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COMMENTARY

Barnes' Notes on the Bible
Volume 15 -
1 Thessalonians

By A. Barnes

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THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION

SECTION 1. THE SITUATION OF THESSALONICA

Thessalonica was a city and sea-port of Macedonia. It was at the head of the bay Thermaicus, or the Gulf of Thessalonica, and was, therefore, favorably situated for commerce. It was on the great Egnatian Way; was possessed of an excellent harbor, and had great advantages for commerce through the Hellespont, and with Asia Minor and the adjacent countries. It was southwest of Philippi and Amphipolis, and a short distance northeast of Berea. Macedonia was an independent country until it was subdued by the Romans. The occasion of the wars which led to its conquest by the Romans was an alliance which was formed by Philip II. with Carthage, during the second Punic war. The Romans delayed their revenge for a season; but Philip having laid siege to Athens, the Athenians called the Romans to their aid, and they declared war against the Macedonians. Philip was compelled to sue for peace, to surrender his vessels, to reduce his army to 500 men, and to defray the expenses of the war. Perseus, the successor of Philip, took up arms against the Romans, and was totally defeated at Pydna by Paulus Emilins, and the Romans took possession of the country. Indignant at their oppression, the Macedonian nobility and the whole nation rebelled under Andriscus; but after a long struggle they were overcome by Quintus Caecilius, surnamed, from his conquest, Macedonius, and the country became a Roman province, B.C. 148. It was divided into four districts, and the city of Thessalonica was made the capital of the second division, and was the station of a Roman governor and questor. At the time, therefore, that the gospel was preached there. this whole country was subject to Roman authority. The city, called, when Paul visited it, Thessalonica, was anciently called Therme, and by this name was known in the times of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Eschines. We are informed by Strabo that Cassander changed the name of Therme to Thessalonica, in honor of his wife, who was a daughter of Philipians Others have said that

the name was given to it by Philip himself, in memory of a victory which he obtained over the armies of Thessaly. In the time of Brutus and Cassius it was a city of so much importance that the promise of being permitted to plunder the city, as the reward of victory, infused new courage into their armies. The city was inhabited by Greeks, Romans, and Jews. It adored many gods, but particularly Jupiter, as the father of Hercules, the alleged founder of its ancient royal family. It had a celebrated amphitheater, where gladiatorial shows were exhibited for the amusement of the citizens, and a circus for public games. The Roman part of the population was, of course, introduced after the conquest, and it is impossible now to estimate the relative number of the Greeks and the Romans in the time when the gospel was preached there. In common with most of the other cities of Greece, a considerable number of Jews resided there, who had a synagogue at the time when the city was visited by Paul; ~~<417>~~ Acts 17:1. Little is known of the morals of the place, but there is reason to believe that it was somewhat distinguished for dissoluteness of manners.

“The females, particularly, could claim little credit on the score of modest, retiring demeanour; for this virtue was in so low estimation in the city, that the place was selected as the scene of the wanton fancies of the satirist.” (Lucian.)

See Hug. Intro. The name of the place now is Saloniki. It is a Turkish commercial town, and contains about 70,000 inhabitants. Its situation and appearance are thus described by Dr. Clarke: “The walls of Salonica give a very remarkable appearance to the town, and cause it to be seen at a great distance, being white-washed; and what is still more extraordinary, they are painted. They extend in a semi-circular manner from the sea, enclosing the whole of the buildings within a peribolus, whose circuit is five or six miles; but a great part of the space within the walls is void. It is one of the few remaining cities which has preserved the ancient form of its fortifications; the mural turrets yet standing, and the walls that support them, being entire. Their antiquity is perhaps, unknown, for, though they have been ascribed to the Greek emperors, it is very evident they were constructed in two distinct periods of time; the old Cyclopean masonry remaining in the lower parts of them, surmounted by an upper structure of brickwork. Like all the ancient and modern cities of Greece, its wretched aspect within is forcibly contrasted with the beauty of its external appearance. The houses are generally built of unburnt bricks, and, for the most part, they are no better than so many hovels.” It is, however, a flourishing commercial town,

from which is exported the corn, cotton, wool, tobacco, bees-wax, and silk of Macedonia. It is the seat of a Pasha, and has still among its population a considerable proportion of Jews. rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who visited it in A.D. 1160, describes it, under the name of Salunki, and says that it was built by Seleucus, one of the four Greek nobles who arose after Alexander, and that when, he visited it, it was “a large city containing about five hundred Jewish inhabitants.” “The Jews,” says he, “are much oppressed in this place, and live by the exercise of handicrafts.” Itinerary, vol. 1:49,50, Ed. 1840. He describes it as having at that time more Jewish inhabitants than any other town in Greece, Thebes alone excepted. It is said at present to contain about 20,000 Jewish inhabitants. Its favorable situation for commerce is probably the cause of the numerous assemblage of the Jews there. See Asher’s Ed. of Benjamin of Tudela, vol. 2:p. 42.

SECTION 2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH IN THESSALONICA

The gospel was first preached in Thessalonica by Paul and Silas. After their release from imprisonment at Philippi, they passed through Amphipolls and Apollonia, and came to Thessalonica. For some cause they appear not to have paused to preach in either of the first two places, but went at once to the city of Thessalonica, That was a much more important place, and they may have been attracted there particularly because many Jews resided there. It was customary for the apostle Paul, when he came to a place where there were Jews, to preach the gospel first to them; and as there was a synagogue in Thessalonica, he entered it, and, for three Sabbath days, reasoned with the Jews in regard to the Messiah. The points on which he endeavored to convince them were, that, according to the Scriptures, it was necessary that the Messiah should be put to death, and that he would rise from the dead, and that all the predictions on these points were completely fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; ~~ACTS~~ Acts 17:2,3. A few of the Jews believed, and a much larger number of the “devout Greeks,” and also a considerable number of females of the more elevated ranks. From these converts the church was organized, and the number at the organization would seem to have been large. It is not quite certain how long Paul and Silas remained at Thessalonica. It is known only that they preached in the synagogue for three sabbaths, and if that were all the time that they remained there, it could not have been more than about three weeks. But it is not certain that they did not remain in the city a longer time. It is possible

that they may have been excluded from the synagogue, but still may have found some other place in which to preach. This would seem probable from one or two circumstances referred to in the history and in the Epistle. In the history (^{<4175>}Acts 17:5), it appears that Paul and Silas, for a time at least, made the house of Jason their home, and that so large numbers attended on their ministry as to give occasion to great excitement among the Jews. In the epistle (^{<3119>}1 Thessalonians 2:9), Paul says that when he was among them, he “labored night and day, because he would not be chargeable unto any of them, and preached unto them the gospel of God” (compare ^{<3118>}2 Thessalonians 3:8), which looks as if he had been with them a longer time than the “three sabbaths,” and as if he had labored at his usual occupation for support, before he shared the hospitality of Jason. It appears also, from ^{<3116>}Philippians 4:16, that he was there long enough to receive repeated supplies from the church at Philippi. “For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.” Paul and Silas were driven away from Thessalonica by the opposition of the Jews. A mob was created by them; the house of Jason was assailed; he and “certain brethren,” who were supposed to have harbored and secreted Paul and Silas, were dragged before the magistrates and accused of receiving those who “had turned the world upside down,” and who were guilty of treason against the Roman emperor; ^{<4175>}Acts 17:5-7 So great was the tumult, and such would be the danger of Paul and Silas if they remained there, that the members of the church judged it best that they should go to a place of safety, and they were conveyed by night to the neighboring city of Berea. There the gospel was received with more favor, and Paul preached without opposition, until the Jews from Thessalonica, hearing where he was, came thither and excited the people against him; ^{<4173>}Acts 17:13. It became necessary again that he should be removed to a place of safety, and he was conducted to Athens, while Silas and Timothy remained at Berea. Timothy, it appears, had accompanied Paul, and had been with him, as well as Luke, at Philippi and Thessalonica, though he is not mentioned as present with them until the arrival at Berea. When Paul went to Athens, he gave commandment to those who conducted him, that Silas and Timothy should come to him as soon as possible; and while he waited for them at Athens, he delivered the memorable speech on Mars’ hill, recorded in Acts 17: Their actual arrival at Athens is not mentioned by Luke (Acts 17.), but that Timothy came to him there appears from 1 Thessalonians 3:1,2,

“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timotheus our brother, etc., to comfort you concerning your faith.”

Timothy appears, therefore, to have been with Paul at Athens but a short time, for he sent him back to Thessalonica, and before his return, Paul had gone to Corinth, whither Timothy followed him; ~~418B~~ Acts 18:5.

SECTION 3. THE TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING THE EPISTLE

The subscription at the close of this epistle affirms that it was written at Athens. But these subscriptions are of no authority whatever (see notes at the close of 1 Corinthians), and in this case, as in several others, the subscription is false. Paul remained but a short time at Athens, and there is internal evidence that the epistle was not written there. In ~~510I~~ 1 Thessalonians 3:1,2, Paul says that, such was his anxiety for them, that he had concluded to remain at Athens alone, and that he had sent Timothy to them from that place to impart to them consolation. In the same epistle (~~518B~~ 1 Thessalonians 3:6), he speaks of Timothy's return to him before the epistle was written. But from Acts 17 and ~~418B~~ Acts 18:5, it is evident that Timothy did not return to Paul at Athens, but that he and Silas came to him after he had left Athens and had gone to Corinth. To that place Paul had gone after his short visit to Athens, and there he remained a year and a half; Acts xviii. 11. It is further evident that the epistle was not written to the Thessalonians so soon as it would be necessary to suppose, if it were written from Athens. In ~~510I~~ 1 Thessalonians 2:17,18, the author says,

“But we, brethren, being taken from you a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.”

From this it is evident that the apostle had repeatedly endeavored to visit them, but had been hindered. But it is not reasonable to suppose that he had attempted this during the short time that he was in Athens, and so soon after having been driven away from Berea. It is more probable that this had occurred during his residence at Corinth, and it would seem also from this, that the epistle was written toward the close of his residence there. At the time of writing the epistle, Silas and Timothy were with the apostle (~~510I~~ 1 Thessalonians 1:1), and we know that they were with him when he was at

Corinth; ^{<418>}Acts 18:5. If this epistle was written at the time supposed, at Corinth, it must have been about the 13th year of the reign of Claudius, and about A.D. 52. That this was the time in which it was written, is the opinion of Mill, of Lardner, of Hug, and is indeed generally admitted. It was the first epistle written by the apostle Paul, and, in some respects, may be allowed to excite a deeper interest on that account than any others of his. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is supposed to have been written at the same place, and probably in the same year; see Lardner, vol. 6:4-6. Grotius, indeed, supposes that the order of the epistles has been inverted, and that that which is now called the “Second Epistle to the Thessalonians” was in fact first sent. But there is no evidence of this.

SECTION 4. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA, AND THE DESIGN OF THE EPISTLE

The church at Thessalonica, at first, was composed of the following classes of persons:

- (1) Jews. To them Paul preached first, and though the mass of them opposed him, and rejected his message, yet some of them believed; ^{<417>}Acts 17:4.
- (2) Greeks who had been proselyted to the Jewish faith, and who seem to have been in attendance on the synagogue; Acts 17: 4. They are called “devout Greeks” — **σεβομενοι ἑλληνοι** — that is, religious Greeks, or those who had renounced the worship of idols, and who attended on the worship of the synagogue. They were probably what the Jews called “Proselytes of the Gate;” persons who were admitted to many privileges, but who were not proselytes in the fullest sense. There were many such persons usually where a synagogue was established among the Gentiles.
- (3) Females of the more elevated rank and standing in the community; ^{<417>}Acts 17:4. They were women of influence, and were connected with distinguished families. Possibly they also may have been of the number of the proselytes.
- (4) Not a few members of the church appear to have been converted from idolatry by the preaching of the apostle, or had connected themselves with it after he had left them. Thus, in ^{<510>}1 Thessalonians 1:9, it is said, “For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.

Though the apostle had been much opposed when there, and the gospel had been rejected by the great body of the inhabitants of Thessalonica, yet it had been most cordially embraced by these different classes (^{¹ Thessalonians 2:13), and they were entirely harmonious in the belief of it. They forgot all their former differences in the cordiality with which they had embraced the gospel. The characteristics of the church there, and the circumstances existing, which gave occasion for the two epistles to the Thessalonians, appear to have been, so far as can be gathered from the history (Acts 17), and the epistles themselves, the following:}

(1) The members of the church had very cordially embraced the gospel; they were the warm friends of the apostle; they greatly desired to receive his instruction; and these things prompted him to the earnest wish which he had cherished to visit them (^{¹ Thessalonians 2:17), and now led him to write to them; compare ^{¹ Thessalonians 1:5,6; 2:8,9,13,19,20. Paul had for them the strong affection which a nurse has for the children committed to her charge (^{¹ Thessalonians 2:7), or a father for his children (^{¹ Thessalonians 2:11), and hence the interest shown for them by writing these epistles.}}}}

(2) They were disposed not only to embrace the gospel, but to spread it abroad (chap 1:8), and Paul was evidently desirous of commending them for this, and of exciting them to greater love and zeal in doing it.

(3) They had at first embraced the gospel amidst scenes of strife (^{¹ Thessalonians 2:2); they were now opposed, as they had been there, by the Jews, and by their own countrymen (^{¹ Thessalonians 2:14); and they appear to have been called to some peculiar trials, by the loss of some valued members of the church — friends who were peculiarly dear to their hearts; ^{¹ Thessalonians 2:3,5; 3:13. To console them in view of these afflictions was one design of the first epistle, and in doing it the apostle states one of the most interesting views of the resurrection to be found in the Scriptures; ^{¹ Thessalonians 4:14-18.}}}}

(4) They had been instructed in reference to the future coming of the Saviour; the day of judgment, and the fact that the appearing of the “day of the Lord” would be like a thief in the night; ^{¹ Thessalonians 5:2. But they seem to have inferred that that day was near, and they were looking for the immediate advent of the Redeemer, and the close of the world. To this view they seem to have been led by two things. One was, a misinterpretation of what the apostle says, ^{¹ Thessalonians 4:14-18;}}

5:2,3, about the advent of the Redeemer, which they seem to have understood as if it meant that it would be “soon;” and the other was, probably, the fact that certain letters had been forged in the name of Paul which maintained this doctrine; ² 2 Thessalonians 2:2. To correct this view was one of the leading objects of the second epistle, and accordingly the apostle in that shows them that events must occur preceding the coming of the Lord Jesus which would occupy a long time, and that the end of the world, therefore, could not be near; ² 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

(5) An error seems also to have prevailed among them in regard to the resurrection, which was the cause of great uneasiness to those who had lost Christian friends by death; ¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:13, They seem to have supposed that when the Lord Jesus appeared, they who were alive would have great advantages over those who were deceased; that the living would be allowed to behold his glory, and to participate in the splendors of his personal reign, while those who were in their graves would slumber through these magnificent scenes. To correct these views, appears to have been one design of the first epistle. The apostle shows them that at the coming of the Saviour, all the redeemed, whether living or dead, would participate alike in his glory. They who were alive would not anticipate those who were in their graves. In fact, he says, those who were dead would rise before the change would take place in the living that was to fit them to dwell with the Lord, and then all would be taken up to be forever with him; ¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

(6) It would appear to be not improbable that after the departure of the apostle from Thessalonica, he had been accused by the enemies of the gospel there, of a lack of courage, and that they had urged this as proof that he was conscious that the gospel was an imposture. Besides, his leaving the church there without any instructors in a time when they greatly needed them, may have been urged as a proof that he had no real affection for them, or concern for their welfare. To meet this charge, the apostle urges several things, vindicating his conduct, and showing the strength of his attachment for them. He says,

(1) that, as they knew; so far from being deterred by persecution from preaching, after a violent persecution at Philippi, he and his fellow laborers had at once preached the same gospel at Thessalonica, and they had done it there amidst the same kind of opposition; ¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:2.

