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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON  
1 THESSALONIANS

*by Adam Clarke.*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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# A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

# HOLY BIBLE

## OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

**BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.**

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE  
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

**For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.**

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

THESSALONICA, now called by the Turks *Salonichi*, a mere corruption of its ancient name, is a seaport town of Turkey in Europe, situated on what was called the *Thermaic* Gulf, and was anciently the capital of *Macedonia*. According to *Stephanus Byzantinus*, it was embellished and enlarged by *Philip*, king of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, who called it *Thessalonica*, or the *Victory of Thessalia*, on account of the *victory* he obtained there over the *Thessalians*; prior to which it was called *Thermæ*. *Strabo*, *Tzeizes*, and *Zonaras* say that it obtained the name of *Thessalonica* from *Thessalonica*, wife of *Cassander*, and daughter of *Philip*.

In 1431, it was taken from the Venetians by the Turks, in whose possession it still continues. It is still a large, rich, and populous city, being ten miles in circumference, and carrying on an extensive trade in *silk*, the principal merchants being Greek Christians and Jews.

Christianity has never been extinct in Thessalonica since the year 51 or 52, in which it was planted there by the Apostle Paul; see Acts 17, &c. It contains at present thirty *churches* belonging to the Greek Christians, and as many Jewish *synagogues*, besides some Mohammedan *mosques*. Thessalonica is the see of an archbishop; and is well fortified, being surrounded with walls flanked with towers, and defended on the land side by a citadel; and near the harbour, with three forts.

St. Paul, in company with Silas, first preached the Gospel in this city and the adjacent country, about A. D. 52 or 53. Though the Jews, who were sojourners in this city, rejected the Gospel in general, yet a great multitude of the *devout Greeks*, i.e., such as were proselytes to Judaism, or the descendants of Jewish parents, born and naturalized in Greece, *believed and associated with Paul and Silas*, and *not a few of the chief women of the city embraced the Christian faith*. ~~<4170>~~ **Acts 17:4.**

As the Jews found that, according to the doctrine of the Gospel, the *Gentiles* were called to enjoy the same privileges with themselves, without being obliged to submit to circumcision and other ordinances of the law, they persecuted that Gospel, and those who proclaimed it; for, *moved with indignation*, they employed *certain lewd fellows of the baser sort*—the

beasts of the people, *set the city on an uproar, assaulted the house of Jason*, where the apostles lodged, dragged *him* and *certain brethren before the rulers*, and charged them with seditious designs and treason against the Roman emperor! The apostles escaped, and got to *Berea*, where they began anew their important evangelical labours: thither the Jews of Thessalonica, pursuing them, raised a fresh tumult; so that the apostle, being counselled by the brethren, made his escape to *Athens*; <sup><417B></sup>**Acts 17:5-15**. Thus he followed the command of his Master: *Being persecuted in one city, he fled to another*; not to hide himself, but to proclaim, in every place, the saving truths of the Gospel of Christ.

It does not appear that St. Paul stayed long at *Athens*; he soon went thence to Corinth, where Timothy and Silas were, but probably not before Timothy met him, for whom he had sent, <sup><417B></sup>**Acts 17:15**, to come to him speedily; and whom, it appears, he sent immediately back to Thessalonica, to establish the believers there, and comfort them concerning the faith; <sup><30D></sup>**1 Thessalonians 3:2**. While Paul abode at Corinth, Timothy and Silas came to him from Thessalonica, and hearing by them of the steadfastness of the Thessalonian converts in the faith of Christ, he wrote this epistle, and shortly after the second, to comfort and encourage them; to give them farther instructions in the doctrines of Christianity, and to rectify some mistaken views, relative to the day of judgment, which had been propagated amongst them. See the preface to the second epistle.

Who the persons were who formed the apostolic Church at Thessalonica is not easy to determine. They were not *Jews*, for these in general persecuted the apostle and the Gospel in this place. We are therefore left to infer that the Church was formed, 1st, of *Jewish proselytes*, called, <sup><417B></sup>**Acts 17:4**, *devout Greeks*. And 2dly, of converts from *heathenism*; for, on the preaching of the Gospel to them, it is said; <sup><30D></sup>**1 Thessalonians 1:9**, that *they turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God*. Though *some* of the Jews believed on the preaching of Paul and Silas, <sup><417B></sup>**Acts 17:3, 4**, yet it is evident that the great bulk of the Church was composed of Grecian proselytes and converts from heathenism. Hence we find in this epistle but few allusions to the Jews, and but few references to the peculiarities of their religious or civil institutions.

There is a remarkable reading in the text of <sup><417B></sup>**Acts 17:4**, which I neglected to quote in the note on that place: instead of **των σεβομενων, ελληνων πολυ πληθος**, of devout Greeks a great multitude; the *Codex*

*Alexandrinus, Codex Beza*, both in the *Greek and Latin*, two others, with the *Vulgate*, read *των σεβομενων και ἑλληνων*, of the devout, i.e., those who worshipped the true God; AND of the Greeks, i.e., those who were previously *heathens, a great multitude*; so that, 1. Some few *Jews*; 2. A great number of those who *acknowledged the true God*; and 3. A great multitude of *heathens*, besides *many of the chief women*, received the doctrine preached by the apostle, and became members of the Church at Thessalonica. See Dr. Paley's remarks on this various reading.

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians is allowed on all hands to be the *first* epistle that St. Paul wrote to any of the Churches of God; and from it two things may be particularly noted: 1. That the apostle was full of the Spirit of love; 2. That the Church at Thessalonica was pure, upright, and faithful, as we scarcely find any reprehension in the whole epistle: the Thessalonian converts had FAITH that *worked*, a LOVE that *laboured*, and a HOPE which induced them to bear afflictions *patiently* and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This epistle has been *divided* into *different parts* by commentators; but these are arbitrary, the apostle having made no division of this kind; for, although he treats of several subjects, yet he has not so distinguished them from each other as to show that he had any formal division in his mind. In the divisions imposed on this epistle by commentators we do not find *two* of them alike; a full proof that the apostle has made no divisions, else some of these learned men would have certainly found them out. *Technical distinctions* of this nature are of little use to a proper understanding of the contents of this epistle.

## **THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.**

### *Chronological Notes relative to this Epistle.*

- Year of the Constantinopolitan era of the world, or that used by the Byzantine historians, 5560.
- Year of the Alexandrian era of the world, 5554.
- Year of the Antiochian era of the world, 5544.
- Year of the Julian period, 4762.
- Year of the world, according to Archbishop Usher, 4056.
- Year of the world, according to Eusebius, in his Chronicon, 4280.
- Year of the minor Jewish era of the world, or that in common use, 3812.
- Year of the Greater Rabbinical era of the world, 4411.
- Year from the Flood, according to Archbishop Usher, and the English Bible, 2400.
- Year of the Cali yuga, or Indian era of the Deluge, 3154.
- Year of the era of Iphitus, or since the first commencement of the Olympic games, 992.
- Year of the era of Nabonassar, king of Babylon, 799.
- Year of the CCVIIth Olympiad, 4.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Fabius Pictor, 799.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Frontinus, 803.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to the Fasti Capitolini, 804.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Varro, which was that most generally used, 805.
- Year of the era of the Seleucidæ, 364.
- Year of the Cæsarean era of Antioch, 100.
- Year of the Julian era, 97.
- Year of the Spanish era, 90.
- Year from the birth of Jesus Christ according to Archbishop Usher, 56.
- Year of the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 52.
- Year of Ventidius Cumanus, governor of the Jews, 4.

- Year of Vologesus, king of the Parthians, 3.
- Year of Caius Numidius Quadratus, governor of Syria, 2.
- Year of Ananias, high priest of the Jews, 8.
- Year of the Dionysian period, or Easter Cycle, 53.
- Year of the Grecian Cycle of nineteen years, or Common Golden Number, 15; or the first after the fifth embolismic.
- Year of the Jewish Cycle of nineteen years, 12, or the first after the fourth embolismic.
- Year of the Solar Cycle, 5.
- Dominical Letters, it being Bissextile, or Leap Year, BA.
- Day of the Jewish Passover, according to the Roman computation of time, the Calends of April, i.e. April 1st, which happened in this year on the Jewish Sabbath.
- Easter Sunday, April 2.
- Epact, or the moon's age on the 22d of March, or the Xth of the Calends of April, 4
- Epact, according to the present mode of computation, or the moon's age on New Year's day, or the Calends of January, 11.
- Monthly Epacts, or the moon's age on the Calends of each month respectively, (beginning with January,) 11, 13, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 18, 20, 20.
- Number of Direction, or the number of days from the twenty-first of March (or the XIth of the Calends of April) to the Jewish Passover, 10.
- Year of Claudius Cæsar, the fifth emperor of the Romans, 12.
- Roman Consuls, Publius Cornelius Sylla Faustus, and Lucius Salvius, Otho Titianus; and for the following year, (which is by some supposed to be the date of this epistle,) Decimus Junius Silanus, and Quintus Haterius Antoninus.

## CHAPTER 1.

*The inscription by Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus, to the Church of the Thessalonians, 1. St. Paul gives thanks to God for their good estate, and prays for their continuance in the faith, 2-4. Shows how*

*the Gospel came to them, and the blessed effects it produced in their life and conversation, 5-7, How it became published from them through Macedonia and Achaia, and how their faith was everywhere celebrated, 8. He shows farther, that the Thessalonians had turned from idolatry, become worshippers of the true God, and were waiting for the revelation of Christ, 9, 10.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 1.

**Verse 1. Paul, and: Silvanus, and Timotheus]** Though St. Paul *himself* dictated this letter, yet he joins the names of Silas and Timothy, because they had been with him at Thessalonica, and were well known there. See <sup><4170></sup>Acts 17:4, 14.

**And Silvanus]** This was certainly the same as *Silas*, who was St. Paul's companion in all his journeys through Asia Minor and Greece; see <sup><4152></sup>Acts 15:22; 16:19; 17:4, 10. Him and Timothy, the apostle took with him into Macedonia, and they continued at Berea when the apostle went from thence to Athens; from this place St. Paul sent for them to come to him speedily, and, though it is not said that they came while he was at Athens, yet it is most probable that they did; after which, having sent them to Thessalonica, he proceeded to Corinth, where they afterwards rejoined him, and from whence he wrote this epistle. See the *preface*.

