

**CONCISE BIBLE NOTES ON
PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS**



1 Thessalonians 4:16
“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven...”

DR. STANFORD E. MURRELL

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Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians

Human Author: Paul

Divine Author: God the Holy Spirit

Written c. AD 51

Key Thought: Christ is coming the second time

“For they themselves shew 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; 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 Thessalonians 1:9-10

Introduction

The letters written to the believers at Thessalonica are among the earliest of Paul's writings. They were written from the city of Corinth where Paul fled after persecution broke out in Berea. At his request Silas and Timothy had remained behind before going on to Thessalonica. Finding Paul at Corinth Timothy and Titus gave a report on the condition of the young church. According to Luke's history in the book of Acts, Paul had preached the gospel on three successive Sabbath days in the Jewish synagogue with much spiritual success.

- *Acts 17:1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.*

While some of those converted were Jews many were Gentiles who turned from their idolatry to the living God as revealed in His Son. Though this decision would cost much it was worth it all.

“It will be worth it all
when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small
when we see Christ;

One glimpse of His dear face
all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race
till we see Christ.”

Esther Kerr Rusthoi

Because he had a pastor's heart Paul was deeply concerned about these young converts. They were like sheep without a shepherd. While the apostle waited for the report from Timothy and Silas he was afraid that Satan might take advantage of their youth. However, the report was good and so Paul was led to write this first epistle as his thoughts turned to the second coming of Christ which is referred to in some way in every chapter. Though the converts in Thessalonica were young in the faith the importance of the doctrine of the second coming was essential to their Christian walk.

This particular point is important to understand for eschatology is not a peripheral issue. Carelessness in this area can easily translate into careless living as Jesus told in one of His parables.

- *Luke 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. 41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? 42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. 45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; 46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

Summary of Chapter One

The first chapter reveals how the gospel was well received in the city of Thessalonica. It closes with the image of a local church filled with happy believers earnestly serving the Lord while waiting with hopeful and expecting hearts for the return of Jesus Christ.

“Jesus is coming to earth again;
what if it were today?
Coming in power and love to reign;
what if it were today?

Coming to claim His chosen Bride,
all the redeemed and purified,
Over this whole earth scattered wide;
what if it were today?

Glory, glory!
Joy to my heart 'twill bring.
Glory, glory!
When we shall crown Him King.
Glory, glory!

Haste to prepare the way;
Glory, glory!
Jesus will come some day.”

Leila N. Morris

1 THESSALONIANS 1

1 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. Silas and Timothy are graciously united with Paul in the work of the ministry. It has been said that a person can get much accomplished in life – if attention is not paid to who gets credit for the work. Christians are to co-operate with one another instead of being in competition. One of the curses of modern Christendom with its corporation mentality is that so many people are given titles instead of towels. Men once called to be servants of the Savior and His people now desire to rule and more often than not do so without spiritual sensitivity or *Scripture*.

- 1:1. the church. The church was and is the main part of the plan of God. The key to understanding redemptive history is not bound up in a biological race or an earthly nation, especially one that crucified the Son of God and is under judgment until the second coming of Christ. The church is not a parenthetical part of the plan of God but the culmination of His life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, session and soon second coming. The value Christ has for the church is reflected in these words of Ephesians 5:25-27. *“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

Any system of theology that relegates the church to a secondary or parenthetical place, any teaching that advocated the church will become an apostate organization doomed for failure should be immediately and consistently challenged with the promise of Jesus. *Matthew 16:18* *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* The church is and remains the most glorious institution on planet earth.

1:1. grace be unto you and peace. As the believer receives saving grace in order to believe the gospel and be converted (Ephesians 2: 8-9) so the believer receives sustaining grace in order to live the Christian life. For those who are the objects of God’s love there is abundant grace and more to come. The story is told of a large sum of money being given to the evangelist Rowland Hill to dispense to a poor pastor. Thinking that the amount was too much to send all at once, Hill forwarded just a portion along with a note that said simply, *“More to follow.”* In a few days the man received another envelope containing the same amount and with the same message, *“More to follow.”* At regular intervals, there came a third, and a fourth. In fact, they continued, along with those cheering words, until the entire sum had been received. C. H. Spurgeon used this story to illustrate that the good things we receive from God always come with the same prospect of more to follow. He said: *“When God forgives our sins, there’s more forgiveness to follow. He justifies us in the righteousness of Christ, but there’s more to follow. He adopts us into His family, but there’s more to follow. He prepares us for heaven, but there’s more to follow. He gives us grace, but there’s more to follow. He helps us to old age, but there’s still more to follow.”* Spurgeon concluded, *“Even when we arrive in the world to come, there will still be more to follow.”*

Closely associated with grace is the peace of God. The question of having peace with God is settled at the moment of salvation. But the peace of God comes by being occupied with Him as a person, knowing Him and loving Him forever. Dark thoughts about God must never be entertained. The child's prayer that begins, "*God is good, God is great, let us thank Him*" says its all. It is enough.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

1:2 in our prayers. Though a man of great energy and passion Paul was a man of great prayer. He often told others he was praying for them and he did. "*Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing necessary to a minister. Pray, then, my dear brother; pray, pray, pray*" (E. M. Bounds).

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

1:3 faiths...love...patience. These are the Triple Crown jewels of the Christian life. Though they cannot be purchased with silver or gold they can be reproduced in the life by yielding to the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

1:3 work of faith. The Christian does not engage in good works in order to be saved but because salvation has come to the soul. James insists that faith without works is dead and so it is. Doing well to others reflects the heart of God. It is also contrary to the natural heart, which seeks to look out only for selfish interests.

1:3. labor of love. To be real, love must be sacrificial in nature. It is easy to talk about loving God, loving the church, loving the brethren and loving lost souls. Authentic love labors to do good for others in a sacrificial way.

1:3. patience of hope. Though the heart hopes for the soon coming of Christ there is to be much patience displayed. Jesus may not return in the lifetime or generation that desires Him.

Nevertheless, the confidence of His return never wavers nor does the labor to advance His cause and kingdom. Christ Himself is the Man of Patience as He waits for the moment when the Father will say, "*Go Son. Go and embrace your bride. Renovate the heavens and the earth. Judge the nations. Separate the righteous from the unrighteous. Let the great consummation of all things begin.*"

"I seem forsaken and alone,
I hear the lion roar;
And every door is shut but one,
And that is Mercy's door.

There, till the dear Deliverer come,
 I'll wait with humble prayer;
 And when He calls His exile home,
 The Lord shall find him there."

Olney Hymns, William Cowper,
 Cowper's Poems

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

1:4. Knowledge of one's election of God comes first by revelation of divine doctrinal truth communicated to the soul and secondly through an experiential outworking of the new life. The doctrine of election was never designed by God to be controversial but a source of comfort for those who are the heirs of salvation. Many people want to know their election before they look to Christ. But they cannot learn it thus; it is only to be discovered by *'looking unto Jesus.'* Look to Jesus, believe on Him, and you shall make proof of your election directly, for as surely as you believe, you are elect. If you will give yourself wholly up to Christ and trust Him, then you are one of God's chosen ones. Go to Jesus just as you are. Go straight to Christ, hide in His wounds, and you shall know your election. Christ was at the everlasting council. He can tell you whether you were chosen or not, but you cannot find out in any other way. Go and put your trust in Him. There will be no doubt about His having chosen you, when you have chosen Him (Charles Spurgeon). Evangelist D. L. Moody said somewhat wryly, *"The elect are the whosoever wills, the non-elect are the whosoever won'ts."*

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

1:5. the gospel came...in power. The gospel changed hearts and lives. The rhetoric of the profession of faith matched the reality of a different life. The fear of God and the love for Christ made individuals better than before.

1:4. the gospel came...in the Holy Ghost. Paul takes no glory for the success of the ministry. The Holy Spirit was pleased to move in a sovereign way to regenerate lives. How this secret work of the Spirit is accomplished is a great mystery. *John 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

1:5. the gospel came...in much assurance. *Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Salvation can be assured provided the gospel has come with power borne by the Holy Spirit. Careless professions of faith and a habitual life of sin brings no assurance and no comfort to the heart. Nevertheless, there are strong consolations that come from Christ's imputed righteousness as Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) pointed out in his writings.

“Ah sinners! The Lord is infinitely just as well as merciful. And if ever your sins be pardoned, it must be by a mixture of mercy and justice together. It was one of the great ends of the gospel dispensation that God might exalt His justice in the justification of a sinner: “To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be, just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

“Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds
our sin and our guilt!

Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured,
There where the blood of
the Lamb was spilled.

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss;
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide.
What can we do to wash it away?

Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,
Brighter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!

You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment
His grace receive?”

Julia H. Johnston

6 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. followers. The practical result of the gospel is that a person follows godly examples and follows Christ. *“Christian, where are you going?”* Answer, *“I am going to Calvary and beyond that I am going to share the gospel with others.”*

1:6. afflictions...joy. The Christian life is full of many paradoxes. The believer is strong though he is weak. He reaches the highest expression of the human heart when he goes low before the throne of grace. Though foolish in the sight of the world the Christian is wise before the Lord. He receives the word of the Lord in affliction, but in the joy of the Holy Spirit. The affliction of which Paul speaks may be referring to the contrition of the heart which the gospel brings.