(2) That they themselves were witnesses that it had been done without any appearance of fraud or of guile. They had given them all possible proofs of sincerity; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:3-5;

(3) That they had given every proof possible that they did not seek glory from men, and that their aims were not selfish. They were willing to have imparted, not the gospel only, but also their own lives; and to show that they had had no selfish aim while with them, they had supported themselves by the labor of their own hands; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:6-9.

(4) That so far from not feeling any interest in them, he had repeatedly sought to visit them, but had in every instance been prevented (¹1 Thessalonians 2:17, 18); and

(5) that, since he was prevented from going to them, he had submitted to the personal sacrifice of parting with Timothy at Athens, and of being left alone there, in order that he might go to them and comfort their hearts; ¹1 Thessalonians 3:1,2.

(7) In common with other churches, gathered in part or in whole from the pagan, they were in danger of falling into the sins to which they had been addicted before their conversion, and one object of the first epistle is to put them on their guard against the leading vices to which they were exposed; ¹1 Thessalonians 4:1-7.

(8) It would seem, also, that there were some in the church who had a spirit of insubordination toward their religious teachers, and who, under pretence of edifying others, were guilty of disorder. To correct this was also one object of the epistle; ¹1 Thessalonians 5:12-14.

From these views, the design of this epistle, and also of the second epistle to the same church, which seems to have been written soon-after this, will be apparent. They were the effusions of warm attachment toward a church which the apostle had founded, but from which he had been soon driven away, and which he had been prevented from revisiting when he had earnestly desired it. They are filled with expressions of tender regard; they remind the members of the church of the ardor with which they had at first embraced the gospel; caution them against the dangers to which they were exposed; commend them for their fidelity hitherto, and encourage them in their trials and persecutions. They present some most interesting views of

the nature of the gospel, and especially contain statements about the resurrection of the saints which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament, and views in relation to the great apostasy, and the “man of sin,” which demonstrate that the writer was inspired, and which are of inestimable importance in guarding the true church from the power of Antichrist. No one could have drawn the picture of the Papacy in the second chapter of the second epistle who was not under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and no true Christian can be sufficiently grateful that the apostle was thus inspired to reveal the features of that great apostasy, to put the church on its guard against the wiles and the power of him who “exalteth himself above all that is called God.”

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

NOTES ON 1 THESSALONIANS 1

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER

The first chapter of this Epistle embraces the following subjects:

- 1.** The inscription by Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the Thessalonians, and the usual salutations; <SC00B>1 Thessalonians 1:1.
- 2.** An expression of thanks for their fidelity in the gospel; <SC00B>1 Thessalonians 1:2-4. The apostle says that he made mention of them continually in his prayers; that he remembered their faith, and love, and patience, for by these things they had shown that they were among the elect of God.
- 3.** He reminds them of the manner in which they received the gospel when it was first preached to them; <SC00B>1 Thessalonians 1:5,6. The power of God had been manifested among them in a remarkable manner; they had embraced the gospel with strong assurance, and though in the midst of deep afflictions, they had received the word with joy.
- 4.** The effect of the establishment of the church in Thessalonica had been felt far abroad, and had been of the most happy character; <SC00B>1 Thessalonians 1:7-10. They had become examples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia. From them the gospel had been sounded abroad throughout Greece, and indeed in all places with which they had connection by their commercial relations. Those who dwelt in distant places bore witness to the influence of the gospel on them, and to the power of that religion which had turned them from idols to serve the living God. These verses contain a beautiful illustration of the effect of the gospel in a place favorably situated for commerce, and having extensive contact with other regions.

1 Thessalonians 1:1. *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus* On the reasons why Paul associated other names with his in his epistles, see the notes on **1 Corinthians 1:1**, and **2 Corinthians 2:1**. Silvanus, or Silas, and Timothy were properly united with him on this occasion, because they had been with him when the church was founded there, Acts 17, and because Timothy had been sent by the apostle to visit them after he had himself been driven away; **1 Thessalonians 2:1,2**. Silas is first mentioned in the New Testament as one who was sent by the church at Jerusalem with Paul to Antioch (notes, **Acts 15:22**); and he afterward became his traveling companion.

Which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ Who are united to the true God and to the Redeemer; or who sustain an intimate relation to the Father and the Lord Jesus. This is strong language, denoting, that they were a true church; compare **1 John 5:20**. “Grace be unto you,” etc.; see the notes, **Romans 1:7**.

1 Thessalonians 1:2. *We give thanks to God always for you all* see the notes, **Romans 1:9**.

Making mention of you in our prayers See the notes at **Ephesians 1:16**. It may be observed here:

(1) that the apostle was in the habit of constant prayer.

(2) That he was accustomed to extemporary prayer, and not to written prayer. It is not credible that “forms” of prayer had been framed for the churches at Thessalonica and Ephesus, and the other churches for which Paul says he prayed, nor would it have been possible to have adapted such forms to the varying circumstances attending the organization of new churches.

1 Thessalonians 1:3. *Remembering without ceasing* Remembering your faith and love whenever we pray. This is not to be understood literally, but it is language such as we use respecting anything that interests us much. It is constantly in our mind. Such an interest the apostle had in the churches which he had established.

Your work of faith That is, your showing or evincing faith. The reference is probably to acts of duty, holiness, and benevolence, which proved that they exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Works of faith are those to which

faith prompts, and which show that there is faith in the heart. This does not mean, therefore, a work of their own producing faith, but a work which showed that they had faith.

And labour of love Labour produced by love, or showing that you are actuated by love. Such would be all their kindness toward the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted; and all their acts which showed that they loved the souls of people.

And patience of hope Patience in your trials, showing that you have such a hope of future blessedness as to sustain you in your afflictions. It was the hope of heaven through the Lord Jesus that gave them patience; see the notes on ~~4124~~Romans 8:24.

“The phrases here are Hebraisms, meaning active faith, and laborious love, and patient hope, and might have been so translated.” Doddridge.

In our Lord Jesus Christ That is, your hope is founded only on him. The only hope that we have of heaven is through the Redeemer.

In the sight of God and our Father Before God, even our Father. It is a hope which we have through the merits of the Redeemer, and which we are permitted to cherish before God; that is, in his very presence. When we think of God; when we reflect that we must soon stand before him, we are permitted to cherish this hope. It is a hope which will be found to be genuine even in the presence of a holy and heart-searching God. This does not mean that it had been merely professed before God, but that it was a hope which they might dare to entertain even in the presence of God, and which would bear the scrutiny of his eye.

~~4004~~**1 Thessalonians 1:4.** *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God* The margin here reads, “beloved of God, your election.” The difference depends merely on the pointing, and that which would require the marginal reading has been adopted by Hahn, Tittman, Bloomfield, and Griesbach. The sense is not materially varied, and the common version may be regarded as giving the true meaning. There is no great difference between “being beloved of God,” and “being chosen of God.” The sense then is, “knowing that you are chosen by God unto salvation;” compare notes on ~~4004~~Ephesians 1:4,5,11. The word “knowing” here refers to Paul himself, and to Silas and Timothy, who united with him in writing the

Epistle, and in rendering thanks for the favors shown to the church at Thessalonica. The meaning is, that they had so strong confidence that they had been chosen of God as a church unto salvation, that they might say they knew it. The way in which they knew it seems not to have been by direct revelation or by inspiration, but by the evidence which they had furnished, and which constituted such a proof of piety as to leave no doubt of the fact. Calvin. What this evidence was, the apostle states in the following verses. I was shown by the manner in which they embraced the gospel, and by the spirit which they had evinced under its influence. The meaning here seems to be, not that all the members of the church at Thessalonica were certainly chosen of God to salvation — for, as in other churches, there might have been those there who were false professors — but that the church, as such, had given evidence that it was a true church — that it was founded on Christian principles — and that, as a church, it had furnished evidence of its “election by God.” Nor can it mean, as Clarke and Bloomfield suppose, that God “had chosen and called the Gentiles to the same privileges to which he chose and called the Jews; and that as they (the Jews) had rejected the gospel, God had now elected the Gentiles in their stead;” for a considerable portion of the church was composed of Jews (see ~~417~~ Acts 17:4,5), and it cannot, therefore, mean that the Gentiles had been selected in the place of the Jews. Besides, the election of the Gentiles, or any portion of the human family, to the privileges of salvation, to the neglect or exclusion of any other part, would be attended with all the difficulties which occur in the doctrine of personal and individual election. Nothing is gained on this subject in removing the difficulties, by supposing that God chooses masses of people instead of individuals. How can the one be more proper than the other? What difficulty in the doctrine of election is removed by the supposition? Why is it not as right to choose an individual as a nation? Why not as proper to reject an individual as a whole people? If this means that the church at Thessalonica had shown that it was a true church of Christ, chosen by God, then we may learn:

(1) that a true church owes what it has to the “election of God.” It is because God has chosen it; has called it out from the world; and has endowed it in such a manner as to be a true church.

(2) A church may give evidence that it is chosen of God, and is a true church. There are things which it may do, which will show that it is undoubtedly such a church as God has chosen, and such as he approves. There are just principles on which a church should be organized, and there

is a spirit which may be manifested by a church which will distinguish it from any other association of people.

(3) It is not improper to speak with strong confidence of such a church as undoubtedly chosen of God. There are churches which, by their zeal, self-denial, and deadness to the world, show beyond question their “election of God,” and the world may see that they are founded on other principles and manifest a different spirit from other organizations of people.

(4) Every church should evince such a spirit that there may be no doubt of its “election of God.” It should be so dead to the world; so pure in doctrine and in practice, and so much engaged in spreading the knowledge of salvation, that the world will see that it is governed by higher principles than any worldly association, and that nothing could produce this but the influence of the Holy Spirit of God.

◀1005▶1 Thessalonians 1:5. *For our gospel came not unto you* When first preached; **◀4470▶** Acts 17:1-3. Paul speaks of it as “our gospel,” because it was the gospel preached by him and Silas and Timothy; comp **◀5124▶** 2 Thessalonians 2:14; **◀5108▶** 2 Timothy 2:8. He did not mean to say that the gospel had been originated by him, but only that he had delivered the good news of salvation to them. He is here stating the evidence which had been given that they were a church “chosen by God.” He refers, first, to the manner in which the gospel was received by them (**◀5106▶** 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7), and, secondly, to the spirit which they themselves manifested in sending it abroad; yet. 8-10.

In word only Was not merely spoken; or was not merely heard. It produced a powerful effect on the heart and life. It was not a mere empty sound that produced no other effect than to entertain or amuse; compare **◀4532▶** Ezekiel 33:32.

But also in power That is, in such power as to convert the soul. The apostle evidently refers not to any miracles that were performed there, but to the effect of the gospel on those who heard it. It is possible that there were miracles performed there, as there were in other places, but there is no mention of such a fact, and it is not necessary to suppose it, in order to see the full meaning of this language. There was great power manifested in the gospel in its leading them to break off from their sins, to abandon their idols, and to give their hearts to God; see this more fully explained in the notes on **◀4111▶** 1 Corinthians 2:4.

And in the Holy Ghost Compare the notes on ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 2:4. It is there called the “demonstration of the Spirit.”

And in much assurance That is, with firm conviction, or full persuasion of its truth. It was not embraced as a doubtful thing, and it did not produce the effect on the mind which is caused by anything that is uncertain in its character. Many seem to embrace the gospel as if they only half believed it, or as if it were a matter of very doubtful truth and importance; but this was not the case with the Thessalonians. There was the firmest conviction of its truth, and they embraced it “heart and soul;” compare ^{<500>}Colossians 2:2; ^{<800>}Hebrews 6:11. From all that is said in this verse, it is evident that the power of God was remarkably manifested in the conversion of the Thessalonians, and that they embraced the gospel with an uncommonly strong conviction of its truth and value. This fact will account for the subsequent zeal which the apostle so much commends in them — for it is usually true that the character of piety in a church, as it is in an individual, is determined by the views with which the gospel is first embraced, and the purposes which are formed at the beginning of the Christian life.

As ye know what manner of men, ... Paul often appeals to those among whom he had labored as competent witnesses with respect to his own conduct and character; see ^{<500>}1 Thessalonians 2:9,10; ^{<400>}Acts 20:33-35. He means here that he and his fellow-laborers had set them an example, or had shown what Christianity was by their manner of living, and that the Thessalonians had become convinced that the religion which they taught was real. The holy life of a preacher goes far to confirm the truth of the religion which he preaches, and is among the most efficacious means of inducing them to embrace the gospel.

^{<500>}**1 Thessalonians 1:6.** *And ye became followers of us* “You became imitators — μιμηται ^{<3402>} — of us.” This does not mean that they became followers of Paul, Silas, and Timothy, in the sense that they had set themselves up as teachers, or as the head of a sect, but that they imitated their manner of living; see the notes on ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1.

And of the Lord The Lord Jesus. You also learned to imitate him. From this it is evident that the manner in which the Saviour lived was a prominent topic of their preaching, and also that it was one of the means of the conversion of the Thessalonians. It is probable that preaching on the pure and holy life of the Lord Jesus might be made a much more important means of the conversion of sinners than it is. Nothing is better adapted to

show them the evil of their own guilty lives than the contrast between their lives and his; and nothing can be conceived better fitted to win them to holy living than the contemplation of his pure and holy deportment.

Having received the word in much affliction That is, amidst much opposition from others; see ^{<447B>}Acts 17:5-8. It was in the midst of these trials that they had become converted — and they seem to have been all the better Christians for them. In this they were imitators of the Saviour, or shared the same lot with him, and thus became his followers. Their embracing and holding fast the truths of religion amidst all this opposition, showed that they were controlled by the same principles that he was, and that they were truly his friends.

With joy of the Holy Ghost With happiness produced by the Holy Ghost. Though they were much afflicted and persecuted, yet there was joy. There was joy in their conversion — in the evidence of pardoned sin — in the hope of heaven; see the notes, ^{<448B>}Acts 8:8. However great may be the trials and persecutions experienced in receiving the gospel, or however numerous and long the sufferings of the subsequent life in consequence of having embraced it, there is a joy in religion that more than overbalances all, and that makes religion the richest of all blessings.