**Verse 2. We give thanks]** See <sup><5103></sup>Philippians 1:3, 4, and <sup><5103></sup>Colossians 1:3; where the same forms of speech are used.

**Verse 3. Your work of faith]** This verse contains a very high character of the believers at Thessalonica. They had FAITH, not *speculative* and *indolent*, but *true, sound, and operative*; their *faith worked*. They had LOVE, not that *gazed* at and became enamoured of the perfections of God, but such a love as *laboured* with faith to fulfil the whole will of God. Faith worked; but love, because it can do more, did more, and therefore *laboured-worked* energetically, to promote the glory of God and the salvation of men. They had HOPE; not an idle, cold, heartless expectation of future good, from which they felt no excitement, and for which they could give no reason, but such a hope as produced a satisfying expectation of a future life and state of blessedness, the reality of which faith had descried, and love anticipated; a *hope*, not hasty and impatient to get out of the trials of life and possess the heavenly inheritance, but one that was as willing to



*endure hardships* as to *enjoy glory* itself, when God might be most honoured by this patient endurance. FAITH *worked*, LOVE *laboured*, and HOPE *endured patiently*.

It is not a mark of much grace to be longing to get to heaven because of the troubles and difficulties of the present life; they who love Christ are ever willing to suffer with him; and he may be as much glorified by *patient suffering*, as by the most *active faith* or *laborious love*. There are times in which, through affliction or other hinderances, we cannot *do* the will of God, but we can *suffer* it; and in such cases he seeks a heart that bears submissively, suffers patiently, and endures, as seeing him who is invisible, without repining or murmuring. This is as full a proof of Christian perfection as the most intense and ardent love. Meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering, are in our present state of more use to ourselves and others, and of more consequence in the sight of God, than all the ecstasies of the spirits of just men made perfect, and than all the raptures of an archangel. That Church or Christian society, the members of which manifest the *work of faith*, *labour of love*, and *patience of hope*, is most nearly allied to heaven, and is on the suburbs of glory.

**Verse 4. Knowing-your election of God.]** Being assured, from the doctrine which I have delivered to you, and which God has confirmed by various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, that he has *chosen* and *called* the Gentiles to the same privileges to which he *chose* and *called* the Jews; and that, as they have rejected the offers of the Gospel, God has now *elected* the Gentiles in their stead. This is the *election* which the Thessalonians *knew*; and of which the apostle treats at large in his Epistle to the *Romans*, and also in his Epistles to the *Galatians* and *Ephesians*. No irrelative, unconditional, eternal, and personal election to everlasting glory, is meant by the apostle. As God had chosen the Jews, whom, because of their obstinate unbelief, he had now rejected; *so* he had now chosen or elected the Gentiles. And in neither case was there any thing absolute; all was most specifically conditional, as far as their *final salvation* was concerned; without any merit on their side, they were *chosen* and *called* to those blessings which, if *rightly used*, would lead them to eternal glory. That these blessings could be *abused*-become finally useless and forfeited, they had an ample proof in the case of the Jews, who, after having been the *elect* of God for more than 2000 years, were now become *reprobates*.

**Verse 5. For our Gospel]** That is, the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ, and of your being elected to enjoy all the privileges to which the Jews were called, without being obliged to submit to circumcision, or fulfil the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law.

**Came not unto you in word only]** It was not by *simple teaching* or mere *reasoning* that the doctrines which we preached recommended themselves to you, we did not insist on your using this or the other religious institution; we insisted on a change of heart and life, and we held out the energy which was able to effect it.

**But also in power]** *εν δυναμει*. With *miraculous* manifestations, to your eyes and to your hearts, which induced you to acknowledge that this Gospel was the *power of God unto salvation*.

**And in the Holy Ghost]** By his influence upon your hearts, in changing and renewing them; and by the testimony which ye received from him, that you were accepted through the Beloved, and become the adopted children of God.

**And in much assurance]** *εν πληροφορια πολλη*. The Holy Spirit which was given you *left no doubt* on your mind, either with respect to the *general truth* of the doctrine, or the safety of your own state. Ye had the fullest assurance that the Gospel was true, and the fullest assurance that ye had received the remission of sins through that Gospel; the Spirit himself bearing witness with your spirit, that you are the sons and daughters of God Almighty.

**What manner of men we were]** How we *preached*, and how we *lived*; our *doctrines* and our *practices* ever corresponding. And *for your sakes* we sustained difficulties, endured hardships, and were incessant in our labours.

**Verse 6. Ye became followers of us]** Ye became *imitators*, *μιμηται*, of us—ye believed the same truths, walked in the same way, and minded the same thing; knowing that our doctrine was of the Lord, and that the way in which we walked was prescribed by himself, and that he also suffered the contradictions of ungodly men.

**Having received the word in much affliction]** That they received the doctrine of the Gospel in the midst of much persecution we may learn from the history in general, and from <sup><417></sup>Acts 17:5, 6.

**With joy of the Holy Ghost]** The consolations which they received, in consequence of believing in Christ, more than counterbalanced all the afflictions which they suffered from their persecutors.

**Verse 7. Ye were ensamples]** *τοπους*. *Types, models, or patterns;* according to which all the Churches in Macedonia and Achaia formed both their *creed* and their *conduct*.

**Verse 8. From you sounded out]** As Thessalonica was very conveniently situated for traffic, many merchants from thence traded through Macedonia, Achaia, and different parts of Greece. By these, the fame of the Thessalonians having received the doctrine of the Gospel was doubtless carried far and wide. And it appears that they had walked so conscientiously before God and man, that their friends could speak of them without a blush, and their adversaries could say nothing to their disgrace.

**Verse 9. How ye turned to God from idols]** This could not be spoken either of the *Jews* or of the *devout persons*, but of the *heathen Greeks*, and of such it appears that the majority of the Church was formed. See what is said on this subject in the *preface* to this epistle.

**To serve the living and true God]** The living God; in opposition to the idols, which were either *inanimate* stocks or stones, or the representations of *dead* men.

*The true God*-In opposition to the whole system of idolatry, which was *false* in the *objects* of its *adoration*, *false* in its *pretensions*, *false* in its *promises*, and *false* in all its *prospects*.

**Verse 10. And to wait for his Son from heaven]** To *expect* a *future state* of *glory*, and *resurrection* of the body, according to the Gospel doctrine, after the example of Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead, and ascended unto heaven, ever to appear in the presence of God for us.

**Delivered us from the wrath to come.]** From all the punishment due to us for our sins, and from the destruction which is about to come on the unbelieving and impenitent Jews.

This was the *news*, the *sounding out*, that went abroad concerning the converted Thessalonians. Every where it was said: They have believed the Gospel; they have renounced idolatry; they worship the living and true God; they have received the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; they are

happy in their souls, unspotted in their lives, and full of joy; expecting an eternal glory through that Christ who had died for and purged their sins, and who shall fashion their degraded bodies and make them like to his glorious body, and give them an eternal residence with himself in a state of blessedness.

These were glorious news; and, wherever they were told, prepared the way of the Gospel among the heathen. The mere *preaching* of the Gospel has done much to convince and convert sinners, but the *lives* of the sincere followers of Christ, as *illustrative* of the truth of these doctrines, have done much more: Truth represented in *action* seems to assume a *body*, and thus renders itself *palpable*. In heathen countries, which are under the dominion of Christian powers, the Gospel, though established there, does little good, because of the profane and irreligious lives of those who profess it. Why has not the whole peninsula of India been long since evangelized? The Gospel has been preached there; but the lives of the Europeans professing Christianity there have been, in general, profligate, sordid, and base. From them sounded out no good report of the Gospel; and therefore the *Mohammedans* continue to prefer their *Koran*, and the *Hindoos* their *Vedas* and *Shasters*, to the *Bible*. It should now ever be acknowledged, to the glory of God, that of late years a few apostolic men in that country are turning the tide in favour of the Gospel; and several eminent Europeans have warmly espoused the doctrine of Christ, and are labouring to circulate the *word of God* through the whole of British India.

## I THESSALONIANS

### CHAPTER 2.

*The apostle sets forth how the Gospel was brought and preached to the Thessalonians, in consequence of his being persecuted at Philippi, 1, 2. The manner in which the apostles preached, the matter of their doctrine, and the tenor of their lives, 3-11. He exhorts them to walk worthy of God, 12. And commends them for the manner in which they received the Gospel, 13. How they suffered from their own countrymen, as the first believers did from the Jews, who endeavoured to prevent the apostles from preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, 14-16. St. Paul's apology for his absence from them; and his earnest desire to see them, founded on his great affection for them, 17-20.*

#### NOTES ON CHAP. 2.

**Verse 1. Our entrance in unto you]** His first coming to preach the Gospel was particularly owned of the Lord, many of them having been converted under his ministry. This consideration gave him a *right* to deliver all the following exhortations.

**Verse 2. Shamefully entreated-at Philippi]** There Paul and Silas had been beaten with many stripes, shut up in the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks. See <sup><41623></sup>Acts 16:23, &c.; and the notes there.

**With much contention.]** The words *εν πολλω αγωνι* not only signify, *with intense labour and earnestness*, but may here mean, *exposed to the greatest danger; at the peril of our lives*. The Greek phrase quoted by Rosenmuller is to the point, *αγων προφασιν ουκ αναμενει*, *in danger we must not delay*-activity and despatch are then indispensably necessary.

**Verse 3. Our exhortation]** The word *παρακλησις* has a very extensive meaning; it signifies not only *exhortation* and *teaching* in general, but also *encouragement*, *consolation*, and the like. When the apostles exhorted or admonished men, it was that they should turn from *evil* to *good*, from *misery* to *happiness*, from *Satan* to *God*, and from *hell* to *heaven*. Their exhortations having this object, every word was *consolatory*; and as the

truth which they delivered was unquestionable, therefore their ministry was a subject of the highest encouragement and joy.