To mourn over wasted years and acts of idolatry is proper. The affliction may have been physical. Often there is a high cost to pay for the Pearl is of great price. But the believers counted the cost and considered that Jesus Christ was better than the toys of time, worldly prosperity or security. And so there was joy in the Holy Spirit.

“He and I in that bright glory
One deep joy shall share:
Mine to be forever with Him,
His, that I am there.”

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

1:7. ye were ensamples.

“Lord, make me an instrument
of your peace.
Where this is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

St. Francis of Assisi

8 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. from you. While Paul was being modest in his person, and complimentary in his praise, he rejoiced how the word of the Lord was spreading not only in Macedonia and Achaia but where ever the lives of the saints were sent. What was the secret of this spiritual success? There is only one answer and that is a Spirit filled life. Ralph Emerson said of another, “*What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.*” Every Christian must strive for holiness of heart and life in order to be an effective instrument in the hand of God.

Dr. Harry Ironside said, *“Integrity of life, devotedness of heart, holiness of spirit should characterize the proclaimers of the gospel of grace.”*

9 For they themselves shew 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. to serve. When the Lord first revealed Himself to the disciples they were filled with visions of ruling over nations. Calvary changed their hearts and made them servants. On the other side of Calvary they remembered to be like the Master who came *“to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Matt 20:28). No disciple is above the Master. During the American Revolution a man in civilian clothes rode past a group of soldiers repairing a small defensive barrier. Their leader was shouting instructions, but making no attempt to help them. Asked why by the rider, he retorted with great dignity, *“Sir, I am a corporal!”* The stranger apologized, dismounted, and proceeded to help the exhausted soldiers. The job done, he turned to the corporal and said, *“Mr. Corporal, next time you have a job like this and not enough men to do it, go to your commander-in-chief, and I will come and help you again.”* It was none other than George Washington.

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

1:10. to wait. While the Christian serves, he waits in his heart for Jesus Christ to return from heaven the second time for all who believe.

- *Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

“There’s a man in yonder glory I have loved for many years,
He has cleared my guilty conscience and has banished all my fears.

He is coming in a moment in the twinkling of an eye,
And no time will be allotted for you to utter one good-bye.

No time to kiss the husband or embrace the loving wife,
If they are but united in the bonds of holy life.

Are you ready, Christian, ready, for shout and trump and voice?
Will His coming make you tremble or cause you to rejoice?

Are you walking, talking with Him daily, taking Him your care,
Do you live so close to heaven that a breath would waft you there?”

In this day and age it cannot be repeated often enough that Jesus Christ has promised to return. He did not say He would come in stages or phases separated by an interval of time characterized by cataclysmic events. When Jesus comes, time will cease and eternity will begin.

“When Jesus comes
the tempters power is broken,
When Jesus comes
all tears are wiped away.

He takes the gloom
and fills the life with gladness,
For all is changed
when Jesus comes to stay.”

“Even so come quickly, Lord Jesus”

1 THESSALONIANS 2

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

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

2:1-2. we had suffered. Paul begins a review of the ministry of himself along with Silas and Timothy in the city of Thessalonica. He remembers and so reminds the church how he had come to them from Philippi where he had been "shamefully entreated." The story is told in Acts 16. After being unjustly arrested Paul and Silas were severely beaten with thongs and cast into a dungeon. Insult was added to injury when their feet were put in the stocks. Despite this physical hardship the spirits of the men remained high. In the middle of the night they prayed and sang praises to God. Someone has said the gospel entered Europe in a sacred concert.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

2:3 Holiness of life should characterize the person who proclaims the message of God.

- not of deceit. The person who preaches the gospel should live the gospel. *Romans 2:21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*
- nor of uncleanness. There was no secret moral evil in Paul's life. There was nothing unclean in his life, nothing that grieved or quenched the Holy Spirit.
- nor in guile. Paul believed the message he proclaimed. He did not preach for money, power, position or prestige. He did not mishandle the Word of God.

Ministers of the gospel must heed the memorable words written by Robert Murray McCheyne to the Rev. Dan Edwards on 2 October 1840 after his ordination as a missionary to the Jews: *'I trust you will have a pleasant and profitable time in Germany. I know you will apply hard to German; but do not forget the culture of the inner man, —I mean of the heart. How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his saber clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God's sword, —His instrument, —I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God'.*

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

2:4. to be put in trust. Proclaiming the gospel is a sacred trust not to be violated or avoided. The sacred trust is violated when the rhetoric of the messenger does not match the reality of life. The sacred trust is avoided if the gospel is not faithfully proclaimed due to fear of men or in an effort to gain the favor of individuals for job security or personal advancement.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

2:5. flattering words. Like John the Baptist and the prophets of old, Paul did not preach to exalt people, but to humble them and call individuals to repentance. Insincere words of praise should never cross the lips of the believer especially when the gospel message is at stake. God himself does not appreciate or value the words of the false flatter. *Psalms 78:35 And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. 36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. 37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.*

2:5. A cloke of covetousness. Because God's people are often generous it is possible to use the ministry as a means of acquiring possessions coveted. *"When we see someone with more than we have, we must beware. The hunger to beg, borrow, or steal our way into what is theirs may poison us spiritually"* (Bob James). Though Paul once coveted what others had (Rom. 7:7) grace changed his heart and allowed him to release the hold the details of this world once held on him.

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

2:5. As Paul was not a flatterer nor covetous neither did he preach the gospel or minister to others in a pursuit for personal glory. The great New York Yankee baseball player Joe Di Maggio said, *"I'm just a ballplayer with one ambition, and that is to give all I've got to help my ball club win. I've never played any other way."* In like manner Paul had one ambition and that was to exalt Christ, not to call undue attention to himself.

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

2:7. Having described what he was not, Paul states what he was like among the believers at Thessalonica. Basically he was a gentle man, like a good nurse who watches over children entrusted to her care.

“The great mind knows the power
of gentleness.”

Robert Browning

~*~

“Nothing is so strong as gentleness,
and nothing is so gentle
as real strength.”

Ralph W. Sockman

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

2:8. So great was the love of Paul for the believers that he wanted to impart to them not only the gospel but also the essence of his own soul's love. William Gladstone, in announcing the death of Princess Alice to the House of Commons, told a touching story. The little daughter of the Princess was seriously ill with diphtheria. The doctors told the princess not to kiss her little daughter and endanger her life by breathing the child's breath. Once when the child was struggling to breathe, the mother, forgetting herself entirely, took the little one into her arms to keep her from choking to death. Rasping and struggling for her life, the child said, “*Momma, kiss me!*” Without thinking of herself the mother tenderly kissed her daughter. She got diphtheria and some days thereafter she went to be forever with the Lord. Real love forgets self. Real love knows no danger. Real love doesn't count the cost. The *Bible* says, “*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.*” Paul had such love for the church, just like Jesus.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

2:9. travail. The word travail refers to birth pangs. The earnest and intense passion in Paul's soul was to the point of agony. So greatly did the apostle long to see people saved and come to Christ he worked at the matter day and night. The Lord would have the church seek to bring precious souls to a saving knowledge. “*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest*” (*John 4:35*). Christian, pray for a soul winners heart.

“Rescue the perishing,
 care for the dying,
 Snatch them in pity
 from sin and the grave;

Weep o’er the erring one,
 lift up the fallen,
 Tell them of Jesus,
 the mighty to save.”

Fanny Crosby

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

2:10 Because of the way he conducted himself in the work of the ministry, Paul had no regrets. Beyond that, he had a moral basis to exhort the believers to good works and to holiness of life. It was the apostle’s appeal that he had proven himself holy, just and unblameable.

- holy. *“Ministry is a character profession. To put it bluntly, you can sleep around and still be a good brain surgeon. You can cheat on your mate and have little trouble continuing to practice law. Apparently, it is no problem to stay in politics and plagiarize. You can be a successful salesperson and cheat on your income tax. But you cannot do those things as a Christian or as a minister and continue enjoying the Lord’s blessing. You must do right in order to have true integrity. If you can’t come to terms with evil or break habits that continue to bring reproach to the name of Christ, please, do the Lord (and us in ministry) a favor and resign” (Chuck Swindoll, Rise and Shine, p. 198).*
- justly. In his relationships with people Paul did not show favoritism. He was gracious towards all.
- unblameably. By being unblameable, Paul simply meant he had lived in such a way that no one could take fault with his attitude or actions.

As a cadet at West Point Military Academy, Robert E. Lee was graduated in 1829 second in his class but without a single demerit against his name. He had lived in the military context without blame. So ministers must strive to live a life without a mark against it. To live without blame is to live without secret or open shame.

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

2:11. The role of the minister continues to be set forth by way of an example as Paul speaks of how he exhorted and comforted and charged the believers.