^{<5007>}**1 Thessalonians 1:7.** *So that ye were ensamples to all that believe* Examples in reference to the firmness with which you embraced the gospel, the fidelity with which you adhered to it in trials, and the zeal which you showed in spreading it abroad. These things are specified in the previous and subsequent verses as characterizing their piety. The word here rendered “ensamples” — **τυπον** ^{<5179>}, singular — is that from which the word type is derived. It properly denotes anything caused or produced by the means of “blows” (from **τυπω** ^{<5180>}), and hence a mark, print, or impression, made by a stamp or die; and then a resemblance, figure, pattern, exemplar — a model after which anything is made. This is the meaning here. They became, as it were, a model or pattern after which the piety of others should be moulded, or showed what the piety of others ought to be.

In Macedonia Thessalonica was an important city of Macedonia (see the Intro.; compare notes, ^{<448B>}Acts 16:9), and of course their influence would be felt on the whole of the surrounding region. This is a striking instance of the effect which a church in a city may have on the country. The influence

of a city church may be felt, and will usually be felt afar on the other churches of a community — just as, in all other respects, a city has an important influence on the country at large.

And Achaia Achaia proper was the part of Greece of which Corinth was the capital. The word, however, was sometimes so used as to comprehend the whole of Greece, and in this sense it seems to be employed here, as there is no reason to suppose that their influence would be felt particularly in the province of which Corinth was the center. Koppe observes that Macedonia and Achaia were the two provinces into which all Greece was divided when it was brought under the Roman yoke, the former of which comprehended Macedonia proper, Illyricum, Epirus, and Thessaly, and the other Greece properly so called. The meaning here is, therefore, that their influence was felt on all the parts of Greece; that their piety was spoken of, and the effect of their conversion had been felt in all those places.

Thessalonica was a commercial city, and a sea-port. It had contact with all the other parts of Macedonia, with Greece, and with Asia Minor. It was partly owing to the advantages of its situation that its influence was thus felt. Its own merchants and mariners who went abroad would carry with them the spirit of the religion of the church there, and those who visited it from other ports would see the effect of religion there. This is just an instance, therefore, of the influence which a commercial town and a sea-port may have in religion on other parts of the world. A revival of religion in such a place will extend its influence afar to other places, and appropriate zeal among the friends of the Redeemer there may have an important effect on sea-ports, and towns, and lands far remote. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of such places in regard to the spread of the gospel; and Christians who reside there — be they merchants, mechanics, lawyers, physicians, mariners, or ministers of the gospel, should feel that on them God has placed the responsibility of using a vast influence in sending the gospel to other lands. He that goes forth from a commercial town should be imbued with the spirit of the gospel, and churches located there should be so under the influence of religion, that they who come among them from abroad shall bear to their own lands honorable testimony of the power of religion there.

1 Thessalonians 1:8. *For from you sounded out the word of the Lord* The truths of religion were thus spread abroad. The word rendered “sounded out” — *εξηχηται* ^{<1837>} — refers to the sounding of a trumpet (Bloomfield), and the idea is, that the gospel was proclaimed like the

sonorous voice of a trumpet echoing from place to place; compare ^{<380>}Isaiah 58:1; ^{<610>}Revelation 1:10. Their influence had an effect in diffusing the gospel in other places, as if the sound of a trumpet echoed and reechoed among the hills and along the vales of the classic land of Greece. This seems to have been done:

(1) involuntarily; that is, the necessary result of their conversion, even without any direct purpose of the kind of their own, would be to produce this effect. Their central and advantageous commercial position; the fact that many of them were in the habit of visiting other places; and the fact that they were visited by strangers from abroad, would naturally contribute to this result. But

(2) this does not appear to be all that is intended. The apostle commends them in such a way as to make it certain that they were voluntary in the spread of the gospel; that they made decided efforts to take advantage of their position to send the knowledge of the truth abroad. If so, this is an interesting instance of one of the first efforts made by a church to diffuse the gospel, and to send it to those who were destitute of it. There is no improbability in the supposition that they sent out members of their church — messengers of salvation — to other parts of Macedonia and Greece that they might communicate the same gospel to others. See Doddridge.

But also in every place Thessalonica was connected not only with Macedonia and Greece proper, in its commercial relations, but also with the ports of Asia Minor, and not improbably with still more remote regions. The meaning is, that in all the places with which they trafficked the effect of their faith was seen and spoken of.

Faith to God-ward Fidelity toward God. They showed that they had a true belief in God and in the truth which he had revealed.

So that we need not to speak anything That is, wherever we go, we need say nothing of the fact that you have been turned to the Lord, or of the character of your piety. These things are sufficiently made known by those who come from you, by those who visit you, and by your zeal in spreading the true religion.

^{<300>}**1 Thessalonians 1:9.** *For they themselves* They who have visited you, and they whom you have sent out; all persons testify of your piety. The apostle seems to refer to all whom he had met or had heard of “in all

places,” who said anything about the Thessalonians They were unanimous in bearing testimony to their fidelity and piety.

Show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you The testimony which they bear of you is, in fact, testimony of the manner in which we preached the gospel, and demeaned ourselves when we were with you. It shows that we were intent on our Master’s work, and that we were not actuated by selfish or sinister motives The argument is, that such effects could not have been produced among them if Paul, Silas, and their fellow laborers had been impostors. Their sound conversion to God; their change from idolatry to the true religion, and the zeal which had been the result of their conversion, was an argument to which Paul and his fellow-laborers might appeal in proof of their sincerity and their being sent from God. Paul often makes a similar appeal; compare notes on ^{<478D>}2 Corinthians 3:2,3. It is certain that many of the Jews in Thessalonica, when Paul and his fellow-laborers were there, regarded them as impostors (^{<4476>}Acts 17:6,8), and there is every reason to suppose that after they left the city, they would endeavor to keep up this impression among the people. To meet this, Paul now says that their own undoubted conversion to a life of holiness and zeal under their ministry, was an unanswerable argument that this was not so. How could impostors and deceivers have been the means of producing such effects?

And how ye turned to God from idols That is, under our preaching. This proves that the church was to a considerable extent composed of those who were converted from idolatry under the preaching of Paul; compare Intro. 4. The meaning here is, that they who came from them, or they who had visited them, bore abundant testimony to the fact that they had turned from idols to the worship of the true God; compare notes ^{<612D>}1 Corinthians 12:2; Galatians i.,8.

To serve the living and true God He is called the “living God” in opposition to idols — who are represented as dead, dumb, deaf, and blind; compare ^{<39265>}Psalms 135:15-17; notes, ^{<23440>}Isaiah 44:10-17; ^{<4066>}Matthew 16:16; ^{<4055>}John 5:26; ^{<4445>}Acts 14:15.

^{<3010>}**1 Thessalonians 1:10.** *And to wait for his Son from heaven* It is clear from this and from other parts of these two Epistles, that the return of the Lord Jesus to this world was a prominent subject of the preaching of Paul at Thessalonica. No small part of these Epistles is occupied with stating the true doctrine on this point (^{<3045>}1 Thessalonians 4:5.), and in

correcting the errors which prevailed in regard to it after the departure of Paul. Perhaps we are not to infer, however, that this doctrine was made more prominent there than others, or that it had been inculcated there more frequently than it had been elsewhere, but the apostle adverts to it here particularly because it was a doctrine so well fitted to impart comfort to them in their trials (~~1THES~~1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), and because, in that connection, it was so well calculated to rouse them to vigilance and zeal; ~~1THES~~1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. He makes it prominent in the second Epistle, because material errors prevailed there in reference to it which needed to be corrected. In the passage before us, he says that the return of the Son of God from heaven was an important point which had been insisted on when he was there, and that their conduct, as borne witness to by all, had shown with what power it had seized upon them, and what a practical influence it had exerted in their lives. They lived as if they were” waiting” for his return. They fully believed in it; they expected it. They were looking out for it, not knowing when it might occur, and as if it might occur at any moment. They were, therefore, dead to the world, and were animated with an earnest desire to do good. This is one of the instances which demonstrate that the doctrine that the Lord Jesus will return to our world, is fitted, when understood in the true sense revealed in the Scriptures, to exert a powerful influence on the souls of people. It is eminently adapted to comfort the hearts of true Christians in the sorrows, bereavements, and sicknesses of life (~~JOH~~John 14:1-3; ~~ACTS~~Acts 1:11; ~~1THES~~1Thessalonians 4:13-18; ~~2PET~~2 Peter 3:8,9); to lead us to watchfulness and to an earnest inquiry into the question whether we are prepared to meet him (~~MAT~~Matthew 24:37-44; 25:13); to make us dead to the world, and to lead us to act as becomes the children of light (~~1THES~~1 Thessalonians 5:5-9; to awaken and arouse impenitent and careless sinners (~~1THES~~1 Thessalonians 5:2,3; ~~2PET~~2 Peter 3:3-7), and to excite Christians to self-denying efforts to spread the gospel in distant lands, as was the case at Thessalonica. Every doctrine of the gospel is adapted to produce some happy practical effects on mankind, but there are few that are more full of elevated and holy influences than that which teaches that the Lord Jesus will return to the earth, and which leads the soul to wait for his appearing; compare notes, ~~1COR~~1 Corinthians 1:7; ~~PHIL~~Philippians 3:20.

Whom he raised from the dead See the notes at ~~ACTS~~Acts 2:24-32; ~~1COR~~1 Corinthians 15:4-9. Paul probably means to intimate here, that this was one of the great truths which they had received, that the Lord Jesus had been

raised from the dead. We know it was a prominent doctrine wherever the gospel was preached.

Which delivered us from the wrath to come Another of the prominent doctrines of Christianity, which was undoubtedly always inculcated by the first preachers of religion. The “wrath to come” is the divine indignation which will come upon the guilty; ~~<4037>~~ Matthew 3:7. From that Christ delivers us by taking our place, and dying in our stead. It was the great purpose of his coming to save us from this approaching wrath. It follows from this:

(1) that there was wrath which man had to dread — since Jesus came to deliver us from something that was real, and not from what was imaginary; and

(2) that the same wrath is to be dreaded now by all who are not united to Christ, since in this respect they are now just as all were before he died; that is, they are exposed to fearful punishment, from which He alone can deliver. It may be added, that the existence of this wrath is real, whether people believe it or not, for the fact of its existence is not affected by our belief or unbelief.

REMARKS ON 1 THESSALONIANS 1

This chapter teaches:

(1) That it is right to commend these who do well; ~~<5008>~~ 1 Thessalonians 1:3. Paul was never afraid of injuring any one by commending him when he deserved it: nor was he ever afraid to rebuke when censure was due.

(2) Christians are chosen to salvation; ~~<5008>~~ 1 Thessalonians 1:4. Their hope of heaven depends on the “election of God.”

(3) It is possible for a people to know that they are chosen of God, and to give such evidence of it that others shall know it also; ~~<5008>~~ 1 Thessalonians 1:4. It is possible for a church to evince such a spirit of piety, self-denial, love, and holiness, and such a desire to spread the gospel, as to show that they are “chosen of God,” or that they are a true church. This question is not to be determined by their adherence to certain rites and forms; by their holding to the sentiments of an orthodox creed: or by their zeal in defense of the “apostolic succession,” but by their bringing forth “the fruits of good living.” In determining that the church at Thessalonica was “chosen of

God,” Paul does not refer to its external organization, or to the fact that it was founded by apostolic hands, or that it had a true ministry and valid ordinances, but to the fact that it evinced the true spirit of Christian piety; and particularly that they had been zealous in sending the gospel to others. There were three things to which he referred:

1. that the gospel had power over themselves, inducing them to abandon their sins;
2. that it had such influence on their lives that others recognized in them the evidence of true religion; and,
3. that it made them benevolent, and excited them to make efforts to diffuse its blessings abroad.

(4) If a church may know that it is chosen or elected of God, it is true of an individual also that he may know it. It is not by any direct revelation from heaven; not by an infallible communication of the Holy Spirit; not by any voice or vision; but it is in the same way in which this may be evinced by a church. The conversion of an individual, or his “election of God,” may be certainly known by himself, if,

1. the gospel is received as “the word of God,” and induces him to abandon his sins;
2. if it leads him to pursue such a life that others shall see that he is actuated by Christian principles; and,
3. if he makes it his great aim in life to do good, and to diffuse abroad, as far as he can, that religion which he professes to love. He who finds in his own heart and life evidence of these things, need not doubt that he is among the “chosen of God.”

(5) The character of piety in the life of an individual Christian, and in a church, is often determined by the manner in which the gospel is embraced at first, and by the spirit with which the Christian life is entered on; see the notes on ^{<small>SMB>}1 Thessalonians 1:5,6. If so, then this fact is of immense importance in the question about organizing a church, and about making a profession of religion. If a church is so organized as to have it understood that it shall be to a considerable extent the patron of worldly amusements — a “halfway house” between the world and religion, that purpose will determine all its subsequent character — unless it shall be counteracted by

the grace of God. If it is organized so as to look with a benignant and tolerant eye on gaiety, vanity, self-indulgence, ease, and what are called the amusements and pleasures of life, it is not difficult to see what will be its character and influence. How can such a church diffuse far and near the conviction that it is “chosen of God,” as the church at Thessalonica did And so of an individual. Commonly, the whole character of the religious life will be determined by the views with which the profession of religion is made. If there is a purpose to enjoy religion and the world too; to be the patron of fashion as well as a professed follower of Christ; to seek the flattery or the plaudits of man as well as the approbation of God, that purpose will render the whole religious life useless, vacillating, inconsistent, miserable. The individual will live without the enjoyment of religion, and will die leaving little evidence to his friends that he has gone to be with God. If, on the other hand, there be singleness of purpose, and entire dedication to God at the commencement of the Christian life, the religious career will be one of usefulness, respectability, and peace. The most important period in a man’s life, then, is that when he is pondering the question whether he shall make a profession of religion.

(6) A church in a city should cause its influence to be felt afar; ^{<SC007>1} Thessalonians 1:7-9. This is true, indeed, of all other churches, but it is especially so of a church in a large town. Cities will be centers of influence in fashion, science, literature, religion, and morals. A thousand ties of interest bind them to other parts of a land, and though in fact there may be, as there often is, much more intelligence in a country neighborhood than among the same number of inhabitants taken promiscuously from a city; and though there may be, as there often is, far more good sense and capability to appreciate religious truth in a country congregation than in a congregation in a city, yet it is true that the city will be the radiating point of influence. This, of course, increases the responsibility of Christians in a city, and makes it important that, like those of Thessalonica, they should be models of self-denial and of efforts to spread the gospel.

(7) A church in a commercial town should make use of its special influence to spread the gospel abroad; ^{<SC007>1} Thessalonians 1:7-9. Such a place is connected with remote lands, and those who, for commercial purposes, visit distant ports from that place, should bear with them the spirit of the gospel. Such, too, should be the character of piety in the churches in such a city, that all who visit it for any purpose, should see the reality of religion, and be led to bear the honorable report of it again to their own land.

(8) Such, too, should be the piety of any church. The church at Thessalonica evinced the true spirit of religion; ^{<51007>}1 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Its light shone afar. It sent out those who went to spread the gospel. Its members, when they went abroad, showed that they were influenced by higher and purer principles than those which actuated them before conversion, and than were evinced by the pagan world. Those who visited them, also, saw that there was a reality in religion, and bore an honorable report of it again to their own lands. Let any church evince this spirit, and it will show that it is “chosen of God,” or a true church; and wherever there is a church formed after the primitive model, these traits will always be seen.