**Not of deceit]** We did not endeavour to allure you with false pretences; we did not deceive you, nor were we deceived ourselves.

**Nor of uncleanness]** Such as the teachings of the Gentile philosophers were; their supreme gods were celebrated for their adulteries, fornications, uncleannesses, thefts, barbarities, and profligacies of the most odious kind. Our Gospel was pure; came from the pure and holy God; was accompanied with the influences of the Holy Spirit, and produced purity both in the hearts and lives of all that received it.

**Nor in guile]** We had no false pretences, and were influenced by no sinister motives.

**Verse 4. But as we were allowed of God]** *καθως δεδοκιμασμεθα*. As we were accounted worthy to be put in trust-as God put confidence in us, and sent us on his most especial message to mankind, *even so we speak*, keeping the dignity of our high calling continually in view; and, acting as in the *sight of God*, we speak *not to please* or flatter men, though our doctrine is the most *consolatory* that can be conceived, but to *please* that *God who searcheth the heart*, and before whom all our motives are constantly without a veil.

**Verse 5. Flattering words]** Though we proclaimed the *Gospel* or glad tidings, yet we showed that without holiness none should see the Lord.

**Ye know]** That while we preached the whole Gospel we never gave any countenance to sin.

**For a cloak of covetousness]** We did not seek temporal emolument; nor did we preach the Gospel for a cloak to our covetousness: *God is witness* that we did not; we sought *you*, not *yours*. Hear this, ye that preach the Gospel! Can ye call God to witness that in preaching it ye have no end in view by your ministry but his glory in the salvation of souls? Or do ye enter into the priesthood for a morsel of bread, or for what is ominously and impiously called a *living*, a *benefice*? In better days your place and office were called a *cure of souls*; what *care* have *you* for the *souls* of them by whose labours you are in general more than sufficiently supported? Is it your study, your earnest labour, to bring sinners to God; to preach among your heathen parishioners the unsearchable riches of Christ?

But I should speak to the *thousands* who have no *parishes*, but who have their *chapels*, their *congregations*, *pew* and *seat rents*, &c., &c. Is it for the sake of *these* that ye have *entered* or continue in the Gospel ministry? Is God witness that, in all these things, ye have no cloak of covetousness? Happy is the man who can say so, whether he has the provision which the law of the land allows him, or whether he lives on the free-will offerings of the people.

The faithful labourer is worthy of his hire; for the ox that treads out the corn should not be muzzled; and they that preach the Gospel should *live*, not *riot*, by the Gospel. But wo to that man who enters into the *labour* for the sake of the *hire*! he knows not Christ; and how can he preach him?

**Verse 6. Nor of men sought we glory]** As we preached not for worldly gain, so we preached not for popular applause; we had what we sought for—the approbation of God, and the testimony of a good conscience.

**When we might have been burdensome]** They had a right to their maintenance while they devoted themselves wholly to the work of the Gospel for the sake of the people's souls. Others understand the words **εὐβαρεὶ εἶναι**, *to be honourable*; we sought no *glory* of you nor of others, though we were *honourable* as the apostles of Christ. **dbk cabod**, in Hebrew, to which the Greek **βαρος** answers, signifies not only *weight* but *glory*; and in both these senses the apostle uses it, <sup>40417</sup>**2 Corinthians 4:17**.

**Verse 7. But we were gentle among you]** Far from assuming the authority which we had, we acted towards you as a tender nurse or parent does to a delicate child. We fed, counselled, cherished, and bore with you; we taught you to walk, preserved you from stumbling, and led you in a right path.

Instead of **ἡπιοι**, *gentle*, many MSS., and several versions and fathers, have **νηπιοι**, *young children*. But this never can be considered the original reading, the scope of the place being totally opposed to it. It is the Thessalonians whom the apostle considers as *young children*, and *himself* and fellow labourers as the *nurse*; he could with no propriety say that he was among them as a *little child*, while himself professed to be *their nurse*.

**Verse 8. Being affectionately desirous of you]** We had such intense love for you that we were not only willing and forward to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to you, but also to give our *own lives* for

your sake, *because ye were dear*, **διότι αγαπητοι ημιν**, *because ye were beloved by us*. The words used here by the apostle are expressive of the strongest affection and attachment.

**Verse 9. Ye remember-our labour and travail]** From this it appears that St. Paul spent much more time at Thessalonica than is generally supposed; for the expressions in this verse denote a long continuance of a constantly exercised ministry, interrupted only by manual labour for their own support; *labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to you*. Probably Paul and his companions worked with their hands by *day*, and spent a considerable part of the *night*, or *evenings*, in preaching Christ to the people.

**Verse 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily]** i.e., in reference to GOD; how *justly* in reference to *men*; and *unblamably* in reference to our *spirit* and *conduct*, as ministers of Christ, *we behaved ourselves among you*. What a consciousness of his own integrity must St. Paul have had to use the expressions that are here! No hypocrite, and none who did the work of the Lord carelessly, could make such an appeal both to God and man.

**Verse 11. How we exhorted]** What pastoral care is marked here! They *exhorted*-were continually teaching and instructing, the objects of their charge; this was their *general* work.

**And comforted]** They found many under trials and temptations, and those they encouraged.

**And charged]** **μαρτυρουμενοι**. Continued *witness* to the people that all the threatenings and promises of God were true; that he required faith, love, and obedience; that he could not behold sin with allowance; that Jesus died to save them from their sins; and that, without holiness, none should see God. And all these things they did, not in a general way only, but they spoke to *every man*; none was left unnoticed, unadmonished, un comforted. The spirit in which they performed all these branches of the pastoral care was that which was most likely to insure success; as a *father* treats his children, so they treated every member of the Church.

**Verse 12. That ye would walk worthy of God]** That they should, in every respect, act up to their high calling, that it would not be a reproach to the God of holiness to acknowledge them as his sons and daughters. **See**



Clarke's notes on "<sup><<4001></sup>Ephesians 4:1"; "<sup><<3012></sup>Philippians 1:27"; and "<sup><<51010></sup>Colossians 1:10".

**His Kingdom and glory.]** His *Church* here, for that is the *kingdom of God* among men; and his *glory* hereafter, for that is the state to which the dispensations of grace in his *Church* lead. The words, how ever, may be a *hendiadys*, and signify his *glorious kingdom*.

**Verse 13. Ye received the word of God]** Ye received the *doctrine* of God, not as any thing fabricated by *man*, but as coming immediately from God himself, we being only his *messengers* to declare what he had previously revealed to us. And ye have had the fullest proof that ye have not believed in vain; for that doctrine, under the power and influence of the Holy Ghost, has *worked most powerfully* in you, filling you with light, life, and holiness.

**Verse 14. Ye-became followers of the Churches of God]** There is not a word here of the *Church of Rome* being the *model* after which the other Churches were to be formed; it had no such pre-eminence: this honour belonged to the *Churches of Judea*; it was according to *them*, not the Church at *Rome*, that the Asiatic Churches were modelled. The purest of all the apostolic Churches was that of the *Thessalonians*, and this was formed after the Christian Churches in *Judea*.

Had any pre-eminence or authority belonged to the Church of Rome, the apostle would have proposed this as a model to all those which he formed either in Judea, Asia Minor, Greece, or Italy.

**Ye also have suffered-of your own countrymen]** It is worthy of remark that, in almost every case, the *Jews* were the leaders of all persecutions against the apostles and the infant Church. And what they could not do *themselves*, they instigated others to do; and, by gathering together lewd fellows of the baser sort from among the Gentiles, they made frequent uproars, and especially at Thessalonica, where the opposition to the Gospel was very high, and the persecution of the Christians very hot.

**Verses 15. & 16. Who hath killed the Lord Jesus, &c.]** What a finished but just character is this of the Jews! 1. *They slew the Lord Jesus*, through the most unprincipled and fell malice. 2. *They killed their own prophets*; there was no time in which the seed of the serpent did not hate and oppose spiritual things, they slew even their own prophets who declared to them

the will of God. 3. They *persecuted the apostles*; showing the same spirit of enmity to the *Gospel* which they had shown to the *law*. 4. *They did not please God*, nor seek to please him; though they pretended that their opposition to the Gospel was through their *zeal for God's glory*, they were *hypocrites* of the worst kind. 5. *They were contrary to all men*; they hated the whole human race, and judged and wished them to perdition. 6. *They forbade the apostles to preach to the Gentiles, lest they should be saved*; this was an inveteracy of malice completely superhuman; they persecuted the body to death, and the soul to damnation! They were afraid that the Gentiles should get their souls saved if the Gospel was preached to them! 7. *They filled up their sins always*; they had no mere *purposes* or *outlines* of iniquity, all were filled up; every *evil purpose* was followed, as far as possible, with a *wicked act*! Is it any wonder, therefore, that *wrath* should *come upon them to the uttermost*? It is to be reckoned among the highest mercies of God that the whole nation was not pursued by the Divine justice to utter and final extinction.

**Verse 17. Being taken from you for a short time]** Through the persecution raised by the Jews, see Acts 17., he was obliged to leave Thessalonica, and yield to a storm that it would have been useless for him to have withstood.

**Being taken from you-in presence, not in heart]** The apostle had compared himself to a *parent* or *nurse*, <sup><small>συνή</small></sup> **1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11**; and the people he considered as his most beloved children; here he represents himself as feeling what an affectionate father must feel when *torn from his children*; for this is the import of the word **απορφανισθεντες**, *bereft of children*, which we tamely translate *being taken from you*.

**Endeavoured the more abundantly]** His separation from them did not destroy his parental feelings, and the manner in which he was obliged to leave them increased his desire to visit them as soon as possible.

**Verse 18. Even I Paul]** He had already sent Timothy and Silas to them; but he himself was anxious to see them, and had purposed this *once and again, but Satan hindered*; i.e., some *adversary*, as the word means, whether the *devil* himself, or some of his children. There was, however, such a storm of persecution raised up against him, that his friends did not think it prudent to permit him to go till the storm had been somewhat allayed.