- **exhort.** To exhort means to encourage to a certain attitude and action. It is easy to become lazy in spiritual matters to the point of the ridiculous. The story is told of an old mountaineer and his wife who were sitting in front of the fireplace one evening just whiling away the time. After a long silence, the wife said: “*Jed, I think it’s raining. Get up and go outside and see.*” The old mountaineer continued to gaze into the fire for a second, sighed, then said, “*Aw, Ma, why don’t we just call in the dog and see if he’s wet.*” All Christians are to exhort one another to good works. “*But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*” (Heb. 3:13).
- **comforted.** By being personally present and speaking words of hope and encouragement the apostle was able to comfort the church. The apostle laughed with those who laughed and wept with those who were hurting. A little girl came home from a neighbor’s house where her little friend had died. “*Why did you go?*” questioned her father. “*To comfort her mother,*” said the child. “*What could you do to comfort her?*” *I climbed into her lap and cried with her.*”
- **charged.** To charge carries the force of a command. Sometimes the voice of authority has to be heard. The voices of the ancient prophets always said in essence, “*This is the way of the Lord. Let us walk therein.*”
- **as a father.** Tenderness of heart and careful concern characterize a good father. Spiritually Paul had proven himself to be a good father to the church.

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

2:12. The pastoral work of Paul had one single unifying goal in mind and that was for believers to walk in a worthy manner for the glory of God who had called them into the kingdom. The walk of the believer need not be wearisome. Gospel duties can be a holy delight, and will be when the heart is committed to knowing God and enjoying Him. John Piper reminds the church, “*God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.*”

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

2:13. The spiritual fruit of Paul’s pastoral labors was the response of the believers. The church received the gospel as the *Word of God* and not as the mere opinion of a man. It is only when the gospel is received as divine revelation it can be effective in the heart. It is by the Word individuals are brought to repentance and the Word regenerates individuals. “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (1 Peter. 1:23).

Many years ago in a Moscow Theater, matinee star Alexander Rostovzev was converted while playing the role of Jesus in a sacrilegious play entitled Christ in a Tuxedo. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, remove his gown, and cry out, “*Give me my tuxedo and top hat!*” But as he read the words, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,*” he began to tremble. Instead of following the script, he kept reading from Matthew 5, ignoring the coughs, calls, and foot stamping of his fellow actors. Finally, recalling a verse he had learned in his childhood in a Russian Orthodox Church, he cried, “*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!*” (Luke 23:42). Before the curtain could be lowered, Rostovzev had trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. (*Why Christians Sin*, J. K. Johnston, Discovery House, 1992, p. 121)

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

2:14. The consequence for embracing the gospel as the Word of God and not just another religious option or the opinion of a man was persecution. The believers at Thessalonica began to suffer at the hands of their own countrymen. Jesus had said this would happen. “*Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also*” (John 15:20). When the Roman Emperor Valens (364-378 A.D) threatened the Christian Eusebuis (b. about 260; d. before 341) with confiscation of all his goods, torture, banishment, or even death, the courageous Christian replied, “*He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments, when his body can be destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow.*”

15 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:

2:15. Speaking of the Christians in Judea suffering at the hands of their fellow countrymen the Jews, Paul divorces himself from his own people according to the flesh with rhetorical observations. He says how “*they*” please not God and “*are contrary to all men.*” Once Paul was among those who persecuted the church, but God had mercy on him. Following the new birth Paul no longer identified himself racially but according to gospel terms. In Christ “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal. 2:38). Any person who comes to faith in Christ is the object of amazing grace.

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
 And grace my fears relieved;
 How precious did that grace appear
 The hour I first believed."

John Newton

Paul's willingness to distinguish himself racially from those who hurt the church is a reminder to many today not to become enamored with any nation that is hostile to Christ and to the gospel. The only "race" on earth that is the object of God's special grace, love and favor, is the church which is declared to be "*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*" (1 Peter 2:9).

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

2:16. The unconverted Jews tried to prevent Paul from taking the gospel message of saving grace to the Gentiles. The attempt to prevent the spread of the gospel can, and will, come in many ways in the name of religion, even from those who profess to name the name of Christ. However, no one has a right to stop or hinder the gospel from going forth. Christian, go if God calls you to a specific place of ministry, even for a short time and let no one and nothing hinder your commitment to taking the gospel to others.

"Down from the glories of Heaven,
 Down to the world of woe;
 When there was no eye to pity,
 Jesus said, "I will go."

Go, go, go, go,
 Leave what He asks you to leave;
 Pray for your part in the harvest,
 Give what He asks you to give.

Out in the dark they are dying,
 For them His life He gave;
 Go, tell the lost of salvation,
 Give them a chance to live.

“Uttermost part” is His order,
Dare any answer no?
What will you do when you meet Him,
If you refuse to go?”

Paul Rader

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

2:18. Satan hindered us. Paul communicates his heart's desire to see the brethren in person but attributes the persecution that prevented him from being with them to Satan. Satan is a real enemy that should not be underestimated.

19 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?

2:19. crown.

Five Crowns for Christians

- Crown of Life for those who have endured temptation or suffered for Christ. *James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Rev 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*
- Crown of Righteousness for those who love the Lord's appearing *2 Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*
- Crown of Glory for those who minister to the people of God. *1 Peter 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*
- Incorruptible Crown for those who are faithful to Christ. *1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

- Crown of Rejoicing for those who win souls. *1 Thessalonians 2: 19 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?*

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

2:19-20. Every person won to Christ becomes part of the spiritual crown of rejoicing. Christian, do not meet Christ empty handed. Seek to win a soul to the Savior.

“Must I go, and empty handed,
Thus my dear Redeemer meet?
Not one day of service give Him,
Lay no trophy at His feet?”

“Must I go, and empty handed?”
Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him,
Must I empty handed go?”

Charles C. Luther

The Story Behind the Song

Charles Luther heard Rev. A. G. Upham tell the story of a young man who was about to die. He'd only been a Christian for a month, and was sad because he'd had so little time to serve the Lord. He said, *“I am not afraid to die; Jesus saves me now. But must I go empty handed?”* This incident prompted the writing of the song; George C. Stebbins wrote the music when Luther gave him the words. The complete song was first published in Gospel Hymns No. 3, 1878.

2:12. The believer is to walk in the following manner.

Doctrine of Walking

1. Walk in the newness of life. *Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*
2. Walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. *Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*
3. Walk honestly. *Romans 13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*
4. Walk in the direction of divine appointment. *1 Corinthians 7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.*
5. Walk by faith and not by sight. *2 Corinthians 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight :)*
6. Walk in the Spirit. *Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*
7. Walk in good works. *Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*
8. Walk in a worthy manner as a Christian. *Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*
9. Walk in love. *Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.*
10. Walk as children of the light. *Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*
11. Walk wisely. *Ephesians 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Colossians 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.*
12. Walk by faith. *Colossians 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*
13. Walk in the light. *1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

14. Walk after the Lord's commandments. *2 John 6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.*
15. Walk in the sphere of truth. *3 John 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*
16. Walk with Jesus. *Revelation 3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

2: 12. were called.

Doctrine of the Call

1. It is important to realize there is an external call of the gospel but also an internal call as well. The Scriptural evidence is compelling.
2. In the external call, the gospel is preached to all people indiscriminately. Anyone can hear it but not all will respond to the spiritual truths communicated (Matt. 22:3-9).
3. In the external call of the gospel, the good news is sown. Gospel truth falls upon rocky soil and good soil alike.
4. In the external call, the gospel is easily dismissed.
5. The internal call of the gospel is different than the external call. The internal call of the gospel is the voice of the Holy Spirit effectively applying the gospel message to the hearts of individuals with sovereign power to repentance, faith, salvation, and service.
 - *Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*
 - *Luke 5:32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*
 - *Mark 1:20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.*
 - *Acts 2:39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*
6. The external call gives spiritual power for the dead soul to live in order to believe the gospel.
7. The internal call cannot be denied nor does the renewed heart want to reject the gospel. There is the effective evocation of faith by the Holy Spirit
 - *Romans 8:30 Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*
 - *1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*
 - *Galatians 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,*
 - *2 Thessalonians 2:13 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:*

- *2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*
- *Hebrews 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*
- *1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*
- *2 Peter 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

The reason why so many can turn away from the Lord and reject Christianity is because they have yet to hear the internal call of the gospel.

8. Once the internal call is heard, there are ethical implications. A worthy walk is demanded (Ephesians 4:1) to be characterized by holiness, patience, and peace.
 - *1 Thessalonians 4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*
 - *1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;*
 - *1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*
 - *1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*
 - *Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*
9. It would not be wrong to talk honestly to people and ask them if they have heard the internal call of Christ, which converts the soul and causes the heart to love Jesus.
10. The curse of the modern Church is that people sit in pews, accepting the outward signs of salvation while secretly being unsure whether or not Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world who was crucified, buried, and rose again the third day.
11. Have you ever asked the Lord to grant you the gospel grace of being able to hear the internal call to salvation?

