief moment, everything will appear so faultlessly perfect, peaceful, and wonderful, that an official edict will be proclaimed worldwide - "Peace and safety"; that is, national peace and religious safety. It will seem like the Millennium has come.

Revelation thirteen compares splendidly with this second chapter of II Thessalonians. Study the two together. The first beast, or anti-king, corresponds with the "man of sin," As the son of perdition," mentioned here. This is he whom Jesus said would "come in his own name" - John 5:43. He is "the thief" who "cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" - John 10:10. He is the "little horn" of Daniel seven.

Our blessed Lord Jesus will rightly be worshiped during the Millennium as "The mighty God, The everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6; Rev. 19:6, 13, 15, 16); so the "man of Sin" will set himself up and show himself off as God. The world will wonder after him and worship him as God. Hence, he is called "the anti-Christ."

The second beast of Revelation thirteen, the false prophet, corresponds with "the wicked one" mentioned here (2:8) and with the hireling shepherd of John ten. This is the "little horn" of Daniel eight. Note how his operations agree with Revelation thirteen - "With all power and signs and lying wonders (of falsehood), and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish" - 2:9, 10 R.V. By his great miracles, he will cause all the earth to run after and worship the first beast, the man of sin; that is, all "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" - Revelation 13:8.

"And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time" - 2:6. There is "a time to every purpose under the Heaven" - Eccl. 3:1. Hence, there is a time for the "man of sin" to be revealed. What is it that "withholdeth," or "restraineth"? It is not the Holy Spirit, for He will not be taken out of the way. He must remain to deal with the Jews, and come as "the latter rain" upon all Israel. The hinderer is "the mystery of godliness," which is the opposite to "the mystery of iniquity." Paul here writes that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." Dispensationally, it began to work then. In Matthew 13:24-30, we read of "wheat" and "tares." The former are the children of God's Kingdom. The latter are the children of the wicked one. Both are religious. The wheat constitutes "the mystery of godliness," the tares "the mystery of iniquity." The

harvest of both is near at hand. The lawless one must be revealed in his time. Finally, there is a special meaning to these words. "Doth already work," refers to the time of the end, even before the full overcomers are taken away. The spirit of anti-Christ is crowding matters and pushing to the front. Hence, after the Bride is gone to glory, "the mystery of godliness" will be much weakened; and, of course, "the mystery of iniquity" will mightily work. However, the false claimant to the throne cannot be revealed until all of the Church who are destined for glory have been taken away. This very company, to whom II Thessalonians is addressed, plays an important part in restraining the "man of sin." The 144,000 of Revelation seven and fourteen the powerful link between the Church and the Kingdom people or the heaven-dwelling and earth-dwelling saints, will be the last restraining force. After they ascend, which will be the birth of the "man child," Satan will be cast down; and, eight months later, the false ruler will show himself off as God.

Study 2:11, 12. The lie is set over against "The Truth." We know full well that Jesus announced Himself to be "The Truth" in John 14:6. Men have always "changed the Truth of God into a lie" (Romans 1:25), worshiping the creature instead of God. Satan sought to induce Jesus to do this very thing, in trying to tempt Him to "fall down and worship" him - Matt. 4:9. Hence, men are rapidly renouncing the Truth today, rejecting the only Saviour and rightful King, not receiving "the love of the Truth, that they might be saved" - 2:10. The devil's revival will climax in all the earth wondering after the beast.

Thank God! Our Christ shall prevail. The Lord shall consume both the false king and the false prophet by "the Spirit of His mouth" and by "the brightness of His coming" - 2:8. Both will be cast into the lake of fire - Revelation 19:20.

### **SAFETY THROUGH CHRIST**

Mary M. Bodie

Be of good cheer, thou steadfast soul,  
The Christ has conquered all.  
On Him, thy grief and sorrow roll.  
No winds may harm, nor squall  
Upset thy barque. He will control,  
In briny deep, or shallow shoal.  
Be of good cheer, brave spirit; thou  
Shalt reach the goal. Press on.  
Win in the race. Christ will endow  
With strength till night is gone.  
He'll take thee o'er the sullen brow  
Of ev'ry hill. He takes thee now.

### **CONCLUDING COUNSEL - II THESSALONIANS THREE**

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also it is with you" - 3:1 R.V.

Paul, as well as other saints, needed the cooperation of the prayers of God's people. Jesus was the only Man who did not need the petitions of others. Instead, we all need His intercessions. The apostle instructs each rank of believers to pray that the word of grace be effectual with others, even as it is with those who have received the Truth of that rank. He wished also to "be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." Some believers are unreasonable, in that they refuse God's reasonable offers of grace by accepting which they would obtain a higher place as truly as He pardons the sinner who accepts His saving grace. Compare Isaiah 1:18-20.

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" - 3:5.

The half dozen final exhortations that follow are all in view of the coming of Christ. The first epistle ended with varied and specific instructions, which prepare its readers to be full overcomers and ready for the first trumpet blast. How differently this one ends. This should speak to our hearts. Out of eighteen verses, ten are stern directions concerning lazy believers. Note especially verse six: "Now we command you, brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" - 3:6. II Thessalonians 2:15 also refers to "the traditions." The Greek word "paradoseis," here translated "traditions," means "instructions handed down." They must not be confounded with "tradition of the elders" - Matthew 15:2.

We have two Church ordinances handed down by Paul. They are: The Lord's supper (I Corinthians 11) and water baptism (Romans 6). These were not nailed to the Cross with the Old Testament ordinances, as some imagine - Ephesians 2:14, 15; Colossians 2:14. These ordinances were introduced by the Apostle

Paul after the crucifixion of Christ, and refer only to the new creation in Christ. They are freighted with deep spiritual significance. Hence, to neglect them is to walk disorderly. The first reminds us of Jesus' death in our behalf, and should be observed at stated times. The second figures our death, burial, and resurrection with Him, and should be observed once by each individual. Wholehearted saints gladly do so, and reap the gracious benefits of willing obedience to God.

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" - 3:14, 15. Paul's word is God's Word. It carries divine authority. They, who believe and heed it, receive divine blessing now and through all eternity.

Dear Reader, study these two epistles side by side in entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit to guide you into all Truth, longing to know and enjoy God's very best. Do not arrive hastily at a conclusion. Let not former views bias you. Seek to know the capstone of divine Truth. You will find unspeakable riches herein, and become overwhelmed with an entrancing hope - even the blessed hope of the excellent glory - which purposes to place us who dare to believe it, with the living creatures "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne" - Revelation 4:6.

The End