**Verse 19. For what is our hope]** I can have no prospects from earth; I have forsaken all for the Gospel; and esteem every thing it can afford as dross and dung, that I may gain Christ. Why then should I continually labour at the risk of my life, preaching the Gospel? Is it not to get your souls saved, that ye may be *my crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ?* For this I labour; and, having *planted* the Gospel among you, I wish to take every opportunity of *watering* it, that it may grow up unto eternal life.

**Verse 20. For ye are our glory and joy.]** Ye are the seal of our apostleship; your conversion and steadiness are a full proof that God hath sent us. Converts to Christ are our ornaments; persevering believers, our joy in the day of judgment.

1. IN the preceding chapter we have the *character* and *marks* of a genuine pastor laid down in such a manner as not to be misunderstood. Every man who preaches the Gospel should carefully read *this* chapter and examine himself by it. Most preachers, on reading it conscientiously, will either give up their place to others, or purpose to do the work of the Lord more fervently for the future. He who expects nothing but the approbation of Christ, will labour for Christ; and he, who has the glory of his Master only in view, will ever have his Master's presence and blessing. Those who enter into this work for human applause or secular emolument, may have their reward; but in that, one smile of approbation from Christ is not included.

2. God, for reasons best known to himself, often permits the most pious and benevolent purposes of his servants to be frustrated for a time. It is well that the good purpose was in the heart; but God knows the *fittest time* and *place* to bring it to effect. Satan is ever opposing all that is pure, good, and benevolent and he *appears* frequently to succeed; but this is not *really* the case: if at any time he prevents the followers of God from bringing a pious purpose into effect, that was the time in which it could not have been done to secure its full effect. Let the purpose be retained, and the best *time* and *place* will be duly provided. As Satan *constantly* endeavours to oppose every good work, no wonder he is found opposing a good purpose, even at *the very time* that God sees it improper to bring it to the intended effect. *Man proposes, but God disposes.*

3. The apostle speaks of the *wrath* coming upon the Jews: it was about twenty years after this that their city was destroyed, their temple burnt, more than a million of them destroyed, their civil polity utterly subverted,

and what remained of this wretched nation scattered to all the winds of heaven; and in this state, without a nation, without a temple, without worship, and apparently without any religion, they continue, to this day, a monument of God's displeasure, and a proof of the Divine inspiration both of the prophets and apostles, who, in the most explicit manner, had predicted all the evils which have since befallen them. Their crimes were great; to these their punishment is proportioned. For what end God has preserved them distinct from all the people of the earth among whom they sojourn, we cannot pretend to say; but it must unquestionably be for an object of the very highest importance. In the meantime, let the Christian world treat them with humanity and mercy.

## I THESSALONIANS

### CHAPTER 3.

*St Paul informs them how, being hindered himself from visiting them, he had sent Timothy to comfort them, of whom he gives a high character, 1, 2. Shows that trials and difficulties are unavoidable in the present state, 3, 4. Mentions the joy he had on hearing by Timothy of their steadiness in the faith, for which he returns thanks to God; and prays earnestly for their increase, 5-10. Prays also that God may afford him an opportunity of seeing them, 11. And that they may abound in love to God and one another, and be unblamable in holiness at the coming of Christ, 12, 13.*

#### NOTES ON CHAP. 3.

**Verse 1. Wherefore, when we could no longer, &c.]** The apostle was anxious to hear of their state, and as he could obtain no information without sending a messenger express, he therefore sent Timothy from Athens; choosing rather to be left alone, than to continue any longer in uncertainty relative to their state.

**Verse 2. Timotheus, our brother]** It appears that Timothy was but a youth when converted to God; he had now however been some years in the work of God; Paul therefore calls him his *brother*, being one of the same Christian *family*, a *son of God* by *adoption*: elsewhere he calls him *his own son*, ~~SON~~ **1 Timothy 1:2**; and his *dearly beloved son*, ~~SON~~ **2 Timothy 1:2**; because he was brought to the knowledge of the true God, and to salvation by Christ, through the apostle's instrumentality. See the *preface* to the First Epistle to Timothy.

**Minister of God]** Employed by God to preach the Gospel; this was God's work, and he had appointed Timothy to do it, and to do it at this time in conjunction with St. Paul; and therefore he calls him his *fellow labourer*. There were no *sinecures* then; preaching the Gospel was God's work; the primitive preachers were his *workmen*, and *laboured* in this calling. It is the same still, but who *works*?

**Verse 3. That no man should be moved]** That is, caused to apostatize from Christianity.

**We are appointed thereunto.]** εἰς τοῦτο κειμεθα. *We are exposed to this, we lie open to such, they are unavoidable* in the present state of things; as the Latins say, *sic est sors nostra*, “this is our lot.” God *appoints* nothing of this kind, but he *permits* it: for he has made man a *free agent*.

**Verse 4. That we should suffer tribulation]** I prepared you for it, because I knew that it was according to their nature for wicked men to persecute the followers of God.

**Verse 5. For this cause]** Knowing that you would be persecuted, and knowing that your apostasy was possible, *I sent to know your faith*-whether you continued steadfast in the truth, lest you might have been tempted by Satan to consult your present ease, and abandon the Gospel, for which you suffered persecution.

**Verse 6. When Timotheus came]** We have already seen that he and Silas stayed behind at Thessalonica, when Paul was obliged to leave it; for the persecution seems to have been principally directed against him. When Paul came to Athens, he sent pressing to him and Silas to come to him with all speed to that city. We are not informed that they did come, but it is most likely that they did, and that Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to comfort and build up these new converts. After Paul had sent away Timothy, it is likely he went himself straight to Corinth, and there Timothy soon after met him, with the good news of the steadiness of the Thessalonian Church.

**Your faith and charity]** The *good tidings* which Timothy brought from Thessalonica consisted of *three* particulars: 1. Their *faith*; they continued steadfast in their belief of the Gospel. 2. Their *charity*; they loved one another, and lived in unity and harmony. 3. They were *affectionately attached* to the apostle; they had *good remembrance* of him, and *desired earnestly* to see him.

**Verse 7. Therefore-we were comforted ]** My afflictions and persecutions seemed trifles when I heard of your perseverance in the faith.

**Verse 8. For now we live]** Your steadfastness in the faith gives me new life and comfort; I now feel that I live to some purpose, as my labour in the Lord is not in vain.

**Verse 9. What thanks can we render to God]** The high satisfaction and uncommon joy which the apostle felt are strongly depicted in the language he uses. How near his heart did the success of his ministry lie! It was not enough for him that he preached so often, laboured so hard, suffered so much; what were all these if souls were not converted? And what were all conversions, if those who embraced the Gospel did not walk steadily in the way to heaven, and persevere?

**Verse 10. Night and day praying exceedingly]** Supplicating God at *all times*; mingling this with all my prayers; **υπερεκπερισσου δεομενοι**, abounding and superabounding in my entreaties to God to permit me to revisit you. How strong was his affection for this Church!

**Might perfect that which is lacking]** That I might have the opportunity of giving you the fullest instructions in the doctrine of Christ, that ye might have every thing in the most ample *detail*; so that the great *outlines* of truth which you already know may be *filled up*, that ye may be perfectly fitted to every good word and work.

**Verse 11. Now God himself and our Father]** That is: God who is our Father, who has *adopted* us into the *heavenly family*, and called us his *sons* and *daughters*.

**Direct our way]** As he was employed in God's work he dared not consult his own inclinations, he looked for continual directions from God, *where*, *when*, and *how* to do his Master's work.

**Verse 12. Make you to increase and abound in love]** They had already love to each other, so as to unite them in one Christian body; and he prays that they may have an *increase* and an *abundance* of it; that they might feel the same love to each other which he felt for them all.

**Verse 13. To the end he may establish your hearts]** Without *love* to God and man, there can be no establishment in the religion of Christ. It is *love* that produces both *solidity* and *continuance*. And, as *love is the fulfilling of the law*, he who is filled with love is *unblamable in holiness*: for he who has the love of God in him is a partaker of the Divine nature, for *God is love*.

**At the coming of our Lord]** God is coming to judge the world; every hour that passes on in the general lapse of time is advancing his approach; whatsoever he does is in reference to this great event: and whatsoever we

do should be in reference to the same. But who in that great day shall give up his accounts with joy? That person only whose heart is established in holiness *before God*; i.e., so as to bear the eye and strict scrutiny of his Judge. Reader, lay this to heart, for thou knowest not what a moment may bring forth. When thy soul departs from thy body it will be the *coming of the Lord to thee*.



## I THESSALONIANS

### CHAPTER 4.

*The apostle exhorts them to attend to the directions which he had already given them, that they might know how to walk and please God, 1, 2. Gives them exhortations concerning continence, chastity, and matrimonial fidelity, 3-8. Speaks concerning their love to each other, and love to the Churches of Christ; and exhorts them to continue and increase in it, 9, 10. Counsels them to observe an inoffensive conduct, to mind their own affairs, to do their own business, and to live honestly, 11, 12. Not to sorrow for the dead, as persons who have no hope of a resurrection; because to Christians the resurrection of Christ is a proof of the resurrection of his followers, 13, 14. Gives a short but awful description of the appearing of Christ to judge the world, 15.*

#### NOTES ON CHAP. 4.

**Verse 1. We beseech you, brethren, and exhort]** We give you proper *instructions* in heavenly things, and *request* you to attend to our advice. The apostle used the most pressing entreaties; for he had a strong and affectionate desire that this Church should excel in all righteousness and true holiness.

**Please God more and more.]** God sets no *bounds* to the communications of his grace and Spirit to them that are faithful. And as there are no bounds to the *graces*, so there should be none to the *exercise* of those graces. No man can ever *feel* that he loves God too much, or that he loves man too much for God's sake.

**Verse 2. Ye know what commandments we gave you]** This refers to his instructions while he was among them; and to instructions on particular subjects, which he does not *recapitulate*, but only *hints* at.

**Verse 3. This is the will of God, even your sanctification]** God has called you to holiness; he requires that you should be holy; for without holiness none can see the Lord. This is the *general* calling, but in it many particulars are included. Some of these he proceeds to mention; and it is

very likely that these had been points on which he gave them particular instructions while among them.