2:18. Satan hindered us.

Satan and the Scriptures

1. Satan put on a disguise in order to appear to Eve and tempt her by deception.

- *Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. 7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. 8 And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. 9 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? 10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. 11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? 12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. 13 And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. 14 And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:*

Special note.

Before Satan deceived Eve, he had already deceived other angels and so was cast out with them into the earth. *Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

2. Satan is viewed as the seed of a serpent.

- *Genesis 3:14 And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

3. Before Satan became evil he was known as Lucifer, son of the morning.

- *Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!*

4. Originally Satan was designated as the anointed cherub.

- *Ezekiel 28:14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.*

5. As the devil, Satan energized David to do evil [injurious behavior to self and others].

- *1 Chronicles 21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.*

6. Operating within strict boundaries Satan was allowed to accuse and afflict Job.

- *Job 1:7 And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 8 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9 Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 12 And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. 13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: 15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, 21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. 22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. 2 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present*

himself before the Lord. 2 And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 3 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? And still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. 4 And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. 5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6 And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. 7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. 8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. 9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. 10 But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

7. Satan opposed Israel.

- *Zechariah 3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2 And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. 5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by. 6 And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, 7 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. 8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. 9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.*

8. Satan is a great tempter as he prompts individuals to defy the living God like himself.

- *Matthew 4:3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

9. Satan is the prince or ruler of a vast kingdom of demons.

- *Matthew 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*

10. Satan can induce physical illnesses.

- *Luke 13:16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?*
- *Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

11. Satan is the originator of false doctrine.

- *1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.*
- ❖ There is the false doctrine of Celibacy which advocates people should not get married.
- ❖ There is the false doctrine of abstaining from certain food for religious reasons.

12. Satan is capable of perverting the Word of God thereby causing individuals to turn away from that which is morally right and good.

- *Matthew 4:3 And when the tempter [Satan] came to him [Jesus], he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*
- *Luke 4:9 And he [Satan] brought him [Jesus] to Jerusalem, and set him [Christ] on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 11 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

13. When individuals open themselves up to demonic possession, Satan will work through that avenue causing blindness and the inability to speak.

- *Matthew 12:22 Then was brought unto him [Jesus] one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. 23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? 24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the*

prince of the devils. 25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: 26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? 27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. 29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house.

14. Satan is an enemy in that he is an adversary to God's people.

- *Zechariah 3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.*

15. Satan is called the devil. The word Devil means "accuser" or "slanderer".

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

16. Satan motivated Judas to betray Christ by entering into him.

- *John 13:2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;*
- *John 13:27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.*

17. Satan filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit.

- *Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*

18. Satan can and does blind the eyes of people spiritually so they cannot comprehend spiritual realities.

- *2 Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

19. Satan seeks to harm believers.

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

20. Satan has organized the demons into a celestial hierarchy of evil.

- *Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

21. Satan guides the behavior of those who are not converted to Christ.

- *Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

22. Satan is a liar and “*the father of lies*”.

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

23. Satan is able to perform signs and wonders in imitation of the power of God.

- Apostolic wonders. *Acts 5:12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.*
- Lying wonders. *2 Thessalonians 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,*

24. Satan is a murderer.

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

- ❖ Satan kills babies by advocating abortion rights.
- ❖ Satan kills older people by promoting euthanasia (lit. “*easy death*”).
- ❖ Satan kills civilians and soldiers through warfare.
- ❖ Satan kills by suggesting suicide.
- ❖ Satan kills by enflaming the emotion of anger leading to rage and murder.
- ❖ Satan kills by encouraging various lust patterns to be expressed despite destructive health factors.

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace”.

Alexander Pope

25. Satan is recognized as the prince of this world by Christ.

- *John 14:30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

26. Because of the work of Christ at Calvary, Satan is a defeated prince.

- *John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*
- *Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*
- *Revelation 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

The strategic defeat of Satan by the redemptive work of Christ at Calvary led to His being bound so “*that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled,*” could only take place because Christ is the Stronger Man.

- *Matthew 12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house.*

27. Satan has been told that his future state will be in a place with everlasting fire.

- *Matthew 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*
- *Revelation 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

28. Satan moves to sow spiritual “tares” among the spiritual “wheat” and to place “goats” among the “sheep” of God’s pasture.

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

29. Satan desires to snatch away the good seed of the Word of God lest it find fertile soil and bear spiritual fruit which will undermine his own kingdom work.

- *Matthew 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

30. Rightfully so is Satan called “the enemy.”

- *Matthew 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*

31. Satan is “the wicked one.”

- *Matthew 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*

32. As Christ defeated Satan by going to Calvary and dying despite many attempts to prevent that from happening, so the Christian can defeat Satan by putting on the whole armor of God.

- *Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

33. In dealing with Satan, the Christian is to maintain a mature vigilance in order to exercise faith for the purpose of survival.

- *1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

34. Satan will hinder the work of God in our lives whenever and wherever he can.

- *1 Thessalonians 2:18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.*

35. For all eternity Satan will be remembered, not as Lucifer, son of the morning, or as the anointed cherub, but as the dragon, and that old serpent.

- *Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*
- *Revelation 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,*

36. Knowing the important part Peter would have in establishing the New Testament expression of the church, Satan targeted Simon Peter in a special way.

- *Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*

37. Satan is a master counterfeiter.

- Satan has a counterfeit righteousness. *2 Corinthians 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*
- Satan has counterfeit ministers. *2 Corinthians 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*
- Satan has a counterfeit gospel. *Galatians 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*
- Satan has a counterfeit doctrine. *1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.*
- Satan has a counterfeit synagogue or church. *Revelation 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

38. Satan is said to be the father of those who are not saved.

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

1 THESSALONIANS 3

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

3:1. The background for this epistle is Acts 16-17. In Acts 16 the record is made of Paul's visit to Philippi. When persecution came, he fled to Thessalonica where God blessed his labors in a short period of time. However, persecution broke out and Paul went to Berea where he found Jews who were ready to search the Scriptures. *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (Acts 17:11). While Paul taught Bereans, the Jews who had opposed him at Thessalonica came to Berea to stir the people up against him there. The Berean brethren sent him to Athens. It was at Athens that Paul left Silas and Timothy behind. Concerned about the church at Thessalonica, Paul found a way to instruct Timothy to investigate whether the young converts were walking with the Lord or whether they turned away from the faith due to persecution and despair. The story continues.

2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

3:2. Paul speaks highly of Timothy. He refers to him as a *"brother"* and *"minister of God"* and a *"fellowlabourer."* Knowing that Paul was not given to flattery these words of praise become more meaningful. Timothy had earned the respect of the apostle. Some men demand respect by virtue of their title or position. True respect cannot be demanded but it can be commanded by a worthy life. Timothy deserves the highest respect and honor the church can bestow upon him, for in a day of great persecution he remained faithful, ministering to the church.

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

3:3. we are appointed. The place of suffering in the Christian's life due to gospel opposition should come as no surprise though it is never easy to understand or accept. While some ministers seem to have a life of blessing and spiritual prosperity, others are asked to suffer much for the Lord. Peter did not understand why he would be called upon to be crucified like Christ, while John was promised a life of old age (John 21:18-23), but in the end Peter was faithful unto death. Paul was concerned that the church of Thessalonica not be discouraged by the afflictions they witnessed and experienced. They have been appointed by God. So the church remembers, *"There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one candle...."* This inscription was found on a small, new gravestone, after a devastating air raid on Britain in World War II. Some thought it must be a famous quotation, but it wasn't. The words were written by a lonely old woman whose pet had been killed by a Nazi bomb. Nevertheless, the thought contains a vital truth. The Light of the world has come. *"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."* (John 1:4, 5).

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

3:4. we should suffer. To the modern generation of Christians in the Western world which has been fed a gospel promising health and wealth, these words of Scripture are sobering. The time must come again – and sooner rather than latter – when God will purify His people through tribulation. The best preparation for that period is a holy heart.

“Search me, O God,
And know my heart today;
Try me, O Savior,
Know my thoughts, I pray.

See if there be
Some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin
And set me free.

I praise Thee, Lord,
For cleansing me from sin;
Fulfill Thy Word,
And make me pure within.

Fill me with fire
Where once I burned with shame;
Grant my desire
To magnify Thy Name.

Lord, take my life,
And make it wholly Thine;
Fill my poor heart
With Thy great love divine.

Take all my will,
My passion, self and pride;
I now surrender, Lord
In me abide.

O Holy Ghost,
Revival comes from Thee;
Send a revival,
Start the work in me.

Thy Word declares
Thou wilt supply our need;
For blessings now,
O Lord, I humbly plead.”

J. Edwin Orr,
Composed in 1936 in New Zealand

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

3:5. the Tempter. It would be a blessing in many ways if a person could immediately go to heaven upon profession of faith. However, the Lord has not seen fit to ordain that should happen. It is the Lord’s will the Christian life be lived despite many temptations. C. S. Lewis made these insightful observations about temptation: *“No man knows how bad he is until he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. That is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is.... Christ, because He was the only Man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only Man who knows to the full what temptation means.”* *Today in the Word*, November, 1998, p. 24. There are many ways The Tempter knows how to discourage the heart of the Christian and lure the believer from the Lord. Persecution is just one. Therefore, take this good advice.