(9) It is our duty and privilege to “wait for the Son of God to return from heaven.” We know not when his appearing, either to remove us by death, or to judge the world, will be — and we should therefore watch and be ready. The hope of his return to our world to raise the dead, and to convey his ransomed to heaven, is the brightest and most cheering prospect that dawns on man, and we should be ready, whenever it occurs, to hail him as our returning Lord, and to rush to his arms as our glorious Redeemer. It should be always the characteristic of our piety, as it was that of John to say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus;” ^{<6221>}Revelation 22:20.

NOTES ON 1 THESSALONIANS 2

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER

The principal subjects embraced in this chapter are the following:

I. A statement of the conduct of Paul and his fellow-laborers when they first preached the gospel at Thessalonica; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. In this statement, the apostle specifies particularly the following things:

(1) That he and his fellow-laborers had been shamefully treated at Philippi, and had been obliged to encounter much opposition at Thessalonica; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:1,2.

(2) That in their efforts to convert the Thessalonians they had used no deceit, corruption, or grille; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:3,4.

(3) That they had not sought the praise of people, and had not used the weight of authority which they might have done as the apostles of Christ; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:6.

(4) That they had been gentle and mild in all their conversation with them; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:7,8.

(5) That, in order not to be burdensome, or to subject themselves to the charge of selfishness, they had supported themselves by laboring night and day; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:9.

(6) That the Thessalonians themselves were witnesses in what a holy and pure manner they had lived when there, and how they had exhorted them to a holy life; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

II. The apostle refers to the manner in which the Thessalonians had received the truth at first, as undoubtedly the word of God, and not as the word of people; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:13.

III. He reminds them of the fact that they had met with the same opposition from the Jews which the churches in Judea had, for that everywhere the Jews had made the same opposition to the messengers of God, killing the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and forbidding the apostles everywhere to speak to the Gentiles; ¹1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.

IV. In the conclusion of the chapter, the apostle expresses the earnest desire which he had to visit them, and the reason why he had not done it. It was because he had been prevented by causes beyond his control, and now his earnest and sincere wish was that he might be permitted to see them — for they were his hope, and joy, and crown; ~~<117>~~ 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20.

It is reasonable to suppose that the statements in this chapter were designed to meet a certain condition of things in the church there, and if so, we may learn something of the difficulties which the Thessalonians had to encounter, and of the objections which were made to Paul and to the gospel. It is often in this way that we can get the best view of the internal condition of a church referred to in the New Testament — not by direct statement respecting difficulties and errors in it, but by the character of the Epistle sent to it. Judging by this rule, we should infer that there were those in Thessalonica who utterly denied the divine origin of the gospel. This general charge, the apostle meets in the first chapter, by showing that the power of the gospel evinced in their conversion, and its effects in their lives, demonstrated it to be of heavenly origin.

In reference to the state of things as referred to in this chapter, we should also infer the following things:

- 1.** That it was represented by some that the apostle and his fellow-laborers sought influence and power; that they were dictatorial and authoritative; that they were indisposed to labor; and were, in fact, impostors. This charge Paul refutes abundantly by his appeal to what they knew of him, and what they had seen of him when he was there: ~~<118>~~ 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.
- 2.** That the church at Thessalonica met with severe and violent opposition from the Jews who were there; ~~<119>~~ 1 Thessalonians 2:14-17. This appears to have been a formidable opposition; compare ~~<120>~~ Acts 17:5ff. They would not only be likely to use violence, but it is not improbable that they employed the semblance of argument that might perplex the church. They might represent that they were from the same country as Paul and his fellow-laborers; that they, while pretending to great zeal for religion, were, in fact, apostates, and were engaged in overturning the revealed doctrines of God. It would be easy to represent them as people who, from this cause, were worthy of no confidence, and to urge the fact that those who thus acted in opposition to the religion of their own country, and to the sacred rites of the temple at Jerusalem, could be entitled to no regard. These

charges, if they were made, the apostle meets, by assuring the Thessalonians that they were suffering precisely the same things which the churches in Judea did; that the Jews manifested the same spirit there which they did in Thessalonica; that they had killed alike the Lord Jesus and their own undoubted prophets, and that it was a characteristic of them that they were opposed to all other people. Their opposition, therefore, was not to be wondered at, nor was it to be regarded as any argument that the apostles, though Jews, were unworthy of confidence; ^{<5125>}1 Thessalonians 2:15,16.

3. It was very probably represented by the enemies of Paul and his fellow-laborers, that they had fled from Thessalonica on the slightest danger, and had no regard for the church there, or they would have remained there in the time of peril, or, at least, that they would have returned to visit them. Their continued absence was probably urged as a proof that they had no concern for them. The apostle meets this by stating that they had been indeed “taken from them” for a little time, but that their hearts were still with them, and by assuring them that he had often endeavored to visit them again, but that “Satan had hindered” him; ^{<5127>}1 Thessalonians 2:17-20. He had, however, given them the highest proof of interest and affection that he could, for when he was unable to go himself, he had, at great self-denial, sent Timothy to establish them in the faith, and to comfort their hearts; ^{<5128>}1 Thessalonians 3:1-3. His absence, therefore, should not be urged as a proof that he had no regard for them.

^{<5129>}**1 Thessalonians 2:1.** *For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you* notes, ^{<5130>}1 Thessalonians 1:9. Paul appeals to themselves for proof that they had not come among them as impostors. They had had a full opportunity to see them, and to know what influenced them. Paul frequently appeals to his own life, and to what they, among whom he labored, knew of it, as a full refutation of the slanderous accusations of his enemies; compare notes, ^{<4140>}1 Corinthians 4:10-16; 9:19-27; ^{<4142>}2 Corinthians 6:3-10. Every minister of the gospel ought so to live as to be able, when slanderously attacked, to make such an appeal to his people.

That it was not in vain κενη ^{<2756>} This word means:

(1) “empty, vain, fruitless,” or without success;

(2) that in which there is no truth or reality — “false, fallacious;”

^{<4146>}Ephesians 5:6; ^{<5148>}Colossians 2:8. Here it seems, from the connection

(<sup>1 Thessalonians 2:3-5), to be used in the latter sense, as denoting that they were not deceivers. The object does not appear to be so much to show that their ministry was successful, as to meet a charge of their adversaries that they were impostors. Paul tells them that from their own observation they knew that this was not so.

<sup>**1 Thessalonians 2:2.** *But even after that we had suffered before* Before we came among you.

And were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi <sup>Acts 16:19ff. By being beaten and cast into prison. The shame of the treatment consisted in the fact that it was wholly undeserved; that it was contrary to the laws; and that it was accompanied with circumstances designed to make their punishment as ignominious as possible. The Thessalonians knew of this, and Paul was not disposed to palliate the conduct of the Philippians. What was “shameful treatment” he speaks of as such without hesitation. It is not wrong to call things by their right names, and when we have been abused, it is not necessary that we should attempt to smooth the matter over by saying that it was not so.

We were bold in our God By humble dependence on the support of our God. It was only his powerful aid that could have enabled them to persevere with ardor and zeal in such a work after such treatment. The meaning here is, that they were not deterred from preaching the gospel by the treatment which they had received, but at the very next important town, and on the first opportunity, they proclaimed the same truth, though there was no security that they might not meet with the same persecution there. Paul evidently appeals to this in order to show them that they were not impostors, and that they were not influenced by the hope of ease or of selfish gains. People who were not sincere and earnest in their purposes would have been deterred by such treatment as they had received at Philippi.

With much contention Amidst much opposition, and where great effort was necessary. The Greek word here used is *αγωνι* <sup>73 (agony), a word referring usually to the Grecian games; notes, <sup>Colossians 2:1. It means the course, or place of contest; and then the contest itself, the strife, the combat, the effort for victory; and the apostle here means, that owing to the opposition there, there was need of an effort on his part like the desperate struggles of those who contended for the mastery at the Grecian games; compare notes on <sup>1 Corinthians 9:24-27. The triumph of the

gospel there was secured only by an effort of the highest kind, and by overcoming the most formidable opposition.

1 Thessalonians 2:3. *For our exhortation* That is, the exhortation to embrace the gospel. The word seems to be used here so as to include preaching in general. The sense is, that the means which they used to induce them to become Christians were not such as to delude them.

Was not of deceit Was not founded on sophistry. The apostle means to say, that the Thessalonians knew that his manner of preaching was not such as was adopted by the advocates of error.

Nor of uncleanness Not such as to lead to an impure life. It was such as to lead to holiness and purity. The apostle appeals to what they knew to be the tendency of his doctrine as an evidence that it was true. Most of the teaching of the pagan philosophers led to a life of licentiousness and corruption. The tendency of the gospel was just the reverse,

Nor in guile Not by the arts of deceit. There was no craftiness or trick, such as could not bear a severe scrutiny. No point was carried by art, cunning, or stratagem. Everything was done on the most honorable and fair principles. It is much when a man can say that he has never endeavored to accomplish anything by mere trick, craft, or cunning. Sagacity and shrewdness are always allowable in ministers as well as others; trick and cunning never. Yet stratagem often takes the place of sagacity, and trick is often miscalled shrewdness. Guile, craft, cunning, imply deception, and can never be reconciled with that entire honesty which a minister of the gospel, and all other Christians, ought to possess; see notes on ^{<4726>}2 Corinthians 12:16; compare ^{<4812>}Psalm 32:2; 34:13; ^{<4817>}John 1:47; ^{<4818>}1 Peter 2:1,22; ^{<6415>}Revelation 14:5.

1 Thessalonians 2:4. *But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel* Compare ^{<5011>}1 Timothy 1:11,12. Since there had been committed to us an office so high and holy, and so much demanding sincerity, fidelity, and honesty, we endeavored to act in all respects in conformity to the trust reposed in us. The gospel is a system of truth and sincerity, and we evinced the same. The gospel is concerned with great realities, and we did not resort to trick and illusion. The office of the ministry is most responsible, and we acted in view of the great account which we must render. The meaning is, that Paul had such a sense of the truth, reality, and importance of the gospel, and of his responsibility, as

effectually to keep him from anything like craft or cunning in preaching it. An effectual restrainer from mere management and trick will always be found in a deep conviction of the truth and importance of religion. Artifice and cunning are the usual accompaniments of a bad cause — and, when adopted by a minister of the gospel, will usually, when detected, leave the impression that he feels that he is engaged in such a cause. If an object cannot be secured by sincerity and straight-forward dealing, it is not desirable that it should be secured at all.

Even so we speak In accordance with the nature of the gospel; with the truth and sincerity which such a cause demands.

Not as pleasing men Not in the manner of impostors, who make it their object to please people. The meaning of the apostle is, that he did not aim to teach such doctrines as would flatter people; as would win their applause; or as would gratify their passions or their fancy. We are not to suppose that he desired to offend people; or that he regarded their esteem as of no value; or that he was indifferent whether they were pleased or displeased; but that it was not the direct object of his preaching to please them. It was to declare the truth, and to obtain the approbation of God whatever people might think of it; see the notes on <8110>Galatians 1:10.

Which trieth our hearts It is often said to be an attribute of God that he tries or searches the hearts of people; <8389>1 Chronicles 28:9; 29:17; <8413>Jeremiah 11:20; 17:10; <89104>Psalm 11:4; <85827>Romans 8:27. The meaning here is, that the apostle had a deep conviction of the truth that God knew all his motives, and that all would be revealed in the last day.

<8115>**1 Thessalonians 2:5.** *For neither at any time used we flattering words* see the notes on <8322>Job 31:21,22; and on <8427>2 Corinthians 2:17. The word here rendered “flattering” — *κολακειας* <2850> — occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The meaning is, that the apostle did not deal in the language of adulation; he did not praise them for their beauty, wealth, talent, or accomplishments, and conceal from them the painful truths about their guilt and danger. He stated simple truth — not refusing to commend people if truth would admit of it, and never hesitating to declare his honest convictions about their guilt and danger. One of the principal arts of the deceiver on all subjects is flattery; and Paul says, that when preaching to the Thessalonians he had carefully avoided it. He now appeals to that fact as a proof of his own integrity. They knew that he had been faithful to their souls.

Nor a cloke of covetousness The word rendered “cloke” here — **προφασει** ^{<4392>} — means, properly, “what is shown or appears before any one;” i.e., “show, pretence, pretext,” put forth in order to cover one’s real intent; ^{<1214>}Matthew 22:14; ^{<1120>}Mark 12:40; ^{<207>}Luke 20:47. The meaning here is, that he did not put on a pretence or appearance of piety for the sake of promoting the schemes of covetousness. The evidence of that was not only what they observed of the general spirit of the apostle, but also the fact that when with them he had actually labored with his own hands for a support; ver. 9. It is obvious that there were those there, as sometimes there are now, who, under the pretence of great zeal for religion, were really seeking wealth, and it is possible that it may have been alleged against Paul and his fellow-laborers that they were such persons.

God is witness This is a solemn appeal to God for the truth of what he had said. He refers not only to their own observation, but he calls God himself to witness his sincerity. God knew the truth in the case. There could have been no imposing on him; and the appeal, therefore, is to one who was intimately acquainted with the truth. Learn hence:

(1) That it is right, on important occasions, to appeal to God for the truth of what we say.

(2) We should always so live that we can properly make such an appeal to him.

^{<106>}**1 Thessalonians 2:6.** *Nor of men sought we glory* Or praise. The love of applause was not that which influenced them; see the notes on ^{<1000>}Colossians 1:10.

Neither of you, nor yet of others Nowhere has this been our object The love of fame is not that which has influenced us. The particular idea in this verse seems to be that though they had uncommon advantages, as the apostles of Christ, for setting up a dominion or securing an ascendancy over others, yet they had not availed themselves of it. As an apostle of Christ; as appointed by him to found churches; as endowed with the power of working miracles, Paul had every advantage for securing authority over others, and turning it to the purposes of ambition or gain.

When we might have been burdensome Margin, “or, used authority.” Some understand this as meaning that they might have demanded a support in virtue of their being apostles; others, as Calvin, and as it is in the margin,

that they might have used authority, and have governed them wholly in that manner, exacting unqualified obedience. The Greek properly refers to that which is “weighty” — *εν* ^{<1722>} *βαρει* ^{<922>} — “heavy, burdensome.” Anything that weighs down or oppresses — as a burden, sorrow, or authority, would meet the sense of the Greek. It seems probable, from the context, that the apostle did not refer either to authority or to support exclusively, but may have included both. In their circumstances it might have been somewhat burdensome for them to have maintained him and his fellowlaborers, though as an apostle he might have required it; compare ^{<408>}1 Corinthians 9:8-15. Rather than be oppressive in this respect, he had chosen to forego his right, and to maintain himself by his own labor. As an apostle also he might have exerted his authority, and might have made use of his great office for the purpose of placing himself at the head of churches, and giving them laws. But he chose to do nothing that would be a burden: he treated them with the gentleness with which a nurse cherishes her children (ver. 7), or a father his sons (ver. 11). and employed only the arts of persuasion; compare notes on ^{<4723>}2 Corinthians 12:13-16.