**That ye should abstain from fornication]** The word *πορνεία*, as we have seen in other places, includes *all sorts of uncleanness*; and it was probably this consideration that induced several MSS., some *versions* and *fathers*, to add here *πάσης*, all. Directions of this kind were peculiarly necessary among the Greeks, and indeed heathens in general, who were strongly addicted to such vices.

**Verse 4. How to possess his vessel]** Let every man use his *wife* for the purpose alone for which God created her, and instituted *marriage*. The word *ακευος* answers to the Hebrew *yl k keli*, which, though it signifies *vessel* in general, has several other meanings. That the rabbins frequently express *wife* by it, *Schoettgen* largely proves; and to me it appears very probable that the apostle uses it in that sense here. St. Peter calls the wife the *weaker VESSEL*, ~~1~~ **1 Peter 3:7**. Others think that the *body* is meant, which is the *vessel* in which the *soul* dwells. In this sense St. Paul uses it, ~~2~~ **2 Corinthians 4:7**: *We have this treasure in earthen VESSELS*; and in this sense it is used by both Greek and Roman authors. There is a *third* sense which interpreters have put on the word, which I forbear to name. The general sense is plain; *purity* and *continency* are most obviously intended, whether the word be understood as referring to the *wife* or the *husband*, as the following verse sufficiently proves.

**Verse 5. Not in the lust of concupiscence]** Having no rational object, aim, nor end. Some say, “not like *beasts*;” but this does not apply as they who use it wish, for the males and females of the brute creation are regular and consistent in their intercourse, and scarcely ever exceed such bounds as reason itself would prescribe to those most capable of observing and obeying its dictates.

**The Gentiles which know not God]** These are the *beasts*; their own *brutes* are *rational creatures* when compared with them. Enough has been said on this subject on Romans 1, and 2: They who wish to see more may consult *Juvenal*, and particularly his 6th and 9th Satires; and indeed all the writers on Greek and Roman morals.

**Verse 6. That no man go beyond and defraud his brother]** That no man should by any means endeavour to corrupt the wife of another, or to alienate her affections or fidelity from her husband; this I believe to be the

apostle's meaning, though some understand it of *covetousness*, *overreaching*, *tricking*, *cheating*, and *cozenage* in general.

**The Lord is the avenger of all such]** He takes up the cause of the injured husband wherever the case has not been detected by man, and *all such vices* he will signally punish. Every species of uncleanness was practised among the heathens, nor were they reputed as *vices*. Their *gods*, their *emperors*, their *philosophers*, and their *great* men in general, gave them examples of every species of impurity; and they had no system of ethics which forbade these abominations. The Christian religion not only discountenances these things, but forbids them on the most awful penalties; therefore wherever Christianity prevails, these vices, if practised at all, are obliged to seek the deepest gloom of midnight to cover them from the eyes of men. On this account they are comparatively rare, even among the mere professors of Christianity; they *exist*, but do not *flourish*.

**Verse 7. God hath not called us unto uncleanness]** He is the creator of male and female, and the institutor of marriage, and he has called men and women to this state; but the *end* of this and all the other callings of God to man is *holiness*, not *uncleanness*. And they who use the marriage state as he directs, will find it conducive to their holiness and perfection.

**Verse 8. He therefore that despiseth]** He who will not receive these teachings, and is led either to undervalue or despise them, despises not us but God, from whom we have received our commission, and by whose Spirit we give these directions. See Clarke on “<sup><3045></sup>1 Thessalonians 4:15”.

**Hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.]** Instead of *εις ημας*, *unto US*, *εις υμας*, *unto YOU*, is the reading of BDEFG, a great many others, the Syriac, all the Arabic, Armenian, later Syriac in the margin, some of the *Itala*, *Clement*, *Didymus*, and *Ambrosiaster*; this seems to be the better reading. God has taught *us* that we may teach *you*; and he has also given *you* his Holy Spirit that ye might understand and be enabled to practise these things. It is one thing to *receive a revelation* from the Spirit of God; it is another thing to *receive that Spirit* to enable a man to live according to that revelation. In the first sense the apostles alone received this Holy Spirit; in the latter sense all true Christians, as well as the Thessalonians, receive it. I think *υμας*, *you*, is the true reading, and that it is confirmed by the following verse: *For ye yourselves are TAUGHT OF GOD to love one another*. Griesbach has inserted it in the margin, but has not admitted it

into the text, because it has not what he deemed full support from those MSS. which are of the *Alexandrian recension*; but he thought its genuineness very probable.

**Verse 9. Touching brotherly love]** They were remarkable for this; and though the apostle appears to have had this as a topic on which he intended to write to them, yet, from the account which he received of their prosperous state by Timothy, he finds that it is unnecessary to spend any time in inculcating a doctrine which they fully understood and practised. See <sup><51046></sup>**1 Thessalonians 3:6.**

**Verse 10. Ye do it toward all the brethren]** Ye not only love one another at Thessalonica, but ye love all the brethren in Macedonia; ye consider them all as children of the same Father; and that all the Churches which are in Christ make one great and glorious *body*, of which he is the *head*.

**Verse 11. That ye study to be quiet]** Though in general the Church at Thessalonica was pure and exemplary, yet there seem to have been some *idle, tattling* people among them, who disturbed the peace of others; persons who, under the pretence of religion, *gadded about from house to house*; did not *work*, but were burdensome to others; and were continually *meddling* with other people's business, *making parties*, and procuring their bread by religious gossipping. To these the apostle gives those directions which the whole Church of God should enforce wherever such troublesome and dangerous people are found; viz: That they should *study to be quiet*, *ησυχάζειν*, *to hold their peace*, as their religious cant will never promote true religion; that they should *do their own business*, and let that of others alone; and that they should *work with their own hands*, and not be a burden to the Church of God, or to those well meaning but weak and inconsiderate people who entertain them, being imposed on by their apparent sanctity and glozing conversation. An *idle* person, though able to discourse like an angel, or pray like an apostle, cannot be a Christian; all such are hypocrites and deceivers; the true members of the Church of Christ *walk, work, and labour*.

**Verse 12. That ye may walk honestly]** *ευσχημονως*. *Becomingly, decently, respectably*; as is *consistent* with the *purity, holiness, gravity, and usefulness* of your Christian calling.

**Them that are without]** The unconverted *Gentiles* and Jews. See this expression explained at large on <sup><51046></sup>**Colossians 4:5.**

That **ye may have lack of nothing.**] That ye may be able to get your bread by honest labour, which God will ever bless; and be chargeable to no man. He that is dependent on another is necessarily in bondage; and he who is able to get his own bread by the sweat of his brow, should not be under obligation even to a king.

I do not recollect whether, in any other part of this work, I have given the following story from the *Hatem Tai Nameh*. Hatem Tai was an Arabian nobleman, who flourished some time before the Mahommedan era; he was reputed the most *generous* and *liberal* man in all the east. One day he slew one hundred camels, and made a feast, to which all the Arabian lords and all the peasantry in the district were invited. About the time of the feast he took a walk towards a neighbouring wood, to see if he could find any person whom he might invite to partake of the entertainment which he had then provided. Walking along the skirt of the wood, he espied an old man coming out of it, laden with a burden of faggots; he accosted him and asked if he had not heard of the entertainment made that day by *Hatem Tai*. The old man answered in the affirmative. He asked him why he did not attend and partake with the rest. The old man answered: "He that is able to gain his bread even by collecting faggots in the wood, should not be beholden even to *Hatem Tai*." This is a noble saying, and has long been a rule of conduct to the writer of this note.

**Verse 13. I would not have you to be ignorant]** Instead of *εχομεν*, *have*, *θελομεν*, *wish*, is the reading of ADEFG, many others, besides the *Arabic*, *Æthiopic*, *Armenian*, some of the *Slavonian*, the *Vulgate*, and *Itala*, with many of the Greek *fathers*. This is undoubtedly the true reading: *Brethren, I would not wish you to be ignorant; or, I would not that you should be ignorant.*

This was probably one of the points which were *lacking in their faith*, that he wished to go to Thessalonica to instruct them in.

**Them which are asleep]** That is, those who are *dead*. It is supposed that the apostle had heard that the Thessalonians continued to lament over their dead, as the heathens did in general who had *no hope* of the resurrection of the body; and that they had been puzzled concerning the doctrine of the resurrection. To set them right on this important subject, he delivers three important truths: 1. He asserts, as he had done before, that they who died in the Lord should have, in virtue of Christ's resurrection, a resurrection unto eternal life and blessedness. 2. He makes a new discovery, that the

*last generation* should not die at all, but be in a moment changed to immortals. 3. He adds another new discovery, that, though the living should not die, but be transformed, yet the dead should first be raised, and be made glorious and immortal; and so, in some measure, have the preference and advantage of such as shall then be found alive. See *Dodd*.

**Verse 14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again]** εἰ γάρ.

*Seeing that we believe*; knowing that the *resurrection* of Christ is as fully authenticated as his death.

**Even so them]** It necessarily follows that them who *sleep-die*, *in him*-in the faith of the Gospel, *will God bring with him*-he will raise them up as Jesus was raised from the dead, in the same manner, i.e. by his own eternal power and energy; and he will bring them *with him*-with Christ, for he is the *head* of the Church, which is his *body*.

**Verse 15. This we say unto you by the word of the Lord]** This I have, by *express revelation*, from the Lord: what he now delivers, he gives as coming immediately from the Spirit of God. Indeed, human reason could not have found out the points which he immediately subjoins; no *conjectures* could lead to them. Allowing even the general doctrine of the resurrection to be believed, yet what follows does not flow from the premises; they are doctrines of pure revelation, and such as never could have been found out by human ingenuity. In no place does the apostle speak more confidently and positively of his *inspiration* than here; and we should prepare ourselves to receive some momentous and interesting truth.