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| • What settings are you in when you fall? | Avoid them. |
| • What support systems do you have that enhance your sin? | Eliminate them. |
| • What people are you usually with when you sin? | Replace them. |

6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

3:6. Timothy was able to return to Paul with a good report. The believers were living with a vital faith and love. Nor had they forgotten to be grateful to Paul.

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

3:7. Once more Paul shares the deep anguish of his soul for the believers. Despite his own personal persecution, with emotional distress Paul remained concerned about others.

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

Help me in all the work I do
 To ever be sincere and true,
 And know that all I'd do for You
 Must be done for others.

Let me be crucified and slain
 And buried deep; and all in vain
 My efforts be to rise again
 Unless to live again for others.

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

Others, Lord, yes others,
 Let this my motto be --
 Help me to live for others,
 That I may live like Thee.”

Charles D. Meigs, 1935

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

3:8-10. The ministry was not a profession for Paul. He did not go from town to town-holding meetings and then forgetting those whom he met. He carried souls upon his heart. He prayed for individuals by name. He prayed to be useful in their lives in building them up in the faith. A pastor must pray for his people, not only in their presence but when absent from them.

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

3:11-13. Specific petitions are offered in prayer.

- Paul asks the Lord to be allowed to return to the believers at Thessalonica. Christian, if you have ever longed to minister in a particular location, make that location a matter of specific prayer.
 - Paul asks for love to increase and abound in the hearts of the believers towards them and towards others. When love flows in the heart there will be a desire to see souls saved. A helping hand will be offered to rescue the perishing – just like Jesus. The story is told of a man who became lost in his travels and wandered into a bed of quicksand. Confucius saw the man's predicament and said, *"It is evident that men should stay out of places such as this."* Next, Buddha observed the situation and said, *"Let that man's plight be a lesson to the rest of the world."* Then Mohammed came by and said to the sinking man, *"Alas, it is the will of God."* Finally Jesus appeared. *"Take my hand, friend,"* He said, *"and I will save you!"*
 - Paul prays for holy hearts among the believers at Thessalonica.
 - Paul prays the church will be found without blame at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. Here is a pattern for pastors and for all Christians to follow in prayer.
- ❖ Pray for fellowship.
 - ❖ Pray for love.
 - ❖ Pray for holiness of life.
 - ❖ Pray there will be no shame when Jesus comes.

1 THESSALONIANS 4

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

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4:3. fornication. Sexual sins have always plagued the church even to the present hour. The easy access of pornography on the Internet has brought mental and emotional fornication to the fingertips of millions in the privacy of the home. Countless Christians are now addicted to pornography and the inappropriate behavior lust induces. Christians know how they ought to walk, the only question is, "Will they?". The gospel call goes forth begging and even pleading with souls to please God by abstaining from fornication. The seriousness of sexual sin is found in the fact this sin is against the Holy Spirit who indwells the life. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 explains. *"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

4:4. how to possess. During his term as President of the U.S., Lyndon Johnson was somewhat overweight. One day his wife challenged him with this blunt assertion: *"You can't run the country if you can't run yourself."* Respecting Mrs. Johnson's wise observation, the President lost 23 pounds.

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence [strong sexual desires], even as the Gentiles which know not God:

"Take time to be holy,
 speak oft with thy Lord;
 Abide in Him always,
 and feed on His Word.

Make friends of God's children,
 help those who are weak,
 Forgetting in nothing
 His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy,
the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret,
with Jesus alone.

By looking to Jesus,
like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct
His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy,
let Him be thy Guide;
And run not before Him,
whatever betide.

In joy or in sorrow,
still follow the Lord,
And, looking to Jesus,
still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy,
be calm in thy soul,
Each thought and each motive
beneath His control.

Thus led by His Spirit
to fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted
for service above."

William D. Longstaff, 1882

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

4:6. the avenger. Supreme Court Justice Horace Gray once informed a man who had appeared before him in a lower court and had escaped conviction on a technicality, "*I know that you are guilty and you know it, and I wish you to remember that one day you will stand before a better and wiser Judge, and that there you will be dealt with according to justice and not according to law.*" The Lord knows how to right whatever wrong has been done to a person. He will avenge His own who cry to Him. "*And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*" (Luke 18:7-8).

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

4:7. holiness. When a Moslem makes a religious pilgrimage to Mecca, he kisses the Black Stone, the stone believed to have come down from heaven, drinks from the well of Hagar, and throws stones at the three pillars that represent Satan. No doubt Satan is more amused than offended. Certainly he is not wounded. If Christians want to do battle with evil, the church will have to do more than throw stones at pillars. Believers will have to live holier lives and help others to do the same.

8 He therefore that despiseth [hates this instruction], despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

4:8. Pastoral teaching given by God the Holy Spirit is not to be dismissed. Ministers of the gospel must not be afraid to teach the church the duties of those who listen. Holy responsibilities are placed upon members of the local assembly.

- Respect for the elder (s). *1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. The office of an elder is worthy of honor. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*
- Remuneration. *Galatians 6:6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*
- Obedience. *Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*
- No false accusations. *1 Timothy 5:19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.*
- Despise not biblical teaching. *1 Thess. 4:8 He therefore that despiseth [hates this instruction], despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.*

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

4:9. While Biblical love is described in 1 Corinthians 13 it must be shown. There is no other option. In the Russian novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, a woman has come to talk with a holy man about her problems with faith. "What if I've been believing all my life, and when I come to die there is nothing but Burdocks growing over my grave? ... How can I prove it? How can I convince myself?" The holy man's answer is: "By the experience of active love. Insofar as you advance in active love, you will grow surer of the reality of God and of the immortality of the soul."

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

4:10. Paul's exhortation can be reduced to two simple words, "*More love.*"

"More love to Thee,
O Christ, more love to Thee!
Hear Thou the prayer I make
on bended knee.

This is my earnest plea:
More love, O Christ, to Thee;
More love to Thee,
more love to Thee!

Once earthly joy I craved,
sought peace and rest;
Now Thee alone I seek,
give what is best."

This all my prayer shall be:
More love, O Christ to Thee;
More love to Thee,
more love to Thee!

Let sorrow do its work,
come grief or pain;
Sweet are Thy messengers,
sweet their refrain,
When they can sing with me:

More love, O
Christ, to Thee;
More love to Thee,
more love to Thee!

Then shall my latest breath
 whisper Thy praise;
 This be the parting cry
 my heart shall raise;

This still its prayer shall be:
 More love, O Christ to Thee;
 More love to Thee,
 more love to Thee!"

Elizabeth P. Prentiss

The Story Behind the Song

In 1856 Elizabeth P. Prentiss *wrote* these words during a period of illness, but kept them to herself. When she showed them to her husband 13 years later, he encouraged her to publish them. Howard Doane saw the resulting pamphlet, and wrote music for the words.

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

4: 11. Three commandments.

12. Study to be quiet. The believer is to have as his ambition to lead a quiet life. In a letter to his friends, hymn writer Wendell P. Loveless related this story: One evening a speaker who was visiting the United States wanted to make a telephone call. He entered a phone booth, but found it to be different from those in his own country. It was beginning to get dark, so he had difficulty finding the number in the directory. He noticed that there was a light in the ceiling, but he didn't know how to turn it on. As he tried again to find the number in the fading twilight, passers by noted his plight and said, "*Sir, if you want to turn the light on, you have to shut the door.*" To the visitor's amazement and satisfaction, when he closed the door, the booth was filled with light. He soon located the number and completed the call. In a similar way, when we draw aside in a quiet place to pray, we must block out our busy world and open our hearts to the Father. Our darkened world of disappointments and trials will then be illuminated. We will enter into communion with God, we will sense His presence, and we will be assured of His provision for us. Our Lord often went to be alone with the Heavenly Father. Sometimes it was after a busy day of preaching and healing, as in today's Scripture reading. At other times, it was before making a major decision (Luke 6:12). (*Our Daily Bread*)

- Do your own business. Much conflict in the church comes because of the triangles that are formed in relationships. One person enlists a third against some one else. There is a law of life which should be seared into the conscience of every Christian: never build your happiness on the unhappiness of someone else. In 1669 the French writer Moliere said, "*Here in Paris they hang a man first and try him afterward.*" Something like that happens when we gossip about someone. We hang him and then later they might get a fair trial, but rarely.
- Work with your own hands. It is wrong to take advantage of the kindness and generosity of other people with good hearts. Individuals should be self-sufficient as much as possible. And of course all labor is to be done for the glory of God. "*The work of a Beethoven, and the work of a charwoman, become spiritual on precisely the same condition, that of being offered to God, of being done humbly "as to the Lord."* This does not, of course, mean that it is for anyone a mere toss-up whether he should sweep rooms or compose symphonies. A mole must dig to the glory of God and a cock must crow." (C. S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory*).