As the apostles of Christ Though the writer uses the word apostles here in the plural number, it is not certain that he means to apply it to Silas and Timothy. He often uses the plural number where he refers to himself only; and though Silas and Timothy are joined with him in this Epistle (^{<500>}1 Thessalonians 1:1), yet it is evident that he writes the letter as if he were alone and that they had no part in the composition or the instructions. Timothy and Silas are associated with him for the mere purpose of salutation or kind remembrance. That this is so, is apparent from 1 Thessalonians 3. In ^{<500>}1 Thessalonians 3:1, Paul uses the plural term also. “When we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; compare ^{<505>}1 Thessalonians 3:5.

“For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith.”

Neither Silas nor Timothy were apostles in the strict and proper sense, and there is no evidence that they had the “authority” which Paul here says might have been exerted by an apostle of Christ.

^{<500>}**1 Thessalonians 2:7.** *But we were gentle among you* Instead of using authority, we used only the most kind and gentle methods to win you and to promote your peace and order. The word here rendered “nurse,” may mean any one who nurses a child, whether a mother or another

person. It seems here to refer to a mother (compare ^{<571>}1 Thessalonians 2:11), and the idea is, that the apostle felt for them the affectionate solicitude which a mother does for the child at her breast.

^{<572>}**1 Thessalonians 2:8.** *So, being affectionately desirous of you* The word here rendered “being affectionately desirous” — **ὄμειρομενοι** ^{<5739>} — occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means to “long after, to have a strong affection for.” The sense here is, that Paul was so strongly attached to them that he would have been willing to lay down his life for them.

We were willing to have imparted unto you To have given or communicated; ^{<5741>}Romans 1:11.

Not the gospel of God only To be willing to communicate the knowledge of the gospel was in itself a strong proof of love, even if it were attended with no self-denial or hazard in doing it. We evince a decided love for a man when we tell him of the way of salvation, and urge him to accept of it. We show strong interest for one who is in danger, when we tell him of a way of escape, or for one who is sick, when we tell him of a medicine that will restore him; but we manifest a much higher love when we tell a lost and ruined sinner of the way in which he may be saved. There is no method in which we can show so strong an interest in our fellow-men, and so much true benevolence for them, as to go to them and tell them of the way by which they may be rescued from everlasting ruin.

But also our own souls Or rather “lives” — **ψυχας** ^{<5590>}; ^{<4165>}Matthew 6:25; 20:28; ^{<2122>}Luke 12:22,13; ^{<4104>}Mark 3:4. This does not mean that the apostle was willing to be damned, or to lose his soul in order to save them, but that if it had been necessary he would have been ready to lay down his life; see ^{<5746>}1 John 3:16. “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren;” compare notes, ^{<4513>}John 15:13. His object seems to be to assure them that he did not leave them from any want of love to them, or from the fear of being put to death. It was done from the strong conviction of duty. He appears to have left them because he could not longer remain without exposing others to danger, and without the certainty that there would be continued disturbances; see ^{<4179>}Acts 17:9,10.

^{<5750>}**1 Thessalonians 2:9.** *Ye remember, brethren, our labour* Doubtless in the occupation of a tent-maker; notes, ^{<4184>}Acts 20:34; ^{<4042>}1 Corinthians 4:12.

And travail see the notes on ^{<4112>}2 Corinthians 11:27. The word means “wearisome labor.”

For labouring night and day That is, when he was not engaged in preaching the gospel. He appears to have labored through the week and to have preached on the Sabbath; or if engaged in preaching in the day time during the week, he made it up by night labor.

We preached unto you the gospel of God That is, I supported myself when I preached among you. No one, therefore, could say that I was disposed to live in idleness; no one that I sought to make myself rich at the expense of others.

^{<310>}**1 Thessalonians 2:10.** *Ye are witnesses* They had a full opportunity of knowing his manner of life.

And God also See the notes on ver 5.

How holily Piously — observing all the duties of religion.

And justly In our contact with people. I did them no wrong.

And unblameably This seems to refer to his duties both to God and man. In reference to all those duties no one could bring a charge against him. Every duty was faithfully performed. This is not a claim to absolute perfection, but it is a claim to consistency of character, and to faithfulness in duty, which every Christian should be enabled to make. Every man professing religion should so live as to be able to appeal to all who have had an opportunity of knowing him, as witnesses that he was consistent and faithful, and that there was nothing which could be laid to his charge.

^{<311>}**1 Thessalonians 2:11.** *How we exhorted* That is, to a holy life.

And comforted In the times of affliction.

And charged Greek, “testified.” The word testify is used here in the sense of protesting, or making an earnest and solemn appeal. They came as witnesses from God of the truth of religion, and of the importance of living in a holy manner. They did not originate the gospel themselves, or teach its duties and doctrines as their own, but they came in the capacity of those who bore witness of what God had revealed and required, and they did this in the earnest and solemn manner which became such an office.

As a father doth his children With an interest in your welfare, such as a father feels for his children, and with such a method as a father would use. It was not done in a harsh, dictatorial, and arbitrary manner, but in tenderness and love.

1 Thessalonians 2:12. *That ye would walk worthy of God ...* That you would live in such a manner as would honor God, who has chosen you to be his friends; notes, **Ephesians 4:1.** A child “walks worthy of a parent” when he lives in such way as to reflect honor on that parent for the method in which he has trained him; when he so lives as to bring no disgrace on him, so as not to pain his heart by misconduct, or so as to give no occasion to any to speak reproachfully of him. This he does, when:

- (1) he keeps all his commands;
- (2) when he leads a life of purity and virtue;
- (3) when he carries out the principles of the family into his own life;
- (4) when he honors a father by evincing a profound respect for his opinions; and
- (5) when he endeavors to provide for his comfort and to promote his welfare. In a manner similar to this, a true Christian honors God. He lives so as not to bring a reproach upon him or his cause, and so as to teach the world to honor him who has bestowed such grace upon him.

Who hath called you See the notes at **1 Corinthians 1:9.**

1 Thessalonians 2:13. *For this cause also thank we God* In addition to the reasons for thankfulness already suggested, the apostle here refers to the fact that they received the truth, when it was preached, in such a way as to show that they fully believed it to be the word of God.

Not as the word of men Not of human origin, but as a divine revelation. You were not led to embrace it by human reasoning, or the mere arts of persuasion, or from personal respect for others, but by your conviction that it was a revelation from God. It is only when the gospel is embraced in this way that religion will show itself sufficient to abide the fiery trials to which Christians may be exposed. He who is convinced by mere human reasoning may have his faith shaken by opposite artful reasoning; he who is won by the mere arts of popular eloquence will have no faith which will be proof

against similar arts in the cause of error; he who embraces religion from mere respect for a pastor, parent, or friend, or because others do, may abandon it when the popular current shall set in a different direction, or when his friends shall embrace different views; but he who embraces religion as the truth of God, and from the love of the truth, will have a faith, like that of the Thessalonians, which will abide every trial.

Which effectually worketh also in you that believe The word rendered “which” here — ὅς ^{<3739>} — may be referred either to “truth” or to “God.” The grammatical construction will admit of either, but it is not material which is adopted. Either of them expresses a sense undeniably true, and of great importance. The meaning is, that the truth was made efficacious in the minds of all who became true Christians. It induced them to abandon their sins, to devote themselves to God, to lead pure and holy lives, and enabled them to abide the trials and temptations of life; compare notes on ^{<1852>}Philippians 2:12,13; ^{<5832>}Hebrews 13:21. The particular illustration here is, that when they embraced the gospel it had such an efficacy on their hearts as to prepare them to meet all the terrors of bitter persecution without shrinking.

^{<1014>}**1 Thessalonians 2:14.** *For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus* Which are united to the Lord Jesus, or which are founded on his truth: that is, which are true churches. Of those churches they became “imitators” — μιμηται ^{<3402>} — to wit, in their sufferings. This does not mean that they were founded on the same model; or that they professed to be the followers of those churches, but that they had been treated in the same way, and thus were like them. They had been persecuted in the same manner, and by the same people — the Jews; and they had borne their persecutions with the same spirit. The object of this is to comfort and encourage them, by showing them that others had been treated in the same manner, and that it was to be expected that a true church would be persecuted by the Jews. They ought not, therefore, to consider it as any evidence that they were not a true church that they had been persecuted by those who claimed to be the people of God, and who made extraordinary pretensions to piety.

For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen Literally, “of those who are of your fellow-tribe, or fellowclansmen” — συμφυλετων ^{<4853>}. The Greek word means “one of the same tribe,” and then a fellow-citizen, or fellowcountryman. It is not elsewhere used in the New

Testament. The particular reference here seems not to be to the pagan who were the agents or actors in the scenes of tumult and persecutions, but to the Jews by whom they were led on, or who were the prime movers in the persecutions which they had endured. It is necessary to suppose that they were principally Jews who were the cause of the persecution which had been excited against them, in order to make the parallelism between the church there and the churches in Palestine exact. At the same time there was a propriety in saying that, though the parallelism was exact, it was by the “hands of their own countrymen” that it was done; that is, they were the visible agents or actors by whom it was done — the instruments in the hands of others. In Palestine. the Jews persecuted the churches directly; out of Palestine, they did it by means of others. They were the real authors of it, as they were in Judea, but they usually accomplished it by producing an excitement among the pagan, and by the plea that the apostles were making war on civil institutions. This was the case in Thessalonica. “The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, set all the city on an uproar.”

“They drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, Those that have turned the world up side down have come hither also;” ^{<417B>}Acts 17:5,6.

The same thing occurred a short time after at Berea. “When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also and stirred up the people;” ^{<417C>}Acts 17:13; compare ^{<444D>}Acts 14:2. “The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren.” “The Epistle, therefore, represents the case accurately as the history states it. It was the Jews always who set on foot the persecutions against the apostles and their followers;” Paley, Hor. Paul. in loc. It was, therefore, strictly true, as the apostle here states it:

(1) that they were subjected to the same treatment from the Jews as the churches in Judea were, since they were the authors of the excitement against them; and

(2) that it was carried on, as the apostle states, “by their own countrymen;” that is, that they were the agents or instruments by which it was done. This kind of undesigned coincidence between the Epistle and the history in the Acts of the Apostles, is one of the arguments from which Paley (Hor. Paul.) infers the genuineness of both.

As they have of the Jews Directly. In Palestine there were no others but Jews who could be excited against Christians, and they were obliged to appear as the persecutors themselves.

^{<3126>}**1 Thessalonians 2:15.** *Who both killed the Lord Jesus* see the notes on ^{<4123>}Acts 2:23. The meaning here is, that it was characteristic of the Jews to be engaged in the work of persecution, and that they should not regard it as strange that they who had put their own Messiah to death, and slain the prophets, should now be found persecuting the true children of God.

And their own prophets see the notes on ^{<4213>}Matthew 21:33-40; 23:29-37; ^{<4172>}Acts 7:52.

And have persecuted us As at Iconium (^{<4401>}Acts 14:1), Derbe, and Lystra (^{<4446>}Acts 14:6), and at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. The meaning is, that it was characteristic of them to persecute, and they spared no one. If they had persecuted the apostles themselves, who were their own countrymen, it should not be considered strange that they should persecute those who were Gentiles.

And they please not God Their conduct is not such as to please God, but such as to expose them to his wrath; ^{<3126>}1 Thessalonians 2:16. The meaning is not that they did not aim to please God — whatever may have been the truth about that — but that they had shown by all their history that their conduct could not meet with the divine approbation. They made extraordinary pretensions to being the special people of God, and it was important for the apostle to show that their conduct demonstrated that they had no such claims. Their opposition to the Thessalonians, therefore, was no proof that God was opposed to them, and they should not allow themselves to be troubled by such opposition. It was rather proof that they were the friends of God — since those who now persecuted them had been engaged in persecuting the most holy people that had lived.

And are contrary to all men They do not merely differ from other people in customs and opinions — which might be harmless — but they keep up an active opposition to all other people. It was not opposition to one nation only, but to all; it was not to one form of religion only, but to all — even including God's last revelation to mankind; it was not opposition evinced in their own country, but they carried it with them wherever they went. The truth of this statement is confirmed, not only by authority of the apostle and the uniform record in the New Testament, but by the testimony

borne of them in the classic writers. This was universally regarded as their national characteristic, for they had so demeaned themselves as to leave this impression on the minds of those with whom they had contact. Thus Tacitus describes them as “cherishing hatred against all others” — *adversus omnes alios hostile odium*; *Hist. v. 5*. So Juvenal (*Sat. xiv. 103,104*), describes them.

*Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti,
Quaesitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.*

“They would not even point out the way to any one except of the same religion, nor, being asked, guide any to a fountain except the circumcised.” So they are called by Appollonius “atheists and misanthropes, and the most uncultivated barbarians” — *αθεοι και μισανθρωποι και αφυεστατοι των βαρβαρων* ; Josephus, *Contra Apion ii. 14*. So Diodorus Siculus (34:p. 524), describes them as “those alone among all the nations who were unwilling to have any contact (or intermingling — *επιμιξιας*) with any other nation, and who regarded all others as enemies” *και <2532> πολεμιους <4171> υπολαμβανειν <5274> παντας <3956>* . Their history had given abundant occasion for these charges.

^{<3126>}**1 Thessalonians 2:16.** *Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles* see ^{<4175>}Acts 17:5,13. No particular instance is mentioned in the life of Paul previous to this, when they had formally commanded him not to preach to the pagan, but no one can doubt that this was one of the leading points of difference between him and them. Paul maintained that the Jews and Gentiles were now on a level with regard to salvation; that the wall of partition was broken down; that the Jew had no advantages over the rest of mankind in this respect, and that the pagan might be saved without becoming Jews, or being circumcised; ^{<4125>}Romans 2:25-29; 3:22-31; notes, ^{<5024>}Colossians 1:24. The Jews did not hold it unlawful “to speak to the Gentiles,” and even to offer to them eternal life (^{<4235>}Matthew 23:15), but it was only on condition that they should become proselytes to their religion, and should observe the institutions of Moses. If saved, they held that it would be as Jews — either originally such, or such by becoming proselytes. Paul maintained just the opposite opinion, that pagans might be saved without becoming proselytes to the Jewish system, and that, in fact, salvation was as freely offered to them as to the children of Abraham. Though there are no express instances in which they prohibited Paul from speaking to the Gentiles recorded before the date of this Epistle, yet events

occurred afterward which showed what were their feelings, and such as to make it in the highest degree probable that they had attempted to restrain him; see ^{<4027>}Acts 22:21,22, “And he (Christ) said unto me (Paul), Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they (the Jews) gave him audience unto this word, and then lift up their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live.”

That they might be saved That is, as freely as others, and on the same terms, not by conversion to Judaism, but by repentance and faith.

To fill up their sins alway At all times — πάντοτε ^{<3842>} — in every generation. That is, to do now as they have always done, by resisting God and exposing themselves to His wrath. The idea is, that it had been a characteristic of the nation, at all times, to oppose God, and that they did it now in this manner in conformity with their fixed character; compare ^{<4075>}Acts 7:51-53, and notes on ^{<4232>}Matthew 23:32, on the expression, “Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.”