**We which are alive, and remain]** By the pronoun *we* the apostle does not intend *himself*, and the *Thessalonians* to whom he was then writing; he is speaking of the genuine Christians which shall be found on earth when Christ comes to judgment. From not considering the manner in which the apostle uses this word, some have been led to suppose that he imagined that the day of judgment would take place in *that generation*, and while he and the then believers at Thessalonica *were in life*. But it is impossible that a man, under so direct an influence of the Holy Spirit, should be permitted to make such a mistake: nay, no man in the exercise of his sober reason could have formed such an opinion; there was nothing to warrant the supposition; no premises from which it could be fairly deduced; nor indeed any thing in the *circumstances* of the *Church*, nor in the *constitution* of the *world*, that could have suggested a hint of the kind. The apostle is speaking

of the thing *indefinitely* as to the *time* when it shall happen, but *positively* as to the ORDER that shall be then observed.

**Shall not prevent them which are asleep.]** Those who shall be found living in that day, though they shall not pass through death, but be suddenly changed, shall not go to glory *before* them that are dead, *for the dead in Christ shall rise first*—they shall be raised, their bodies made glorious, and be caught up to meet the Lord, *before* the others shall be changed. And this appears to be the meaning of the apostle’s words, **μη φθασωμεν**, which we translate *shall not prevent*; for, although this word *prevent*, from *præ* and *venio*, literally signifies to go before, yet we use it now in the sense of *to hinder* or *obstruct*. **φθανειν τινα** signifies the same, according to *Hesychius*, as **προηκειν**, *to go before*, **προλαμβανειν**, *to anticipate, be before*. Those who shall be found alive on that day shall not anticipate glory before the dead in Christ; for they shall rise *first*, and begin the enjoyment of it before the others shall be changed. This appears to be the apostle’s meaning.

**Verse 16. The Lord himself]** That is: Jesus Christ *shall descend from heaven*; shall descend in like manner as he was seen by his disciples to ascend, i.e. in his human form, but now infinitely more glorious; for *thousands of thousands shall minister unto him*, and *ten thousand times ten thousand shall stand before him*; for *the Son of man shall come on the throne of his glory*: but who may abide the day of his coming, or stand when he appeareth?

**With a shout]** Or *order*, **εν κελευσματι**. and probably in these words. *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment*; which order shall be repeated by the archangel, who shall accompany it with the sound of the trump of God, whose great and terrible blasts, like those on mount Sinai, *sounding louder and louder*, shall shake both the heavens and the earth!

Observe the order of this terribly glorious day: 1. Jesus, in all the dignity and splendour of his eternal majesty, *shall descend from heaven* to the mid region, what the apostle calls the *air*, somewhere within the earth’s atmosphere. 2. Then the **κελευσμα**, *shout* or *order*, shall be given for the dead to arise. 3. Next the archangel, as the *herald* of Christ, shall repeat the order, *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!* 4. When all the dead in Christ are raised, then the *trumpet shall sound*, as the signal for them all to flock together to the throne of Christ. It was by the *sound of the trumpet* that the solemn assemblies, under the law, were convoked; and to such

convocations there appears to be here an allusion. 5. When the dead in Christ are raised, their vile bodies being made like unto his glorious body, then, 6. Those who *are* alive shall be *changed*, and made immortal. 7. These shall be *caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air*. 8. We may suppose that the judgment will now be set, and the books opened, and the dead judged out of the things written in those books. 9. The eternal states of quick and dead being thus determined, then all who shall be found to have *made a covenant with him by sacrifice*, and to have *washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*, shall be taken to his eternal glory, and *be for ever with the Lord*. What an inexpressibly terrific glory will then be exhibited! I forbear to call in here the descriptions which men of a poetic turn have made of this terrible scene, because I cannot trust to their correctness; and it is a subject which we should speak of and contemplate as nearly as possible in the words of Scripture.

**Verse 18. Comfort one another with these words.]** Strange saying! comfort a man with the information that he is going to appear before the judgment-seat of God! Who can feel comfort from these words? That man alone with whose spirit the Spirit of God bears witness that his sins are blotted out, and the thoughts of whose heart are purified by the inspiration of Gods Holy Spirit, so that he can perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his name. Reader, thou art not in a safe state unless it be thus with thee, or thou art hungering and thirsting after righteousness. If so, thou shalt be filled; for it is impossible that thou shouldst be taken away in thy sins, while mourning after the salvation of God. They that seek *shall* find.



## I THESSALONIANS

### CHAPTER 5.

*The apostle continues to speak of Christ's coming to judgment, and the uncertainty of the time in which it shall take place, and the careless state of sinners, 1-3. Shows the Thessalonians that they are children of the light; that they should watch and pray, and put on the armour of God, being called to obtain salvation by Christ, who died for them; that whether dead or alive, when the day of judgment comes, they may live for ever with him; and that they should comfort and edify each other with these considerations, 4-11. He exhorts them to remember those who labour among them, and are over them in the Lord; and to esteem such highly for their work's sake, 12, 13. He charges them to warn, comfort, and support those who stood in need of such assistance, and to be patient and beneficent towards all, 14, 15. He points out their high spiritual privileges; warns them against neglecting or misimproving the gifts of the Spirit, and the means of grace, 16-20. They are also exhorted to prove all things; to abstain from all evil; and to expect to be sanctified, through spirit, soul, and body, by him who has promised this, and who is faithful to his promises, 21-24. Recommends himself and brethren to their prayers; shows them how they are to greet each other; charges them to read this epistle to all the brethren; and concludes with the usual apostolical benediction, 25-28.*

#### NOTES ON CHAP. 5.

**Verse 1. But of the times and the seasons]** It is natural to suppose, after what he had said in the conclusion of the preceding chapter concerning the coming of Christ, the raising of the dead, and rendering those immortal who should then be found alive, without obliging them to pass through the empire of death, that the Thessalonians would feel an innocent curiosity to know, as the disciples did concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, *when those things should take place, and what should be the signs of those times, and of the coming of the Son of man.* And it is remarkable that the apostle answers, here, to these anticipated questions as our Lord did, in the

above case, to the direct question of his disciples; and he seems to refer in these words, *Of the times and the seasons ye have no need that I write unto you, for yourselves know that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night*, to what our Lord said, <sup><4044></sup>**Matthew 24:44; 25:13**; and the apostle takes it for granted that they were acquainted with our Lord's prediction on the subject: *For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night*. It is very likely therefore, that the apostle, like our Lord, couples these two grand events—the destruction of Jerusalem and the final judgment. And it appears most probable that it is of the *former event chiefly* that he speaks here, as it was certainly of the *latter* that he treated in the conclusion of the preceding chapter. In the notes on <sup><40106></sup>**Acts 1:6, 7**, it has already been shown that the **χρονους η καιρους**, *times or seasons*, (the very same terms which are used here,) refer to the *destruction of the Jewish commonwealth*; and we may fairly presume that they have the same meaning in this place.

**Verse 3. For when they shall say, Peace and safety]** This points out, very particularly, the state of the Jewish people when the Romans came against them; and so fully persuaded were they that God would not deliver the city and temple to their enemies, that they refused every overture that was made to them.

**Sudden destruction]** In the storming of their city and the burning of their temple, and the massacre of several hundreds of thousands of themselves; the rest being sold for slaves, and the whole of them dispersed over the face of the earth.

**As travail upon a woman]** This figure is perfectly consistent with what the apostle had said before, viz.: that the *times and seasons* were not known: though the *thing* itself was expected, our Lord having predicted it in the most positive manner. So, a woman with child knows that, if she be spared, she will have a bearing time; but the *week*, the *day*, the *hour*, she cannot tell. In a great majority of cases the time is accelerated or retarded much *before* or *beyond* the time that the woman expected; so, with respect to the Jews, neither the *day*, *week*, *month*, nor *year* was known. All that was specifically known was this: their destruction was *coming*, and it should be *sudden*, and *they should not escape*.

**Verse 4. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness]** Probably St. Paul refers to a notion that was very prevalent among the Jews, viz.: that God would judge the *Gentiles* in the *night time*, when utterly secure and careless; but

he would judge the *Jews* in the *day time*, when employed in reading and performing the words of the law. The words in *Midrash Tehillim*, on Psalm ix. 8, are the following: *When the holy blessed God shall judge the Gentiles, it shall be in the night season, in which they shall be asleep in their transgressions; but when he shall judge the Israelites, it shall be in the day time, when they are occupied in the study of the law.* This maxim the apostle appears to have in view in the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th verses. {<sup><small>אמר</small></sup> **1 Thessalonians 5:4-8**}

**Verse 5. Ye are all the children of light]** Ye are children of God, and enjoy both his *light* and *life*. Ye are *Christians*-ye belong to him who has brought *life* and *immortality* to *light* by his Gospel. This dispensation, under which ye are, has *illustrated* all the preceding dispensations; in its *light* all is become *luminous*; and ye, who walked formerly in heathen *ignorance*, or in the *darkness* of Jewish prejudices, are now *light* in the Lord, because ye have believed in him who is the *light* to *lighten* the *Gentiles*, and the *glory* and *splendour* of his people *Israel*.

**We are not of the night, nor of darkness.]** Our actions are such as we are not afraid to expose to the fullest and clearest light. Sinners hate the *light*; they are enemies to *knowledge*; they love *darkness*; they will not receive *instructions*; and their deeds are such as cannot bear the *light*.

**Verse 6. Let us not sleep, as do others]** Let *us* who are of the *day*-who believe the Gospel and belong to Christ, not give way to a careless, unconcerned state of mind, like to the Gentiles and sinners in general, who are stupified and blinded by sin, so that they neither *think* nor *feel*; but live in time as if it were eternity; or rather, live as if there were no eternity, no future state of existence, rewards, or punishments.

**Let us watch]** Be always on the alert; *and be sober*, making a *moderate* use of all things.

**Verse 7. For they that sleep]** Sleepers and drunkards seek the night season; so the careless and the profligate persons indulge their evil propensities, and avoid all means of instruction; they prefer their ignorance to the word of God's grace, and to the light of life. There seems to be here an allusion to the opinion mentioned under <sup><small>אמר</small></sup> **1 Thessalonians 5:4**, to which the reader is requested to refer. It may be remarked, also, that it was accounted doubly scandalous, even among the heathen, to be drunk in the day time. They who were drunken *were drunken in the night*.