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

3:12. By cultivating a quiet spirit, by minding one's own business and not gossiping, maligning or taking sides in an issue, by working hard the believer is able to walk without shame or blame, and so win the respect of others while being dependent only on the Lord.

From the Practical to the Theological
The Hope of the Resurrection
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13 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.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before or precede] them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet [greet, Acts 28:15] the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

4:14-17. The Lord is said to be descending from heaven. This is no secret silent descent for Christ comes with a shout, “*with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.*” There is also the resurrection of the dead spoken of and a glorious meeting of the Lord in the sky by the righteous. This is the blessed hope the church has been promised (Titus 2:13). Jesus is to return as He went away – bodily, physically, slowly so all watching can see (Acts 1:11). It is true there is a meeting to take place in the air between Christ and Christians for the word “*meet*” is a Greek word meaning “*to greet.*” If the president of the United States were to visit a major American city he would fly in his plane into the airport where many would gather to meet or greet him. Then he would be escorted on to the place of his intended destination. King Jesus will one day come the second time and not in phases or stages. He will be greeted by believers who will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye so they have bodies suited for this heavenly moment of divine greeting. The destination is earth where the Lord shall establish Himself, not just for a thousand years but for all eternity. It is the last day of human history and the first day of the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

2:18. Only a biblical understanding of the second coming can bring comfort to the church.

4:3. the will of God.

Doctrine of the Will of God

1. Being in the right geographical location is according to the will of God. *Romans 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*
2. It is the will of God that the Holy Spirit prays for the believer according to His will. *Romans 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*
3. It is the will of God that believers not be conformed to this world. *Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
4. It was the will of God that Paul be called to be an apostle. *1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*
5. It was the will of God that the church of Corinth be generous with their persons and possessions. *2 Corinthians 8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.*
6. It was the will of God that Christ die for others. *Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:*
7. It is the will of God that every believer be sanctified. *1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*
8. It is the will of God that thanksgiving be made for everything. *1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*
9. It is the will of God that some Christians suffer. *1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

The Last Day of Human History

Dr. Stanford E. Murrell

“And as it is appointed unto men once
to die, but after this the judgment:
So Christ was once offered to bear the
sins of many; and unto them that look
for Him shall He appear the second time
without sin unto salvation.”

Hebrews 9:27-28

When Adam first opened his eyes on the day of his creation, he awakened to a world of awesome beauty. It was a perfect world that Adam would tread. It was the original temple built by God.

“His fiat laid the cornerstone,
And heaved its pillars, one by one,
He hung its starry roof on high,
The broad, illimitable [expansive] sky;
He spread its pavement, green and light,
And curtained it with morning light.

The mountains in their places stood,
The sea, the sky, and "all was good,
And when its first pure praise rang
The morning stars together sang."

The angels would not sing for long nor would Adam enjoy the beauties of the earth, for sin soon found its way into Paradise. With sin came a curse upon all creation. Death began to stalk the universe. Thorns appeared and animals suddenly turned one upon another until nature was blood red in tooth and claw. Paradise was lost. *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Romans 5:12).*

Today, modern science is a reluctant witness to the spiritual judgment that came into the world. Science confirms that the universe is dying according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which is the Law of Entropy. This Law states that all things go from order to disorder. The Universe is dying. Unless something happens, the sun will one day cease to shine and the stars will no longer twinkle. The hour is coming when the moon will refuse to reflect light.

One day the grass will not be able to grow.

One day animals will no longer find food to eat.

One day, life on planet earth will be silent for the globe will be wrapped in ice and darkness.

Such is the future of the heavens and the earth apart from Divine intervention. But all of these things shall never happen because God has already revealed that the day will come when He will make a new heaven and a new earth. There will be a time when human history will end and eternal history will begin.

While we live in this present period, we wait for the age to come wherein dwelleth righteousness. The new age will begin on the day that history ends. The history of mankind is a very interesting chronicle. It is like a great memoir telling about the rise and fall of magnificent and majestic empires. The history of mankind is like a compelling drama full of interesting characters that play their parts on the stage of life. The history of mankind is like an epic poem. There is travel and intrigue and much adventure. But when the tale is told, the poem is placed back on the dusty shelf of forgetfulness. The history of mankind is very interesting but it will one day end.

Many people thought that history would literally end on October 28, 1962. The United States intelligence community had discovered the existence of Soviet supplied missile installations in Cuba. U-2 photo flights confirmed that the silos for offensive weapons had been built and that the nuclear warheads were on their way from Russia. President Kennedy decided that a naval blockade of the island might prevent the shipments of arms from reaching Cuba. But what would happen if the Russian ships refused to recognize the arbitrary blockade boundaries in international waters? What would happen if the Russians tried to run the blockade and American ships were fired upon?

The world waited and watched, wondering what Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev would do. College students debated among themselves if they should study for their exams on Monday. There would be no exams on Monday if a nuclear war started between the two great super-powers. There might be no United States. In the end, Khrushchev blinked. He backed down. He agreed to remove the arsenal of mass destruction and the world breathed a sigh of relief. History would not come to an end in October of 1962. But it will end someday. When shall that day arrive? No one knows and no one can accurately predict it though many have tried and are still trying. Despite all of the failed prophecies and despite all of the false modern day prophets found in religious circles, the day is coming when Jesus Christ will appear the second time for all who believe. And when Jesus comes, it will be the last day of human history, as we know it. Eternal history will begin.

Now regarding the day of the Lord's appearance, when the great transaction is made from the temporal to the eternal, there are some details provided in the Bible as to what will happen. The last day of history will begin like all other days. The sun will rise and the birds will begin to sing. People will get up, get dressed, eat breakfast and go off to work or play never suspecting that in just a few hours the universe itself will be forever changed. Somewhere, a young woman will awaken expecting to be married before the sun sets. Somewhere, a businessman will dream of concluding a major agreement with a giant corporation. Somewhere a party will be planned. It is hoped that there will be eating and drinking and much laughter.

The day will progress as normal until suddenly, the word spreads throughout the world from mouth to mouth and from ear to ear, "*Something supernatural is taking place.*" "*Look up in the sky!*" People will turn their eyes toward the heavens and gasp with alarm. It is a supernatural invasion.

There is a mass movement of something from outer space. It is entering this atmosphere and moving toward earth. Slowly, deliberately, something is coming to earth. *“What does it all mean?”* Millions will wonder in alarm.

Initially, most of humanity will not know what is taking place on this last day of history, but the Church will know. This is nothing less than the promise of the angels being fulfilled as spoken to a small group of startled men on a hilltop outside the city of Jerusalem two thousand years ago. There, the disciples of Jesus Christ were told that their Lord and Saviour would return to earth in the manner in which He left. The angels had said, *“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:11). Upon reflection, it may be that the disciples remembered that Jesus had said to them in quiet serenity, *“Let not your hearts be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; that where I am there ye may be also”* (John 14:1).

So Jesus went to heaven following His resurrection and the angels sang as they welcomed Him home. When Fredrick Handel was writing his great masterpiece *The Messiah*, he considered the ascension of Christ into heaven. He imagined that the angels sang together the words of Psalm 24:7-10 as they welcomed Jesus back home. There was a shout in the celestial sky as the angels cried,

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; And be lifted up, ye everlasting doors; And the King of Glory will come in.”

The angels at the gates of heaven, when they heard the other angels singing,

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates,”

answered,

“Who is the King of Glory?”

And the angels who were accompanying Jesus replied:

“The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord strong and mighty; The Lord mighty in battle.”

Then the angels who were accompanying Jesus to His Father's home wished to have the gates wide open to receive Him, and so again they sang out in triumphant challenge,

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; And the King of Glory will come in.”

And again the angels by the gates of heaven sang out with joy and gladness:

“Who is the King of Glory? Who is the King of Glory?”

And again the angels who were with Jesus replied in an ever increasing swell of assurance,

“The Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory, He is the King of Glory!”

Then the angels who kept the heavenly entrance opened wide the gates, and Jesus, the King of Glory, passed through them into His Father's home. To welcome Him, all the hosts of heaven continued to sing a song of praise—the angels that were with Jesus and the angels that were by the gates, and the angels who were around the throne of God all sang praises to Jesus, the Friend and Redeemer of mankind. And the wonderful song they sang declared,

“And He shall reign forever and ever. King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!”

But Jesus never meant to stay in heaven. It was and is His stated intention to return to earth to gather His Bride unto Himself at the end of time. On the Last Day of history the promise of Christ to return to His Church will be kept. *“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thess. 4:16).*

As the Lord descends from heaven with the loud blast of the trumpet and the voice of the archangel, the Bible says that Christians on earth will rise to meet the Lord in the air. The word *“meet”* is a very important word. In the original it is *apantesis* [ap-an'-tay-sis] and refers to a friendly encounter. The special idea of the word was the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary (Moulton, *Greek Testament Grammar*, Vol. 1. p. 14). This word is used elsewhere in scripture. It is in Matthew 25:1, 6 and in Acts 28:14-16. In both places the concept is that people went out to *“meet”* someone only to escort that person back to the very place where he was coming to.