For the wrath is come upon them This cannot mean that the wrath of God had been then actually poured out upon them in the extreme degree referred to, or that they had experienced the full expressions of the divine displeasure, for this Epistle was written before the destruction of their city and temple (see the Introduction); but that the cup of their iniquity was full; that they were in fact abandoned by God; that they were the objects even then of his displeasure, and that their destruction was so certain that it might be spoken of as an indubitable fact. The “wrath of God” may be said to have come upon a man when he abandons him, even though there may not be as yet any external expressions of his indignation. It is not punishment that constitutes the wrath of God. That is the mere outward expression of the divine indignation, and the wrath of God may in fact have come upon a man when as yet there are no external tokens of it. The overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple, were but the outward expressions of the divine displeasure at their conduct. Paul, inspired to speak of the feelings of God, describes that wrath as already existing in the divine mind; compare ^{<8047>}Romans 4:17.

To the uttermost Greek — εις ^{<1519>} τέλος ^{<5056>} — “to the end;” that is, until wrath shall be “complete” or “exhausted;” or wrath in the extremest degree. It does not mean “to the end of their race or history;” nor necessarily to the remotest periods of time, but to that which constitutes completion, so that there should be nothing lacking of that which would

make indignation perfect: “εις ^{<1519>} τέλος ^{<5056>} — gantz und gar” — thoroughly, entirely, through and through.” Passow. Some have understood this as meaning “at the last,” or “at length,” as Macknight, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and Wetstein; others as referring to duration, meaning that it would follow them everywhere; but the more correct interpretation seems to be to refer it to that extremity of calamity and woe which was about to come upon the nation. For an account of this, see the notes on ^{<492>}Matthew 24:21.

^{<317>}**1 Thessalonians 2:17.** *But we, brethren, being taken from you*

There is more implied in the Greek word here rendered, “being taken from you” — απορφανισθεντες ^{<642>} — than appears from our translation. It properly has relation to the condition of an orphan (compare notes on ^{<3148>}John 14:18), or one who is bereaved of parents. Then it is used in a more general sense, denoting to be bereaved of; and in this place it does not mean merely that he was “taken from them,” but there is included the idea that it was like a painful bereavement. It was such a state as that of one who had lost a parent. No word, perhaps, could have expressed stranger attachment for them.

For a short time Greek, “For the time of an hour;” that is, for a brief period. The meaning is, that when he left them he supposed it would be only for a short time. The fact seems to have been (^{<4170>}Acts 17:10), that it was supposed, when Paul was sent to Berea, that things would soon be in such a state that he could safely return to Thessalonica. He was “sent” there by those who thought it was necessary for the safety of some of his friends at Thessalonica, and he evidently purposed to return as soon as it could properly be done. It had, in fact, however, turned out to be a long and painful absence.

In presence, not in heart My heart was still with you. This is an elegant and touching expression, which we still use to denote affection for an absent friend.

Endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face Made every endeavor possible. It was from no want of affection that I have not done it, but from causes beyond my control.

With great desire Compare the notes at ^{<4225>}Luke 22:15.

1 Thessalonians 2:18. *Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul* The phrase “even I Paul,” seems to be used by way of emphasis. He had a special desire to go himself. He had sent Timothy to them (**1 Thessalonians 3:2,5**), and perhaps, some might have been disposed to allege that Paul was afraid to go himself, or that he did not feel interest enough in them to go, though he was willing to send one to visit them. Paul, therefore, is at much pains to assure them that his long separation from them was unavoidable.

But Satan hindered us Compare the notes on **2 Corinthians 12:7**. In what way this was done is unknown, and conjecture would be useless. The apostle recognized the hand of Satan in frustrating his attempt to do good, and preventing the accomplishment of his strong desire to see his Christian friends. In the obstacles, therefore, to the performance of our duty, and in the hindrances of our enjoyment, it is not improper to trace the hand of the great enemy of good. The agency of Satan may, for aught we can tell, often be employed in the embarrassments that we meet with in life. The hindrances which we meet with in our efforts to do good, when the providence of God seems to favor us, and his word and Spirit seem to call us to a particular duty, often look very much like the work of Satan. They are just such obstructions as a very wicked being would be glad to throw in our way.

1 Thessalonians 2:19. *For what is our hope* That is, “I had a strong desire to see you; to assist you; to enjoy your friendship; for you are my hope and joy, and my absence does not arise from a want of affection.” The meaning, when he says that they were his “hope,” is, that their conversion and salvation was one of the grounds of his hope of future blessedness. It was an evidence that he was a faithful servant of God, and that he would be rewarded in heaven.

Or joy The source of joy here and in heaven.

Or crown of rejoicing Margin, as in Greek, “glorying;” that is, boasting, or exulting. The allusion is, probably, to the victors at the Grecian games; and the sense is, that he rejoiced in their conversion as the victor there did in the garland which he had won; notes, **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**.

Are not even ye Or, will not you be?

In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming “When the Lord Jesus appears at the end of the world, then our highest source of happiness and honor will be your conversion and salvation.” Then their salvation would be a proof of his fidelity. It would fill his soul with the highest happiness, that he had been the means of saving them from ruin.

1 Thessalonians 2:20. *For ye are our glory and joy* The meaning is, that the source of happiness to a minister of the gospel in the day of judgment will be the conversion and salvation of souls. The object of the apostle in dwelling on this in a manner so tender and affectionate is, to show them that his leaving them, and his long absence from them, were not caused by any want of affection for them.

REMARKS ON 1 THESSALONIANS 2

- (1) Ministers of the gospel should be entirely sincere, and without guile. They should attempt to carry no measure — not even the conversion of sinners — by trick or management; **1 Thessalonians 2:3-5.**
- (2) They should not make it a point to please people; **1 Thessalonians 2:4.** they do please men; or if their ministry is acceptable to people, they should not regard it, indeed, as proof that they are unfaithful, for they “should have a good report of them that are without;” nor should they make it a point to displease people, or consider it a proof that because people are offended, therefore they are faithful; but it should not be their leading aim or purpose to gratify people. They should preach the truth; and if they do this, God will take care of their reputation, and give them just as much as they ought to have. The same principle should operate with all Christians. They should do right, and leave their reputation with God.
- (3) Ministers of the gospel should be gentle, tender, and affectionate. They should be kind in feeling, and courteous in manner — like a father or a mother; **1 Thessalonians 2:7,11.** Nothing is ever gained by a sour, harsh, crabby, dissatisfied manner. Sinners are never scolded either into duty or into heaven. “Flies are not caught with vinegar.” No man is a better or more faithful preacher because he is rough in manner, coarse or harsh in his expressions, or sour in his contact with mankind. Not thus was the Master or Paul. There is no crime in being polite and courteous; none in observing the rules of good breeding, and paying respect to the sensibilities of others; and there is no pity in outraging all the laws which society has

found necessary to adopt to promote happy conversation. What is wrong we should indeed oppose — but it should be in the kindest manner toward the persons of those who do wrong; what is true, and right we should maintain and defend — and we shall always do it more effectually if we do it kindly.

(4) Ministers should be willing to labor in any proper calling, if it is necessary for their own support or to do good; ^{<318>}1 Thessalonians 2:9. It is, indeed, the duty of a people to support the gospel, but there may be situations where they are not able to do it, and a minister should be able to earn something, in some other way, and should be willing to do it. Paul made tents; and if he was willing to do that, a minister should not feel himself degraded if he is obliged to make shoes, or to hoe corn, or to plow, or to keep cattle. He had better not do it, if he can avoid it well — for he needs his time for his more important work; but he should feel it no dishonor if he is obliged to do it — and should feel that it is a privilege to preach the gospel even if he is obliged to support himself by making either tents or shoes. It is no dishonor for a minister to work hard; and it is not well for a man to enter the ministry wholly unacquainted with every other way of procuring an honest living.

(5) Every minister should be able to appeal to the people among whom he has labored in proof that he is an honest man, and lives consistently with his profession; ^{<319>}1 Thessalonians 2:1,9,10,11. The same remark applies to all other Christians. They should so live that they may at once refer to their neighbors in proof of the uprightness of their lives, and their consistent walk, But to be enabled to do this, a man should live as he ought — for the world generally forms a very correct estimate of character.

(6) The joy of a minister in the day of judgment will be measured by the amount of good which he has done, and the number of souls which he has been the means of converting and saving; ^{<320>}1 Thessalonians 2:19. It will not be the honor which he has received from people; the titles which they have conferred on him; the commendation which he has received for eloquence or talent, or the learning which he has acquired, but it will be found in the number of those who have been converted from the error of their ways, and in the evidence of the good which he did on the earth. And will not the same thing be substantially true of all others who bear the Christian name? Will it then be a source of joy to them that they were richer than their neighbors; or that they were advanced to higher honors; or

that they had a more splendid mansion, or were able to fare more “sumptuously?” The good that we do will be remembered certainly with pleasure in the day of judgment: of how many other things which now interest us so much can the same thing be said?

(7). Paul expected evidently to recognize the Thessalonian Christians at the day of judgment, for he said that they would be then his “joy and crown of rejoicing;” ^{<script>}1 Thessalonians 2:19. But this could not be, unless he should be able to know those who had been converted by his instrumentality. If he expected then to recognize them, and to rejoice with them, then we also may hope to know our pious friends in that happy world. Nothing in the Bible forbids this hope, and we can hardly believe that God has created the strong ties which bind us to each other, to endure for the present life only. If Paul hoped to meet those who had been converted by his instrumentality, and to rejoice with them there, then the parent may hope to meet the child over whose loss he mourned; the husband and wife will meet again; the pious children of a family will be re-assembled; and the pastor and his flock will be permitted to rejoice together before the Lord. This hope, which nothing in the Bible forbids us to entertain, should do much to alleviate the sorrow of the parting pang, and may be an important and powerful inducement to draw our own thoughts to a brighter and a better world. Of many of the living it is true that the best and dearest friends which they have are already in heaven — and how should their own hearts pant that they may meet them there!

NOTES ON 1 THESSALONIANS 3

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter (1 Thessalonians 3) is a continuation of the course of thought pursued in the previous chapter, and seems designed to meet the same state of feeling existing in Thessalonica, and the same objection which some there urged against the apostle. The objection seems to have been, that he had really no attachment for them, and no regard for their welfare; that he had fled from them on the slightest danger, and that when the danger was passed he had not returned, but had left them to bear their afflictions alone. It appears to have been inferred from his long absence, that he had no solicitude for their welfare, and had brought them into difficulties, to escape from which, or to bear which. he was now indisposed to render any assistance. It was important, therefore, for him to remind them of what he had actually done, and to state his real feelings toward them. He refers them, therefore, to the following things as proof of his interest in them, and his affection for them:

- (1) He had sent Timothy to them at great personal inconvenience, when he could not go himself; ^{<STR>}1 Thessalonians 3:1-5.
- (2) He had been greatly comforted by the report which Timothy had brought of their steadfastness in the faith; ^{<STR>}1 Thessalonians 3:6-8. Every expression of their attachment to him had gone to his heart, and their faith and charity had been to him in his trials the source of unspeakable consolation. His very life depended, as it were, on their fidelity, and he says he should live and be happy if they stood fast in the Lord; ^{<STR>}1 Thessalonians 3:8.
- (3) He expresses again the earnest desire which he had to see them; says that it had been to him the subject of unceasing prayer night and day, and beseeches God again now that he would be pleased to direct his way to them; ^{<STR>}1 Thessalonians 3:9-11.
- (4) As a proof of affection, the chapter is closed with a fervent prayer that God would cause them to abound more and more in love, and would establish their hearts unblameable before him; ^{<STR>}1 Thessalonians 3:12,13. The Thessalonians well knew the apostle Paul. They had had abundant

proof of his love when he was with them; and if his enemies there had succeeded in any degree in causing their affection toward him to become cool, or to excite suspicions that he was not sincere, their love must have been rekindled, and their suspicions must have been entirely allayed by the expressions of attachment in this chapter. Language of warmer love, or of deeper interest in the welfare of others, it would not be possible to find anywhere.

<S1R1>1 Thessalonians 3:1. *Wherefore* See <S1P18>1 Thessalonians 2:18. This particle ($\delta\iota\omicron$ <4352>) is designed here to refer to another proof of his affection for them. One evidence had been referred to in his strong desire to visit them, which he had been unable to accomplish (<S1P18>1 Thessalonians 2:18), and he here refers to another — to wit, the fact that he had sent Timothy to them.

We could no longer forbear That is, when I could not (<S1R5>1 Thessalonians 3:5), for there is every evidence that Paul refers to himself only though he uses the plural form of the word. There was no one with him at Athens after he had sent Timothy away (<4175>Acts 17:15; 18:5), and this shows that when, in <S1P6>1 Thessalonians 2:6, he uses the term apostles in the plural number, he refers to himself only, and does not mean to give the name to Timothy and Silas. If this be so, Timothy and Silas are nowhere called “apostles” in the New Testament. The word rendered here “could forbear” ($\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ <4722>), means, properly, “to cover, to conceal;” and then to hide or conceal anger, impatience, weariness, etc.; that is, to hold out as to anything, to bear with, to endure. It is rendered suffer in <4092>1 Corinthians 9:12; beareth, <4630>1 Corinthians 13:7; and forbear, <S1R1>1 Thessalonians 3:1,5. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. It means that he could no longer bear up under, hide, or suppress his impatience in regard to them — his painful emotions — his wish to know of their state; and he therefore sent Timothy to them.

We thought it good I was willing to suffer the inconvenience of parting with him in order to show my concern for you.

To be left at Athens alone Paul had been conducted to Athens from Berea, where he remained until Silas and Timothy could come to him; <4175>Acts 17:15. It appears from the statement here that Timothy had joined him there, but such was his solicitude for the church at Thessalonica, that he very soon after sent him there, and chose to remain himself alone at

Athens. Why he did not himself return to Thessalonica, is not stated. It is evidently implied here that it was a great personal inconvenience for him thus to part with Timothy, and to remain alone at Athens, and that he evinced the strong love which he had for the church at Thessalonica by being willing to submit to it. What that inconvenience consisted in, he has not stated, but it is not difficult to understand.

(1) He was among total strangers, and, when Timothy was gone, without an acquaintance or friend.

(2) The aid of Timothy was needed in order to prosecute the work which he contemplated. He had requested that Timothy should join him as soon as possible when he left Berea (<4175> Acts 17:15), and he evidently felt it desirable that in preaching the gospel in that city he should have all the assistance he could obtain. Yet he was willing to forego those comforts and advantages in order to promote the edification of the church at Thessalonica.

<312> **1 Thessalonians 3:2.** *And sent Timotheus* That is, evidently, he sent him from Athens — for this is the fair construction of the passage. But in the history (Acts 17) there is no mention that Timothy came to Athens at all, and it may be asked how this statement is reconcilable with the record in the Acts? It is mentioned there that “the brethren sent away Paul (from Berea) to go, as it were, to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him to Athens;” <4174> Acts 17:14,15. The history further states, that after Paul had remained some time at Athens, he went to Corinth, where he was joined by Timothy and Silas, who came to him “from Macedonia;” <4185> Acts 18:5. But in order to reconcile the account in the Acts with the statement before us in the Epistle, it is necessary to suppose that Timothy had come to Athens. In reconciling these accounts, we may observe, that though the history does not expressly mention the arrival of Timothy at Athens, yet there are circumstances mentioned which render this extremely probable.