**Verse 8. Putting on the breastplate]** We are not only called to WORK, but we are called also to *fight*; and that we may not be surprised, we must *watch*; and that we may be in a condition to defend ourselves, we must be sober; and that we may be enabled to conquer, we must be *armed*: and what the *breastplate* and *helmet* are to a *soldier's heart and head*, such are *faith, love, and hope* to us. *Faith* enables us to *endure*, as seeing him who is invisible; *love* excites us to *diligence and activity*, and makes us bear our troubles and difficulties pleasantly; *hope* helps us to *anticipate* the great *end*, the glory that shall be revealed, and which we know we shall in due time obtain, if we faint not. For an explanation of the different parts of the Grecian armour, as illustrating that of the Christian, see the notes on Eph. 6, where the subject is largely explained.

**Verse 9. For God hath not appointed us to wrath]** So then it appears that *some* were *appointed to wrath*, εἰς ὀργήν, *to punishment*; on this subject there can be no dispute. But *who* are they? *When* did this appointment take place? And for what *cause*? These are supposed to be “very difficult questions, and such as cannot receive a satisfactory answer; and the whole must be referred to the *sovereignty* of God.” If we look carefully at the apostle’s words, we shall find all these difficulties vanish. It is very obvious that, in the preceding verses, the apostle refers simply to the destruction of the Jewish polity, and to the terrible judgments which were about to fall on the Jews as a *nation*; therefore, they are the *people* who were appointed to *wrath*; and they were thus appointed, not from *eternity*, nor from any indefinite or remote time, but from that time in which they utterly rejected the offers of salvation made to them by Jesus Christ and his apostles; the privileges of their *election* were still continued to them, even after they had crucified the Lord of glory; for, when he gave commandment to his disciples *to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature*, he bade them *begin at Jerusalem*. They did so, and continued to offer salvation to them, till at last, being everywhere persecuted, and the whole nation appearing with one consent to reject the Gospel, the kingdom of God was wholly taken away from them, and the apostles turned to the *Gentiles*. *Then* God appointed them to *wrath*; and the *cause* of that appointment was their final and determined rejection of Christ and his Gospel. But even this *appointment to wrath* does not signify *eternal damnation*; nothing of the kind is intended in the word. Though we are sure that those who die in their sins can never see God, yet it is possible that many of those wretched Jews, during their calamities, and especially

during the siege of their city, did turn unto the Lord who smote them, and found that *salvation* which he never denies to the sincere penitent.

When the Jews were *rejected*, and *appointed to wrath*, then the *Gentiles* were *elected*, and appointed to *obtain salvation* by our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Gospel they gladly received, and continue to prize; while the remnant of the Jews continue, in all places of their dispersion, the same irreconcilable and blasphemous opponents of the Gospel of Christ. On *these accounts* the *election* of the *Gentiles* and the *reprobation* of the *Jews* still continue.

**Verse 10. Who died for us]** His death was an atoning sacrifice for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews.

**Whether we wake or sleep]** Whether we *live* or *die*, whether we are in this state or in the other world, we shall live together with him—shall enjoy his life, and the consolations of his Spirit, while *here*; and shall be glorified together with him in the eternal world. The words show that *every where* and in *all circumstances* genuine believers, who walk after God, have life and communion with him, and are continually happy, and constantly safe. The apostle, however, may refer to the doctrine he has delivered, <sup><4015></sup>**1 Thessalonians 4:15**, concerning the *dead in Christ rising first*; and the *last generation* of men not *dying*, but undergoing such a change as shall render them *immortal*. On that great day, all the followers of God, both those who had long *slept* in the dust of the earth, and all those who shall be found *living*, shall be acknowledged by Christ as his own, and *live together* for ever *with him*.

**Verse 11. Comfort-one another]** Rest assured that, in all times and circumstances, it shall be well with the righteous; let every man lay this to heart; and with this consideration *comfort* and *edify each other* in all trials and difficulties.

**Verse 12. Know them]** Act *kindly* towards them; *acknowledge* them as the messengers of Christ; and treat them with *tenderness* and *respect*. This is a frequent meaning of the word **γινώσκω**. See Clarke on “<sup><40110></sup>John 1:10”.

**Them which labour among you]** The words **τοὺς κοπιῶντας** have appeared to some as expressing those who *had* laboured among them; but as it is the *participle* of the *present* tense, there is no need to consider it in

this light. Both it and the word **προισταμενους**, the *superintendents*, refer to persons then actually employed in the work of God. These were all *admonishers, teachers, and instructors* of the people, devoting their time and talents to this important work.

**Verse 13. Esteem them very highly in love]** Christian ministers, who preach the *whole truth*, and *labour* in the word and doctrine, are entitled to more than *respect*; the apostle commands them to be esteemed **υπερεκπερισσου**, *abundantly*, and *superabundantly*; and this is to be done *in love*; and as men delight to serve those whom they love, it necessarily follows that they should provide for them, and see that they want neither the *necessaries* nor *conveniencies* of life; I do not say *comforts*, though these also should be furnished; but of these the genuine messengers of Christ are frequently destitute. However, they should have *food, raiment, and lodging* for themselves and their household. This they ought to have *for their work's sake*; those who do not *work* should not *eat*. As *ministers of Christ*, such as labour not are unworthy either of respect or support.

**Verse 14. Warn them that are unruly]** The whole phraseology of this verse is *military*; I shall consider the import of each term. **ατακτους**. Those who are *out of their ranks*, and are neither in a *disposition* nor *situation* to perform the work and duty of a soldier; those who will not do the work prescribed, and who will meddle with what is not commanded. There are many such in every Church that is of considerable magnitude.

**Comfort the feeble-minded]** **τους ολιγοψυχους**. Those of *little souls*; the *faint-hearted*; those who, on the eve of a battle, are *dispirited*, because of the number of the enemy, and their own feeble and unprovided state. Let them know that the battle is not theirs, but the Lord's; and that those who trust in him shall conquer.

**Support the weak]** **αντεχεσθε των ασθενων**. *Shore up, prop* them that are weak; strengthen those wings and companies that are likely to be most exposed, that they be not overpowered and broken in the day of battle.

**Be patient toward all]** **μακροθυμειτε προς παντας**. The *disorderly*, the *feeble-minded*, and the *weak*, will exercise your patience, and try your temper. If the troops be irregular, and cannot in every respect be reduced to proper order and discipline, let not the *officers* lose their temper nor courage; let them do the best they can; God will be with them, and a

victory will give confidence to *their* troops. We have often seen that the Christian life is compared to a warfare, and that the directions given to *soldiers* are, *mutatis mutandis*; allowing for the different systems, suitable to Christians. This subject has been largely treated on, Eph. 6. The ministers of Christ, being considered as *officers*, should acquaint themselves with the officers' duty. He who has the direction and management of a Church of God will need all the skill and prudence he can acquire.

**Verse 15. See that none render evil for evil]** Every temper contrary to *love* is contrary to *Christianity*. A peevish, fretful, vindictive man may be a child of Satan; he certainly is not a child of God.

**Follow that which is good]** That by which ye may profit your brethren and your neighbours of every description, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*.

**Verse 16. Rejoice evermore.]** Be always happy; the religion of Christ was intended to remove misery. He that has God for his portion may constantly exult. Four MSS. of good note add *εν τω κυριω*, *in the Lord: Rejoice in the Lord evermore*.

**Verse 17. Pray without ceasing.]** Ye are *dependent* on God for every good; without him ye can do nothing; feel that dependence at all times, and ye will always be in the spirit of prayer; and those who feel this spirit will, as frequently as possible, be found in the exercise of prayer.

**Verse 18. In every thing give thanks]** For this reason, that all things work together for good to them that love God; therefore, every occurrence may be a subject of gratitude and thankfulness. While ye live to God, prosperity and adversity will be equally helpful to you.

**For this is the will of God]** That ye should be always happy; that ye should ever be in the spirit of prayer; and that ye should profit by every occurrence in life, and be continually grateful and obedient; for *gratitude* and *obedience* are inseparably connected.

**Verse 19. Quench not the Spirit.]** The Holy Spirit is represented as a *fire*, because it is his province to *enlighten* and quicken the soul; and to purge, purify, and refine it. This Spirit is represented as being *quenched* when any *act* is done, *word* spoken, or *temper* indulged, contrary to its dictates. It is the Spirit of *love*, and therefore anger, malice, revenge, or any unkind or unholy temper, will quench it so that it will withdraw its

influences; and then the heart is left in a state of *hardness* and *darkness*. It has been observed that fire may be quenched as well by heaping *earth* on it as by throwing water on it; and so the *love of the world* will as effectually grieve and quench the Spirit as any ordinary act of transgression.

Every genuine Christian is made a partaker of the Spirit of God; and he who has not the spirit of Christ is none of his. It cannot be the *miraculous gifts* of the Spirit which the apostle means, for these were given to *few*, and not *always*; for even apostles could not work miracles when they pleased; but the direction in the text is *general*, and refers to a gift of which they were generally partakers.

**Verse 20. Despise not prophesyings.]** Do not suppose that ye have no need of continual instruction; without it ye cannot preserve the Christian life, nor go on to perfection. God will ever send a message of salvation by each of his ministers to every faithful, attentive hearer. Do not suppose that ye are already wise enough; you are no more wise enough than you are holy enough. They who slight or neglect the means of grace, and especially the preaching of God's holy word, are generally vain, empty, self-conceited people, and exceedingly superficial both in knowledge and piety.

**Verse 21. Prove all things]** Whatever ye hear in these *prophesyings* or preachings, examine by the words of Christ, and by the doctrines which, from time to time, we have delivered unto you in our preaching and writings. *Try the spirits*-the different teachers, by the word of God.

**Hold fast that which is good.]** Whatever in these prophesyings has a tendency to increase your *faith, love, holiness, and usefulness*, that receive and hold fast. There were *prophets* or *teachers* even at that time who professed to be of God, and yet were not.

**Verse 22. Abstain from all appearance of evil.]** Sin not, and avoid even the *appearance* of it. Do not drive your morality so near the bounds of evil as to lead even weak persons to believe that ye actually touch, taste, or handle it. Let not the *form* of it, εἶδος, appear with or among you, much less the *substance*. Ye are called to holiness; *be ye holy, for God is holy*.