- *Matthew 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet [greet] the bridegroom.*
- *Matthew 25:6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet [greet] him.*
- *Acts 28:14-16 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. 15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet [greet] us as far as Appii forum, and the three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. 16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.*

The Christians will one day rise to meet the coming King of kings as He returns the second time for all who believe (Hebrews 9:28). Christians will welcome the Lord and escort Him back to earth. As the heavenly host, led by the glorified, resurrected Christ continues to move to Earth, men and women and young people who are not Christians and who are not converted will begin to be afraid. They already know what this Second Coming of Christ means for them. The gospel of the Kingdom will have been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations (Matt. 24:14). No one will be without excuse as Christ comes looking for faith on the earth. This is the day of final judgment for multitudes and they know it.

This is the day spoken of by Enoch, *“the seventh from Adam who prophesied saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”* (Jude 1:14-15).

When Jesus Christ returns in the brightness of His glory with the angels of God and the saints of the ages, He will have a specific place that He will visit. While countless cameras record His advent and satellites follow His every movement, the Lord Jesus will make His way toward the ancient City of Peace. Jesus will return to the Holy Land. On that day His feet will touch the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the East. *“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south”* (Zechariah 14:4).

The Lord will yet stand again on the Mount of Olives despite resistance to His coming on that day. One personage who will not want the Lord to reach earth and Palestine is the Man of Sin who is the Son of Perdition. He knows that he will be charged with specific sins by the Savior for it is he, *“Who opposeth and exalteth Himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that He as God sitteth in the Temple of God, showing Himself that He is God”* (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Now God in Christ Jesus has returned to expose the *“Wicked One, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10).

When Jesus comes He shall, *“consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming”* the Man of Sin and his followers (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Those who have ignored the Lord can ignore Him no longer. He has returned. Those who have blasphemed His holy name will cease to curse. He has returned. The blasphemies of the wicked will be turned into prayers but the prayers will be unreasonable as individuals plead with the mountains saying, *“Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand”* (Revelation 6:16-17).

But the mountains will not fall on the ungodly on the Last Day, for the Last Day is also the Day of Judgment in which no one can hide. Even those who are in the grave will not be safe for the hour has come, *“in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28-29).

The damnation of the wicked shall be according to Divine justice. On the Last Day the Lord of Righteousness will say to all those who have rejected Him,

“Ye call Me Master and obey Me not,
 Ye call Me Light and see Me not,
 Ye call Me Way and walk not,
 Ye call Me Life and desire Me not,

Ye call Me Wise and follow Me not,
 Ye call Me Fair and love Me not,
 Ye call Me Rich and ask Me not,
 Ye call Me Eternal and seek Me not,

Ye call Me Gracious and trust Me not,
 Ye call Me noble and serve Me not,
 Ye call Me mighty and honor Me not,
 Ye call Me just and fear Me not;
 If I condemn you, blame Me not.”

While the wicked fight and cry and tremble and are carried away like Judas unto their own place, the experience of the Church will be far different. On the Last Day, the Church will be rejoicing. This is the day for which the Church has long prayed, *“Even so come quickly, Lord Jesus.”*

This is the day of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Bridegroom has come for his Bride whom He sees as altogether lovely without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). It would make the Bride to blush if some were to hear the words from her Lord that she keeps next to her heart. She has heard His voice already and she longs to hear it again. The Church waits for the Bridegroom to come and whisper once more the things He has already said in the *Song of Solomon*.

“How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful.”
“Your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.”
“Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens.”
“How delightful is your love...How much more pleasing is your love than wine”. “You have stolen my heart”.
“The King is held captive” (Song 1:15; 2:14; 2:2; 4:10; 8:4).

The spiritual truth is that the beauty of His Bride enchants the coming King. Did He not die for her? Does He not ever live to intercede for her? Did He not promise that He would return for her? Is love for her not the all-consuming passion of the Messiah's march to victory? *“Listen, O daughter, consider and give your ear: Forget your people and your father's house. The King is enthralled by your beauty; honor Him, for He is your Lord” (Psalm 45:10).*

As the bride looks forward to the day of her marriage so the Church can look forward to The Last Day; it is the day of her eternal union with Christ in a glorified body. On the Last Day of history, those who have died in Christ will receive a resurrected body as they come with Him; and those on earth who love the Lord will be changed. *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).*

Because these things are true according to Scripture, it is wise for all men to prepare for The Last Day of history. Divine preparation is made when Christ is received as Lord and Saviour and life is lived for His honor and His glory. If tomorrow were The Last Day of human history, would you be numbered with those who would resist His arrival or would your heart be rejoicing while saying to others, *“Marvelous messages we bring, Glorious carol we sing, Wonderful word of the King! Jesus is coming again!”*

The *Bible* teaches that there is a special crown for all who love the appearance of Christ. *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:8). Do you love the appearance of Christ? Do you long for His Second Coming? As you look toward the heavens, will your heart be able to sing on the Last Day of Human History,

“O the King is coming,
The King is coming!
I just heard the trumpets sounding,
And now His face I see;
O the King is coming,
the King is coming!
Praise God, He's coming for me!”

Gloria Gaither * Bill Gaither * Charles Millhuff

Come to Christ. Love Him with all of your heart and He will come for you on the Last Day of human history.

1 THESSALONIANS 5

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

5:1. times and the seasons. This phrase is found elsewhere in Scripture. Daniel speaks of times and seasons (Daniel 2:21) as do the disciples in Acts 1:7. The disciples asked for specific details relating to the Second Advent. In plain language Jesus replied that it was not for the church to know the chronological events (*chronous*, times) or even the general events (*kairous*) leading to His return. The responsibility of the church is to wait expectantly for the Lord until He comes. It is only an evil and adulterous generation that is enamored with seeking signs of the time. *“But he [Jesus] answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Matthew 12:39).*

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

5:2. day of the Lord. This expression does not refer, as some have supposed, to the descent of Christ to take the church away in rapture. This expression refers to the manifestation of Christ in glory to inaugurate His second advent. The “day of the Lord” is a day of divine visitation in judgment. Consider several passages that indicate this truth: Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Joel 2:1-3; Jeremiah 30:7; Malachi 4:1

5:2. a thief in the night. In the ancient world a thief was not always careful to come at night under the cover of darkness. If properly armed and with companions in crime, a thief would simply storm a place with overwhelming force at the time of his own choosing. The second coming of Christ will come with overwhelming force and at a time of the Lord’s own choosing.

There need be no surprises for the Church because believers have not been left in darkness concerning this matter. The Lord has informed His people of what will happen on the last day of human history.

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

5:3. There is a false security that many embrace in life. This truth is reflected in the book *At Dawn We Slept*, by Gordon Prange. On Sept. 6, 1941 journalist Clarke Beach wrote, *“A Japanese attack on Hawaii is regarded as the most unlikely thing in the world, with one chance in a million of being successful. Besides having more powerful defenses than any other post under the American flag, it is protected by distance.”* On December 7, 1941, a date that will live in infamy, the imperial forces of the Japanese government attacked Pear Harbor killing over two thousand Americans. The world was at war. Peace and safety were no more. Sudden destruction rained from the sky.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5: 4.

“We’re watching for Jesus
who entered within
The Holiest of all
when He put away sin:

A place in the glory
He’s gone to prepare
When we shall be with Him;
But will you be there?”

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

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

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

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

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

5:17. appointed us to wrath. The wrath to which God has not appointed the church is the wrath associated with the events following the day of the Lord or His second advent.

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

5:13. be at peace. The church at the beginning of the twenty first century finds little peace among its members in the local assembly. The problem is not new. The letters of Christian apologist and philosopher Francis Schaeffer reveal the lack of love in the separatist Presbyterian movement of the 1940s and 1950s. While rightly emphasizing the need for correct doctrine and a pure church, some in this movement lost sight of the need for the demonstration of God's love in relationships with other Christians.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

5:14. warn them that are unruly. There are individuals who have a splendid disposition as long as they can have everything their own way. These self appointed “watchdogs” or “church bosses” will soon manifest the old nature when crossed. They are a hindrance to peace and God’s blessing.

5:14. comfort the feebleminded. The reference is to those who are faint of heart. Not everyone is courageous and willing to stand firm in the faith. One of the earliest schisms in the church took place in the fourth century in North Africa over the issue of how much grace should be shown to those who faltered under state persecution. The followers of Donatus, a bishop of Carthage had little grace for those who lacked courage. The writings of Augustine finally helped to resolve the controversy, but not before great harm had been done to the body of Christ.

5:14. support the weak. There is a natural tendency not to be kind towards those who are weak in the faith. Much grace is needed to bring individuals to a saving knowledge of the Savior and progress in sanctification. Sometimes it is not easy to determine who is “*weak*” in the faith and who has come to do harm to the body of Christ as an emissary of the Enemy. One distinguishing mark that may help in discerning an individual case is the attitude of the heart. Those who have a good heart will be sorry for sin and for being weak. Those who are of their father the devil may be religiously inclined but they never repent, they do not humble themselves, they eternally justify their attitude and actions. From such, withdraw (Rom. 16:17). All others, support.