First, as soon as Paul reached Athens, he sent a message back to Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, and there is every probability that this request would be obeyed; <4175> Acts 17:15.

Secondly, his stay at Athens was on purpose that they might join him there. “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred within him;” <4176> Acts 17:16.

Thirdly, his departure from Athens does not appear to have been in any sort hastened or abrupt. He had an opportunity of seeing the city (^{<4172>}Acts 17:23); he disputed in the synagogue and in the market “daily” (^{<4171>}Acts 17:17); he held a controversy with the philosophers (^{<4173>}Acts 17:18-22); he made converts there (^{<4174>}Acts 17:24), and “after these things” he calmly went to Corinth. There was no tumult or excitement, and it is not suggested that he was driven away, as in other places, because his life was in danger. There was, therefore, ample time for Timothy to come to him there — for Paul was at liberty to remain as long as he pleased, and as he stayed there for the express purpose of having Timothy and Silas meet him, it is to be presumed that his wish was in this respect accomplished. Fourthly, the sending back of Timothy to Macedonia, as mentioned in the Epistle, is a circumstance which will account for the fact mentioned in ^{<4175>}Acts 18:5, that Timothy came to him “at Corinth,” instead of at Athens. He had given directions for him to meet him at Athens (^{<4175>}Acts 17:15), but the history mentions only that he met him, after a long delay, at Corinth. This delay, and this change of place, when they rejoined each other for the purpose of laboring together, can only be accounted for by the supposition that Timothy had come to him at Athens, and had been immediately sent back to Macedonia, with instructions to join him again at Corinth. This is one of the “undesigned coincidences” between the history in the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of Paul, of which Paley (Hor. Paul.) has made so good use in demonstrating the genuineness of both. “The epistle discloses a fact which is not preserved in the history; but which makes what is said in the history more significant, probable, and consistent. The history bears marks of an omission; the epistle furnishes a circumstance which supplies that omission.”

Our brother See the notes at ^{<5001>}Colossians 1:1. The mention of his being a “brother” is designed to show his interest in the church there. He did not send one whose absence would be no inconvenience to him, or for whom he had no regard. He sent one who was as dear to him as a brother.

And minister of God Another circumstance showing his affection for them. He did not send a layman, or one who could not be useful with him or to them, but he sent one fully qualified to preach to them, and to break to them the bread of life. One of the richest tokens of affection which can be shown to any people, is to send to them a faithful minister of God.

And our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ A third token of affectionate interest in their welfare. The meaning is, “I did not send one whom I did not want, or who could be of no use here, but one who was a fellow-laborer with me, and whose aid would have been of essential service to me. In parting with him, therefore, for your welfare I showed a strong attachment for you. I was willing to endure personal inconvenience, and additional toil, in order to promote your welfare.”

To establish you To strengthen you; to make you firm — στηριξαι ^{<4741>}
This was to be done by presenting such considerations as would enable them to maintain their faith steadfastly in their trials.

And to comfort you concerning your faith It is evident that they were suffering persecution on account of their faith in the Lord Jesus; that is, for their belief in him as a Saviour. The object of sending Timothy was to suggest such topics of consolation as would sustain them in their trials — that is, that he was the Son of God; that the people of God had been persecuted in all ages; that God was able to support them, etc.

<4741> **1 Thessalonians 3:3.** *That no man should be moved* The word rendered “moved” (σαινω ^{<4525>}) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means to wag, to move to and fro, as of dogs which wag their tails in fondness (Hom. Od. K. 216. AEL. A. N. 10:7. Ovid. 14:258); then to caress, to fawn upon, to flatter; then to move or waver in mind — as from fear; to dread, to tremble. See Passow and Wetstein. Here the sense is, to be so moved or agitated by fear, or by the terror of persecution, as to forsake their religion. The object of sending Timothy was, that they might not be thus moved, but that amidst all opposition they might adhere steadfastly to their religion.

These afflictions See the notes at <4741> 1 Thessalonians 2:14.

For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto It is not quite certain whether by the word “we” here the apostle refers to himself; or to himself and the Thessalonians; or to Christians in general. On either supposition what he says is true, and either would meet the case. It would be most to the purpose, however, to suppose that he means to state the general idea that all Christians are exposed to persecution and could not hope to avoid it. It would then appear that the Thessalonians had partaken only of the common lot. Still there may have been a special reference to the fact that Paul and his fellow-laborers there were subjected to trials; and if this be the

reference, then the idea is, that the Thessalonians should not be “moved” by their trials, for even their teachers were not exempt. Even their enemies could not say that the apostle and his co-workers were impostors, for they had persevered in preaching the gospel when they knew that these trials were coming upon them. The phrase, “we are appointed thereunto,” means that such was the divine arrangement. No one who professed Christianity could hope to be exempted from trial, for it was the common lot of all believers; compare notes on ~~40B~~ 1 Corinthians 4:9; ~~5B2~~ 2 Timothy 3:12.

~~5B1~~ **1 Thessalonians 3:4.** *For verily, when we were with you, we told you before ...* It is not mentioned in the history (Acts 17) that Paul thus predicted that special trials would come upon them, but there is no improbability in what is here said. He was with them long enough to discourse to them on a great variety of topics, and nothing can be more probable, than that in their circumstances, the subjects of persecution and affliction would be prominent topics of discourse. There was every reason to apprehend that they would meet with opposition on account of their religion, and nothing was more natural than that Paul should endeavor to prepare their minds for it beforehand.

That we should suffer tribulation We who preached to you; perhaps also including those to whom they preached.

Even as it came to pass, and ye know When Paul, Silas, and Timothy were driven away, and when the church was so much agitated, by the opposition of the Jews; ~~417B~~ Acts 17:5-8.

~~5B5~~ **1 Thessalonians 3:5.** *For this cause* Since I knew that you were so liable to be persecuted, and since I feared that some might be turned from the truth by this opposition.

When I could no longer forbear See the notes at ~~5B1~~ 1 Thessalonians 3:1.

I sent to know your faith That is, your fidelity. or your steadfastness in the gospel.

Lest by some means Either by allurements to apostasy, set before you by your former pagan friends; or by the arts of false teachers; or by the severity of suffering. Satan has many methods of seducing people from the truth, and Paul was fearful that by some of his arts he might be successful there.

The tempter Satan; for though the Jews were the immediate actors in those transactions, yet the apostle regarded them as being under the direction of Satan, and as accomplishing his purposes. He was, therefore, the real author of the persecutions which had been excited. He is here called the “Tempter,” as he is often (compare Matthew iv.), and the truths taught are:

(1) that Satan is the great author of persecution; and

(2) that in a time of persecution — or of trial of any kind — he endeavors to tempt people to swerve from the truth, and to abandon their religion. In persecution, people are tempted to apostatize from God, in order to avoid suffering.

In afflictions of other kinds, Satan often tempts the sufferer to murmur and complain; to charge God with harshness, partiality, and severity, and to give vent to expressions that will show that religion has none of its boasted power to support the soul in the day of trial; compare ^{<R00>}Job 1:9-11. In all times of affliction, as well as in prosperity, we may be sure that “the Tempter” is not far off, and should be on our guard against his wiles.

And our labour be in vain By your being turned from the faith; notes, ^{<R01>}Galatians 4:11.

^{<S16>}**1 Thessalonians 3:6.** *But now when Timotheus came from you unto us* To Corinth, after he had been sent to Thessalonica; ^{<H16>}Acts 18:5; compare notes on ^{<S16>}1 Thessalonians 3:2.

And brought us good tidings A cheerful or favorable account. Greek “evangelizing;” that is, bringing good news.

Of your faith Of your faithfulness or fidelity. Amidst all their trials they evinced fidelity to the Christian cause.

And charity Love; notes, ^{<E11>}1 Corinthians 13:1.

And that ye have good remembrance of us always That is, probably, they showed their remembrance of Paul by obeying his precepts, and by cherishing an affectionate regard for him, notwithstanding all the efforts which had been made to alienate their affections from him.

Desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you There was no disposition to blame him for having left them, or because he did not return to them. They would have welcomed him again as their teacher and friend. The

meaning of this is, that there was between him and them a strong mutual attachment.

1 Thessalonians 3:7. *We were comforted over you* See the notes, **2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 7:6,7.** The sense here is, that their steadfastness was a great source of comfort to him in his trials. It was an instance where the holy lives and the fidelity of a people did much, as will always be the case, to lighten the burdens and cheer the heart of a minister of the gospel. In the inevitable trials of the ministerial office there is no source of comfort more rich and pure than this.

1 Thessalonians 3:8. *For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord* This is equivalent to saying, “My life and comfort depend on your stability in the faith, and your correct Christian walk;” compare **Martial 6:70.** Non est vivere, sed valere, vita — “Life consists not merely in living, but in the enjoyment of health.” See also **Seneca, Epis. 99,** and **Manilius, 4:5,** as quoted by **Wetstein.** The meaning here is, that Paul now enjoyed life; he had that which constituted real life, in the fact that they acted as became Christians, and so as to show that his labor among them had not been in vain. The same thing here affirmed is true of all faithful ministers of the gospel. They feel that they have something that may be called life, and that is worth living for, when those to whom they preach maintain a close walk with God.

1 Thessalonians 3:9. *For what thanks can we render to God again* That is, what expression of thanksgiving can we render to God that shall be an equivalent for the joy which your holy walk has furnished, or which will suitably express our gratitude for it.

1 Thessalonians 3:10. *Night and day* Constantly.

Praying exceedingly Greek, abundantly; that is, there was much more than ordinary prayer. He made this a special subject of prayer; he urged it with earnestness, and without intermission; compare **1 Thessalonians 2:17.**

And might perfect that which is lacking in your faith Might render it complete, or fill up anything which is missing. The word used here (**καταρτισταί** ^{<2675>}), means, properly, to make fully ready, to put full in order, to make complete; see the notes, **Romans 9:22;** **2 Corinthians 13:9;** **Galatians 6:1.** It is rendered mending, **Matthew 4:21;** **Mark 1:19;** perfect and perfected, **Matthew 21:19;** **Luke 6:40;** **2**

Corinthians 13:11; ^{<310>}1 Thessalonians 3:10; ^{<32>}Hebrews 13:21; ^{<150>}1 Peter 5:10; fitted, ^{<322>}Romans 9:22; perfectly joined together, ^{<410>}1 Corinthians 1:10; restore, ^{<800>}Galatians 6:1; prepared, ^{<305>}Hebrews 10:5; and framed, ^{<803>}Hebrews 11:3. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The meaning here is, that whatever was deficient in their views of religious doctrine the apostle desired to supply. It is to be remembered that he was with them but a comparatively short time before he was compelled to depart to Berea, and it is reasonable to suppose that there were many subjects on which he would be glad to have an opportunity to instruct them more fully.

^{<311>}**1 Thessalonians 3:11.** *Now God himself* This is evidently a prayer. He earnestly sought of God that he might be permitted to visit them, and that he would so prepare the way that he might do it.

And our Father Even our Father. The reference is particularly to the “Father,” the First Person of the Trinity. It does not refer to the divine nature in general, or to God as such, but to God as the Father of the Lord Jesus. It is a distinct prayer offered to him that he would direct his way to them. It is right therefore to offer prayer to God as the First Person of the Trinity.

And our Lord Jesus Christ This also is a prayer, as much as the former was, for it can be understood in no other way. What can be its meaning, unless the apostle believed that the Lord Jesus had power to direct his way to them, and that it was proper for him to express this wish to him; that is, to pray to him? If this be so, then it is right to pray to the Lord Jesus, or to worship him; see the notes on ^{<328>}John 20:28; ^{<412>}Acts 1:24. Would Paul have prayed to an angel to direct his way to the church at Thessalonica?

Direct our way unto you Margin, “guide.” The Greek word — **κατευθυνω** ^{<2720>} — means, to guide straight toward or upon anything. It is rendered “guide,” in ^{<179>}Luke 1:79, and “direct” here and in ^{<315>}2 Thessalonians 3:5. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The idea is that of conducting one straight to a place, and not by a round-about course. Here the petition is, that God would remove all obstacles so that he could come directly to them.

^{<312>}**1 Thessalonians 3:12.** *And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love* compare notes, ^{<408>}2 Corinthians 9:8. The word “Lord” here probably refers to the Lord Jesus, as this is the name by which he is

commonly designated in the New Testament; see the notes on ^{<402>}Acts 1:24. If this be so, then this is a petition to the Lord Jesus as the fountain of all grace and goodness.

^{<382>}**1 Thessalonians 3:13.** *To the end he may stablish your hearts* That is, “may the Lord cause you to increase in love (^{<382>}1 Thessalonians 3:12), in order that you may be established, and be without blame in the day of judgment.” The idea is, that if charity were diffused through their hearts, they would abound in every virtue, and would be at length found blameless.

Unblameable See the notes on ^{<300>}1 Thessalonians 1:10; Phil 2:15; 3:6; ^{<382>}Hebrews 8:7; compare ^{<406>}Luke 1:6; ^{<382>}1 Thessalonians 5:23. The meaning is, so that there could be no “charge” or “accusation” against them.

In holiness Not in outward conduct merely, or the observance of rites and forms of religion, but in purity of heart

At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ To judge the world; notes, chap i. 10. As we are to appear before him, we should so live that our Judge will find nothing in us to be blamed.

With all his saints With all his “holy ones” — τῶν ^{<3588>} ἁγίων ^{<40>}. The word includes his “angels,” who will come with him (^{<423>}Matthew 25:31), and all the redeemed, who will then surround him. The idea is, that before that holy assemblage it is desirable that we should be prepared to appear blameless. We should be fitted to be welcomed to the “goodly fellowship” of the angels, and to be regarded as worthy to be numbered with the redeemed who “have washed their robes and have made them pure in the blood of the Lamb.” When we come to appear amidst that vast assemblage of holy beings, the honors of the world will appear to be small things; the wealth of the earth will appear worthless, and all the pleasures of this life beneath our notice. Happy will they be who are prepared for the solemnities of that day, and who shall have led such a life of holy love — of pure devotion to the Redeemer — of deadness to the world — and of zeal in the cause of pure religion of universal justice, fidelity, honesty, and truth, as to be without reproach, and to meet with the approbation of their Lord.

NOTES ON 1 THESSALONIANS 4

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter, properly, comprises two parts: First, various practical exhortations, ^{<S401>}1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; and secondly, suggestions designed to console those who have been bereaved; ^{<S403>}1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The first part embraces the following topics:

- (1) An exhortation to increase and abound in the Christian virtues which they had already manifested; ^{<S401>}1 Thessalonians 4:1,2.
- (2) A particular exhortation on the subject of sanctification (^{<S403>}1 Thessalonians 4:3-8), in which two points are specified, probably as illustrations of the general subject, and embracing those in regard to which they were exposed to special danger. The first was fornication, the other was fraud.
- (3) An exhortation to brotherly love; ^{<S403>}1 Thessalonians 4:9,10.
- (4) An exhortation to quiet industry, and to honesty in their dealings, particularly with those who were Christians; ^{<S401>}1 Thessalonians 4:11,12.