**Verse 23. And the very God of peace]** That same God who is the author of peace, the giver of peace; and who has sent, for the redemption of the world, the *Prince of peace*; may that very God *sanctify you wholly*; leave no more evil *in* your hearts than his precepts tolerate evil in your conduct.



The word *wholly*, **ολετελεις** means precisely the same as our phrase, *to all intents and purposes*. May he sanctify you to the end and to the uttermost, that, *as sin hath reigned unto death, even so may grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord*.

**Your whole spirit and soul and body]** Some think that the apostle alludes to the Pythagorean and Platonic doctrine, which was acknowledged among the Thessalonians. I should rather believe that he refers simply to the *fact*, that the creature called *man* is a compound being, consisting, 1. Of a *body*, **σωμα**, an organized system, formed by the creative energy of God out of the dust of the earth; composed of bones, muscles, and nerves; of arteries, veins, and a variety of other vessels, in which the blood and other fluids circulate. 2. Of a *soul*, **ψυχη**, which is the seat of the different *affections* and *passions*, such as love, hatred, anger, &c., with sensations, appetites, and propensities of different kinds. 3. Of *spirit*, **πνευμα**, the immortal principle, the source of life to the body and soul, without which the animal functions cannot be performed, how perfect soever the bodily organs may be; and which alone possesses the faculty of intelligence, understanding, thinking, and reasoning, and produces the faculty of speech wherever it resides, if accident have not impaired the organs of speech.

The apostle prays that this compound being, in all its parts, powers, and faculties, which he terms **ολοκληρον**, *their whole*, comprehending all parts, every thing that constitutes *man* and *manhood*, may be *sanctified and preserved blameless till the coming of Christ*; hence we learn, 1. That body, soul, and spirit are debased and polluted by sin. 2. That each is capable of being sanctified, consecrated in all its powers to God, and made holy. 3. That the whole man is to be preserved to the coming of Christ, that body, soul, and spirit may be then glorified for ever with him. 4. That in *this* state the whole man may be so sanctified as to be preserved *blameless* till the coming of Christ. And thus we learn that the sanctification is not to take place *in, at, or after* death. On the pollution and sanctification of *flesh* and *spirit*, see Clarke's note on "**2 Corinthians 7:1**".

**Verse 24. Faithful is he that calleth you]** In a great variety of places in his word God has promised to *sanctify* his followers, and his faithfulness binds him to fulfil his promises; therefore *he will do it*. He who can believe will find this thing also possible to him.

**Verse 25. Pray for me.]** Even apostles, while acting under an extraordinary mission, and enjoying the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, felt

the necessity of the prayers of the faithful. God requires that his people should pray for his ministers; and it is not to be wondered at, if they who pray not for their preachers should receive no benefit from their teaching. How can they expect God to send a message by him, for whom they, who are the most interested, have not prayed? If the grace and Spirit of Christ be not worth the most earnest prayers which a man can offer, they, and the heaven to which they lead, are not worth having.

**Verse 26. Greet all the brethren]** See Clarke's note on "~~516~~**Romans 16:16**". Instead of *all the brethren*, the *Coptic* has, *greet one another*; a reading not noticed by either Griesbach or Wetstein.

**Verse 27. I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read]** There must have been some particular reason for this solemn charge; he certainly had some cause to suspect that the epistle would be suppressed in some way or other, and that the *whole* Church would not be permitted to hear it; or he may refer to the smaller Churches contiguous to Thessalonica, or the Churches in Macedonia in general, whom he wished to hear it, as well as those to whom it was more immediately directed. There is no doubt that the apostles designed that their epistles should be copied, and sent to all the Churches in the vicinity of that to which they were directed. Had this not been the case, a great number of Churches would have known scarcely any thing of the New Testament. As every Jewish synagogue had a copy of the law and the prophets, so every Christian Church had a copy of the gospels and the epistles, which were daily, or at least every Sabbath, read for the instruction of the people. This the apostle deemed so necessary, that he adjured them by the Lord to read this epistle to all the brethren; i.e. to all the Christians in that district. Other Churches might get copies of it; and thus, no doubt, it soon became general. In this way other parts of the sacred writings were disseminated through all the Churches of the Gentiles; and the errors of the different scribes, employed to take copies, constituted what are now called the *various readings*.

**Verse 28. The grace of our Lord Jesus]** As the epistle *began* so it *ends*; for the *grace of Christ* must be at the *beginning* and *end* of every work, in order to complete it, and bring it to good effect.

**Amen.]** This is wanting in BD\*FG and some others. It was probably not written by St. Paul.

The *subscriptions* are, as in other cases, various and contradictory. The chief MSS. conclude as follows: *The first to the Thessalonians is completed; the second to the Thessalonians begins.*-DFG. The first to the Thessalonians written from Athens.-AB, and others. From *Laodicea.*-Cod. *Claramont.* The first to the *Thessalonians, written from Athens.*-Common Greek text.

The VERSIONS conclude thus:-*The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written at Athens, and sent by the hands of Timotheus.*-SYRIAC. *To the Thessalonians.*-ÆTHIOPIC. Nothing in the VULGATE. *The end of the epistle: it was written from a city of the Athenians, and sent by the hand of Timotheus. And to the Lord be praise for ever and ever. Amen.*-ARABIC. *Written from Athens, and sent by Silvanus and Timotheus.*-COPTIC.

That it was not sent by either *Silvanus* or *Timothy* is evident enough from the *inscription*, for St. Paul associates these two with himself, in directing it to the Thessalonian Church. Others say that it was sent by *Tychicus* and *Onesimus*, but this also is absurd; for Onesimus was not converted till a considerable time after the writing of this epistle. That it was written by St. *Paul*, there is no doubt; and that it was written at *Corinth*, and not at *Athens*, has been shown in the *preface*.

1. THE two preceding chapters are certainly among the most important and the most sublime in the New Testament. The *general judgment*, the *resurrection of the body*, and the *states of the quick and dead*, the *unrighteous* and the *just*, are described, concisely indeed, but they are exhibited in the most striking and affecting points of view. I have attempted little else than verbal illustrations; the subject is too vast for my comprehension; I cannot order my speech by reason of darkness. Though there are some topics handled here which do not appear in other parts of the sacred writings, yet the main of what we learn is this. "Our God will come, and will not keep silence; a fire shall burn before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him; he shall call to the heavens above, and to the earth beneath, that he may judge his people. "The *day of judgment!* what an awful word is this! what a truly terrific time! when the heavens shall be shrivelled as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat; when the earth and its appendages shall be burnt up, and the fury of that conflagration be such that *there shall be no more sea!* A time when the noble and ignoble dead, the *small* and the *great*, shall stand before God, and all be judged according to the deeds done in the body; yea, a time

when the thoughts of the heart and every *secret thing* shall be brought to light; when the innumerable millions of transgressions, and embryo and abortive sins, shall be exhibited in all their *purposes* and *intents*; a time when Justice, eternal Justice, shall sit alone upon the throne, and pronounce a sentence as impartial as irrevocable, and as awful as eternal! There is a *term* of human life; and every human being is rapidly gliding to it as fast as the wings of time, in their *onward* motion, incomprehensibly swift, can carry him! And shall not the living lay this to heart? Should we not live in order to die? Should we not die in order to be judged? And should we not live and die so as to live again to all eternity, not with Satan and his angels, but with God and his saints? O thou man of God! thou Christian! thou immortal spirit! think of these things.

2. The subject in verse 27 {~~REV~~ **1 Thessalonians 5:27**} of the last chapter I have but slightly noticed: *I charge you, by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren*. This is exceedingly strange; the Epistles to the *Romans*, the *Corinthians*, *Galatians*, *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Thessalonians*, were directed to the *whole Church* in each of those places; why, then, after directing this, as he did all the rest, to the *whole Church*, should he at the conclusion *adjure them, by the Lord, that it should be read to all the holy brethren*; that is, to the very persons to whom it was addressed? Is there not some *mystery* here? Has it not been the endeavour of Satan, from the beginning, to keep men from consulting the oracles of God; and has he not used even the authority of the Church to accomplish this his purpose! Was not the prohibiting the use of the Scriptures to the people at large the *mystery of iniquity* which *then began to work*, and against which the adjuration of the apostle is directed? see second epistle, chap. 2; this *mystery*, which was the grand agent in the hands of *Mystery, Babylon the Great*, to keep the people in darkness, that the unauthorized and wicked pretensions of this *mother of the abominations of the earth* might not be brought to the test; but that she might continue to wear her crown, sit on her scarlet beast, and subject the Christian world to her empire. Was it not the Christian world's total ignorance of God's book which the Romish Church took care to keep from the people at large, that induced them patiently, yet with *terror*, to bow down to all her usurpations, and to swallow down monstrous doctrines which she imposed upon them as Christian *verities*? Was it not this deplorable ignorance which induced kings and emperors to put their necks, literally, under the feet of this usurped and antichristian power? This

*mystery of iniquity continues still to work*; and with all the pretensions of the Romish Church, the Scriptures are in general withheld from the *people*, or suffered to be read under such *restrictions* and with such *notes* as totally subvert the sense of those passages on which this Church endeavours to build her unscriptural pretensions. It is generally allowed that the *Vulgate* version is the most favourable to these pretensions, and yet even that version the rulers of the Church dare not trust in the hands of any of their people, even under their general ecclesiastical restrictions, without their counteracting notes and comments. How strange is this! and yet in this Church there have been, and still are, many enlightened and eminent men; surely *truth* has nothing to fear from the *Bible*. When the Romish Church permits the free use of this book, she may be stripped, indeed, of some of her appendages, but she will lose nothing but her dross and tin, and become what the original Church at Rome was, *beloved of God, called to be saints*; and *have her faith*, once more, *spoken of throughout all the world*, <sup><EJ107></sup>**Romans 1:7, 8**. She has, in her own hands the means of her own *regeneration*; and a genuine *Protestant* will wish, not her *destruction*, but her *reformation*; and if she consent not to be *reformed*, her total destruction is inevitable.

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