5:14. be patient toward all men. A Chinese proverb says, “*One moment of patience may ward off great disaster. One moment of impatience may ruin a whole life.*”

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

5:15. evil for evil. The word for evil is *kakos* and refers to acts that are by nature depraved or injurious. How evil came to be present in a moral universe is a great mystery. The Bible speaks of the “*mystery of iniquity*” (2 *Thessalonians* 2:7). While the answer to the origin of evil may never be known, the effects of the same are, and must be recognized and for good reason. “*It is considered awkward to use seriously such words as good and evil, but if we are deprived of these concepts what will be left? We will decline to the status of animals*” (Alexander Solzhenitsyn).

Mr. Solzhenitsyn is speaking from personal example being an innocent victim of the prison system instituted by Joseph Stalin. The challenge is for the Christian to be different and not return "*evil for evil*".

16 Rejoice evermore.

"I've found a joy in sorrow,
a secret balm for pain,
A beautiful tomorrow
of sunshine after rain;

I've found a branch of healing
near every bitter spring;
A whispered promise stealing
o'er every broken string,
A whispered promise stealing
o'er every broken string.

I've found a glad hosanna
for every woe and wail;
A handful of sweet manna
when grapes of Eschol fail;

I've found a Rock of Ages
when desert wells are dry;
And, after weary stages,
I've found an Elim nigh,
And, after weary stages,
I've found an Elim nigh.

An Elim with its coolness,
its fountains, and its shade;
A blessing in its fullness,
when buds of promise fade;
O'er tears of soft contrition
I've seen a rainbow light,
A glory and fruition, so near!

Yet out of sight,
A glory and fruition, so near!
Yet out of sight.

My Savior, Thee possessing,
I have the joy, the balm,
The healing and the blessing,
the sunshine and the psalm;

The promise for the fearful,
the Elim for the faint,
The rainbow for the tearful,
the glory for the saint!

The rainbow for the tearful,
the glory for the saint!"

Jane F. Crewdson, 1864

Special Note.

- Eschol (esh'kol; a bunch, cluster) speaks of a valley in the neighborhood of Hebron, the one in which the spies found large grapes (Numbers 13:23-24).
- Elim (e'lim; trees) refers to the Second Station of Israel in the desert (Exodus 15:27; Numbers 33:9), where they encamped for a month (Exodus 16:1). Here were *"twelve springs of water and seventy date palms."*

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

5:18. give thanks. Scottish minister Alexander Whyte was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. He always found something for which to be grateful. One Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy that one church member thought to himself, *"Certainly the preacher won't think of anything for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this."* Much to his surprise, however, Whyte began by praying, *"We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this."* (Our Daily Bread, August 26, 1989)

19 Quench not the Spirit.

5:19. quench not the Spirit. The person and work of the Holy Spirit is vital to the Christian's life. It is the Spirit who convicts unbelievers of sin, righteousness and judgment: John 16:8-11, regenerates or causes a person to become a believer: John 3:1-8; Titus 3:5, I Peter 1:23-25; James 1:18, indwells and baptizes the believer: I Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9; John 14:16; I Corinthians 12:13, seals the soul until the day of redemption Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30, imparts gifts: I Corinthians 12:7-11, fills the believer: Ephesians 5:15-21; Galatians 5:16, and causes the heart to bear fruit: Galatians 5:22-23.— the characteristics of Jesus Christ. Therefore, great care should be taken not to *"quench"* or drown out His multiple ministries by unconfessed sin persisted in.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

5:20. The ministry of exhorting others to good works or prophesying is not to be discouraged nor despised, nor is this spiritual gifted to be relegated to days forever gone.

When Charles Spurgeon was pastor at New Park Street Chapel in London, God used his words to bring about amazing changes in the lives of people. A man who was on his way to get some gin saw the crowd at the church door and pushed his way in to see what was going on. At that moment, Spurgeon turned and faced the man and said that there was a man in the gallery who had a gin bottle in his pocket and had come with no good motive. The startled man listened to the rest of the message and was converted.

One evening a prostitute, on her way to Blackfriars Bridge to commit suicide, stopped at the church, hoping to hear some word that would prepare her to meet her maker. Spurgeon was preaching from Luke 7:36-50, the story of the prostitute who wiped Jesus feet with her tears. His text was verse 44; "*Seest thou this woman?*" As Spurgeon preached, the woman saw herself but also saw the grace of God and trusted Christ. *Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers*, W. Wiersbe, (Moody Press, Chicago; 1984), p. 231.

John Wesley was not an advocate of sensationalism in preaching. But on one occasion, he interrupted his own sermon and shouted, "*Lord, is Saul also among the prophets? Is James Watson here? If he be, show Thy power!*" And James Watson dropped to the floor and began to cry loudly for God's mercy! *Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers*, W. Wiersbe, (Moody Press, Chicago; 1984), p. 247

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

23 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.

5:23. sanctify you wholly. To pray for God to sanctify a person in body, soul and spirit is not to introduce the doctrine of sinless perfection for then *Scripture* would be contradicting *Scripture*. The *Bible* says in 1 John 1:8-9, "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" That is the bad news. There is still indwelling sin for the best of men are but men at best. Nevertheless "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

5:24. Faithful is he. As salvation does not depend upon the works of a person neither does the security of the believer depend upon something they do in the flesh. This point is made carefully

and cautiously, lest the security of the believer be turned into a license to sin. With Paul we say, "*God forbid!*"

No believer is to sink into spiritual anarchism believing in a false sense of security, for salvation is never divorced from good works. The root of righteousness will produce the fruit of the same. But in the process it is God who is faithful to save and sanctify.

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith
in His excellent Word!

What more can He say
than to you He hath said,
You, who unto Jesus
for refuge have fled?

In every condition,
in sickness, in health;
In poverty's vale,
or abounding in wealth;

At home and abroad, on the land,
on the sea,
As thy days may demand,
shall thy strength ever be.

Fear not, I am with thee,
O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God
and will still give thee aid;

I'll strengthen and help thee,
and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous,
omnipotent hand.

When through the deep waters
I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall
not thee overflow;

For I will be with thee,
thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When through fiery trials
 thy pathways shall lie,
 My grace, all sufficient,
 shall be thy supply;

The flame shall not hurt thee;
 I only design
 Thy dross to consume,
 and thy gold to refine.

Even down to old age
 all My people shall prove

My sovereign, eternal,
 unchangeable love;

And when hoary hairs
 shall their temples adorn,
 Like lambs they shall still in
 My bosom be borne.

The soul that on Jesus
 has leaned for repose,
 I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
 That soul, though all hell
 should endeavor to shake,
 I'll never, no never,
 no never forsake."

The Story Behind the Song

The words are from *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors*, by John Rippon, 1787; attributed variously to John Keene, Kirkham, and John Keith. This hymn was sung at the funerals of American presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and American Civil War general Robert E. Lee.

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

5:26. holy kiss. Even in those cultures that do not encourage public affection to be shown to one another, the church is called upon to challenge that lack of affection and greet one another with kindness.

27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

5:27. be read. Early church Fathers suggested that those books were canonical that were inspired. One test of inspiration was apostolicity: that is, was a book written by an apostle or someone very close to the apostles? Another test was that of internal appeal. Did a book contain doctrinal elements that reflected the teachings of the apostles? A third test was that of universality. Was it read and accepted by all the churches? At a local council in AD 393 at Hippo where Augustine was the bishop, the contents of the canon were set forth officially for the first time with the twenty-seven books we now have.

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

5:6-27.

Seventeen Commandments for Christians

- Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.
- But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.
- Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.
- And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour 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. 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.
- 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.
- Despise not prophesyings.
- Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
- Abstain from all appearance of evil.
- Brethren, pray for us.
- Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.
- I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

5:9. not appointed us to wrath.

Scriptures Speaking of God's Eternal Wrath

- Eternal Wrath. *Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*
- Eternal Wrath. *Luke 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*
- Eternal Wrath. *John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*
- Eternal Wrath. *Romans 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*
- Eternal Wrath. *Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*
- Eternal Wrath *Romans 9:22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:*
- Eternal Wrath. *Ephesians 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

- Eternal Wrath. *Colossians 3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*
- Eternal Wrath. *1 Thessalonians 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*
- Eternal Wrath. *1 Thessalonians 2:16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*
- Eternal Wrath. *1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Scriptures Speaking of God's Temporal Wrath

- Temporal wrath. *Luke 21:23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.*
- Temporal wrath. *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*
- Temporal wrath. *Romans 2:8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,*
- Temporal wrath. *Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*
- Temporal wrath. *Hebrews 3:11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)*
- Temporal wrath. *Hebrews 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.*

- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 14:19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 15:7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 16:1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*
- Temporal wrath. *Revelation 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*