The second part is designed to comfort the Thessalonians who had been bereaved; ^{<S403>}1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Some of their number had died. They appear to have been beloved members of the church, and dear friends of those to whom the apostle wrote. To console them he brings into view the doctrine of the second coming of the Saviour, and the truth that they would be raised up to live with him for ever. He reminds them that those who had died were “asleep” — reposing in a gentle slumber, as if they were to be awakened again (^{<S403>}1 Thessalonians 4:13); that they should not sorrow as they did who have no hope (^{<S403>}1 Thessalonians 4:13); that if they believed that Jesus died and rose again, they ought to believe that God would raise up all those who sleep in Jesus (^{<S404>}1 Thessalonians 4:14); that in the last day they would rise before the living should be changed, and that the living would not be taken up to heaven and leave their departed friends in their graves (^{<S405>}1 Thessalonians 4:15,16), and that both the living and the dead would be raised up to heaven and would be forever with the Lord

<3047>1 Thessalonians 4:17. With this prospect, they had every ground of comfort which they could desire, and they should sustain each other in their trials by this bright hope; <3048>1 Thessalonians 4:18.

<3049>**1 Thessalonians 4:1.** *Furthermore then* To <3588> λοιπον <3063> .

“As to what remains.” That is, all that remains is to offer these exhortations; see the notes, <4731>2 Corinthians 13:11; <4817>Galatians 6:17; <4960>Ephesians 6:10; <5048>Philippians 4:8. The phrase is a formula appropriate to the end of an argument or discourse.

We beseech you Margin, “request.” The Greek is, “we ask you” — ερωτομεν <2065> . It is not as strong a word as that which follows.

And exhort you Marg, “beseech.” This is the word which is commonly used to denote earnest exhortation. The use of these words here implies that Paul regarded the subject as of great importance. He might have commanded them — but kind exhortation usually accomplishes more than a command.

By the Lord Jesus In his name and by his authority.

That as ye have received of us As you were taught by us. Paul doubtless had given them repeated instructions as to their duty as Christians.

How ye ought to walk That is, how ye ought to live. Life is often represented as a journey; <4804>Romans 6:4; 8:1; <4817>1 Corinthians 5:7; <4816>Galatians 6:16, <4901>Ephesians 4:1.

So ye would abound more and more “That is, follow the directions which they had received more and more fully.” Abbott.

<3049>**1 Thessalonians 4:2.** *For ye know what commandments* It was but a short time since Paul was with them, and they could not but recollect the rules of living which he had laid down.

By the Lord Jesus By the authority of the Lord Jesus. Some of those rules, or commandments, the apostle refers to, probably, in the following verses.

<3049>**1 Thessalonians 4:3.** *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification* It is the will or command of God that you should be holy. This does not refer to the purpose or decree of God, and does not mean that he intended to make them holy — but it means that it was his command that they should be holy. It was also true that it was agreeable to

the divine will or purpose that they should be holy, and that he meant to use such an influence as to secure this; but this is not the truth taught here. This text, therefore, should not be brought as a proof that God intends to make his people holy, or that they are sanctified. It is a proof only that he requires holiness. The word here rendered “sanctification” — **ἀγιασμος** ^{<38>} — is not used in the Greek classics, but is several times found in the New Testament. It is rendered holiness, ^{<169>}Romans 6:19,22; ^{<107>}1 Thessalonians 4:7; ^{<215>}1 Timothy 2:15; ^{<214>}Hebrews 12:14; and sanctification, ^{<13>}1 Corinthians 1:30; ^{<143>}1 Thessalonians 4:3,4; ^{<123>}2 Thessalonians 2:13, and ^{<102>}1 Peter 1:2; see the notes, ^{<169>}Romans 6:19; ^{<13>}1 Corinthians 1:30. It means here “purity of life,” and particularly abstinence from those vices which debase and degrade the soul. Sanctification consists in two things:

(1) in “ceasing to do evil;” and

(2) in “learning to do well.” Or in other words, the first work of sanctification is in overcoming the propensities to evil in our nature, and checking and subduing the unholy habits which we had formed before we became Christians; the second part of the work consists in cultivating the positive principles of holiness in the soul.

That ye should abstain from fornication A vice which was freely indulged among the pagan, and to which, from that fact, and from their own former habits, they were particularly exposed. On the fact that they were thus exposed, and on the reasons for these solemn commands on the subject, see the notes on ^{<151>}Acts 15:20, and ^{<168>}1 Corinthians 6:18.

^{<104>}**1 Thessalonians 4:4.** *That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel* The word “vessel” here (**σκευος** ^{<4632>}), probably refers to the body. When it is so used, it is either because the body is frail and feeble, like an earthen vessel, easily broken (^{<107>}2 Corinthians 4:7), or because it is that which contains the soul, or in which the soul is lodged. Lucret. Lib. iii. 441. The word vessel also (Greek **σκευος** ^{<4632>}) was used by the latter Hebrews to denote a wife, as the vessel of her husband. Schoettg. Hor. Hebrews p. 827. Compare Wetstein in loc. Many, as Augustine, Wetstein, Schoettgen, Koppe, Robinson (Lex.), and others, have supposed that this is the reference here; compare ^{<107>}1 Peter 3:7. The word body, however, accords more naturally with the usual signification of the word, and as the apostle was giving directions to the whole church,

embracing both sexes, it is hardly probable that he confined his direction to those who had wives. It was the duty of females, and of the unmarried among the males, as well as of married men, to observe this command. The injunction then is, that we should preserve the body pure; see the notes on ^{<4168>}1 Corinthians 6:18-20.

In sanctification and honour Should not debase or pollute it; that is, that we should honor it as a noble work of God, to be employed for pure purposes; notes, ^{<4169>}1 Corinthians 6:19.

^{<5045>}**1 Thessalonians 4:5.** *Not in the lust of concupiscence* In gross gratifications.

Even as the Gentiles This was, and is, a common vice among the pagan; see the notes, ^{<4450>}Acts 15:20; ^{<4102>}Romans 1:29; ^{<4047>}Ephesians 4:17,18, and the reports of missionaries everywhere.

Which know not God See the notes, ^{<4012>}Romans 1:21,28; ^{<4012>}Ephesians 2:12.

^{<5046>}**1 Thessalonians 4:6.** *That no man go beyond* ^{<5233>} *ὑπερβαίνειν*. This word means, “to make to go over,” as, e.g., a wall or mountain; then, to overpass, to wit, certain limits, to transgress; and then to go too far, i.e., to go beyond right — hence to cheat or defraud. It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. The idea of overreaching is that which is implied in its use here.

And defraud ^{<4122>} *πλεονεκτείν*. Margin, “oppress,” or “overreach.” This word properly means, to have more than another; then to have an advantage; and then to take advantage of any one, to circumvent, defraud, cheat. It is rendered “got an advantage,” ^{<4021>}2 Corinthians 2:11; “defraud,” ^{<4002>}2 Corinthians 7:2; ^{<5046>}1 Thessalonians 4:6; “make a gain,” ^{<4727>}2 Corinthians 12:17,18. Compare for the use of the adjective, ^{<4150>}1 Corinthians 5:10,11; 6:10; ^{<4015>}Ephesians 5:5; and the noun, ^{<4072>}Mark 7:22; ^{<4215>}Luke 12:15; ^{<4102>}Romans 1:29; ^{<4005>}2 Corinthians 9:5; ^{<4015>}Ephesians 5:3; ^{<5005>}Colossians 3:5; ^{<5046>}1 Thessalonians 2:5; ^{<4005>}2 Peter 2:3,14. It is the word commonly used to denote covetousness. Taking advantage of, is the idea which it conveys here.

In any matter Margin, “or the.” According to the reading in the margin, this would refer to the particular matter under discussion (^{<5045>}1 Thessalonians 4:3-5), to wit, concupiscence. and the meaning then would

be, that no one should be guilty of illicit intercourse with the wife of another. Many expositors — as Hammond Whitby, Macknight, Rosenmuller, and others, suppose that this is a prohibition of adultery, and there can be no doubt that it does include this. But there is no reason why it should be confined to it. The Greek is so general that it may prohibit all kinds of fraud, overreaching, or covetousness, and may refer to any attempt to deprive another of his rights, whether it be the right which he has in his property, or his rights as a husband, or his rights in any other respect. It is a general command not to defraud; in no way to take advantage of another; in no way to deprive him of his rights.

Because that the Lord is the avenger of all such Of all such as are guilty of fraud; that is, he will punish them; compare notes on <6129> Romans 12:19; <4019> Ephesians 6:9.

As we also have forewarned Doubtless when he was with them.

<3047> **1 Thessalonians 4:7.** *For God hath not called us unto uncleanness* When he called us to be his followers, it was not that we should lead lives of impurity, but of holiness. We should, therefore, fulfil the purposes for which we were called into his kingdom. The word “uncleanness” (*ακαθαρσια* <167>), means, properly, “impurity, filth;” and then, in a moral sense, “pollution, lewdness,” as opposed to chastity; <6121> Romans 1:24; 6:19; <4721> 2 Corinthians 12:21; <4859> Galatians 5:19; <4049> Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; <5105> Colossians 3:5.

<3048> **1 Thessalonians 4:8.** *He therefore that despiseth* Margin, “rejecteth.” That is, he who disregards such commands as these which call him to a holy life, is really rejecting and disobeying God. Some might be disposed to say that these were merely the precepts of man, and that therefore it was not important whether they were obeyed or not. The apostle assures them in the most solemn manner, that, though communicated to them by man, yet they were really the commands of God.

Who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit This is a claim to inspiration. Paul did not give these commands as his own, but as taught by the Spirit of God; compare notes on <4674> 1 Corinthians 7:40.

<3049> **1 Thessalonians 4:9.** *But as touching brotherly love* The “peculiar charity and affection which one Christian owes to another.” Doddridge; see the notes on <6134> John 13:34.

Ye need not that I write unto you That is, “as I have done on the other points.” They were so taught of God in regard to this duty, that they did not need any special instruction.

For ye yourselves are taught of God The word here rendered “taught of God” — θεοδιδακτοι ^{<2312>} — occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is correctly translated, and must refer here to some direct teaching of God on their own hearts, for Paul speaks of their being so taught by him as to need no special precepts in the case. He probably refers to that influence exerted on them when, they became Christians, by which they were led to love all who bear the divine image. He calls this being “taught of God,” not because it was of the nature of revelation or inspiration, but because it was in fact the teaching of God in this case, though it was secret and silent. God has many ways of teaching people. The lessons which we learn from his Providence are a part of his instructions. The same is true of the decisions of our own consciences, and of the secret and silent influence of his Spirit on our hearts, disposing us to love what is lovely, and to do what ought to be done. In this manner all true Christians are taught to love those who bear the image of their Saviour. They feel that they are brethren; and such is their strong attachment to them, from the very nature of religion, that they do not need any express command of God to teach them to love them. It is one of the first — the elementary effects of religion on the soul, to lead us to love “the brethren” — and to do this is one of the evidences of piety about which there need be no danger of deception; compare ^{<1314>}1 John 3:14.

^{<1310>}**1 Thessalonians 4:10.** *And indeed ye do it* See the notes on ^{<1307>}1 Thessalonians 1:7.

But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more See the notes at ^{<1312>}1 Thessalonians 3:12. Here, as elsewhere, the apostle makes the fact that they deserved commendation for what they had done, a stimulus to arouse them to still higher attainments. Bloomfield.

^{<1311>}**1 Thessalonians 4:11.** *And that ye study to be quiet* Orderly, peaceful; living in the practice of the calm virtues of life. The duty to which he would exhort them was that of being subordinate to the laws; of avoiding all tumult and disorder; of calmly pursuing their regular avocations, and of keeping themselves from all the assemblages of the idle, the restless, and the dissatisfied. No Christian should be engaged in a mob;

none should be identified with the popular excitements which lead to disorder and to the disregard of the laws. The word rendered “ye study” (*φιλοτιμεομαι* ^{<5389>}), means properly, “to love honor, to be ambitious;” and here means the same as when we say “to make it a point of honor to do so and so. Robinson, Lex. It is to be regarded as a sacred duty; a thing in which our honor is concerned. Every man should regard himself as disgraced who is concerned in a mob.

And to do your own business To attend to their own concerns, without interfering with the affairs of others; see the notes on ^{<3104>}Philippians 2:4; compare ^{<3381>}2 Thessalonians 3:11; ^{<5053>}1 Timothy 5:13; ^{<6013>}1 Peter 4:13. The injunction here is one of the beautiful precepts of Christianity so well adapted to promote the good order and the happiness of society. It would prevent the impertinent and unauthorized prying into the affairs of others, to which many are so prone, and produce that careful attention to what properly belongs to our calling in life, which leads to thrift, order, and competence. Religion teaches no man to neglect his business. It requires no one to give up an honest calling and to be idle. It asks no one to forsake a useful occupation; unless he can exchange it for one more useful. It demands, indeed, that we shall be willing so far to suspend our ordinary labors as to observe the Sabbath; to maintain habits of devotion; to improve our minds and hearts by the study of truth, to cultivate the social affections, and to do good to others as we have an opportunity; but it makes no one idle, and it countenances idleness in no one. A man who is habitually idle can have very slender pretensions to piety. There is enough in this world for every one to do, and the Saviour set such an example of untiring industry in his vocation as to give each one occasion to doubt whether he is his true follower if he is not disposed to be employed.

And to work with your own hands, as we commanded you This command is not referred to in the history (Acts 17), but it is probable that the apostle saw that many of those residing in Thessalonica were disposed to spend their time in indolence, and hence insisted strongly on the necessity of being engaged in some useful occupation; compare ^{<4172>}Acts 17:21. Idleness is one of the great evils of the pagan world in almost every country, and the parent of no small part of their vices. The effect of religion everywhere is to make people industrious; and every man, who is able, should feel himself under sacred obligation to be employed. God made man to work (compare ^{<0025>}Genesis 2:15; 3:19), and there is no more benevolent arrangement of his government than this. No one who has already enough

for himself and family, but who can make money to do good to others, has a right to retire from business and to live in idleness (compare ^{<408>}Acts 20:34; ^{<407>}Ephesians 4:27); no one has a right to live in such a relation as to be wholly dependent on others, if he can support himself; and no one has a right to compel others to labor for him, and to exact their unrequited toil, in order that he may be supported in indolence and ease. The application of this rule to all mankind would speedily put an end to slavery, and would convert multitudes, even in the church, from useless to useful people. If a man has no necessity to labor for himself and family, he should regard it as an inestimable privilege to be permitted to aid those who cannot work — the sick, the aged, the infirm. If a man has no need to add to what he has for his own temporal comfort, what a privilege it is for him to toil in promoting public improvements: in founding colleges, libraries, hospitals, and asylums; and in sending the gospel to those who are sunk in wretchedness and want! No man understands fully the blessings which God has bestowed on him, if he has hands to work and will not work.

^{<342>}**1 Thessalonians 4:12.** *That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without* Out of the church; comp notes on ^{<504>}Colossians 4:5. The word rendered honestly, means “becomeingly, decorously, in a proper manner;” ^{<513>}Romans 13:13; ^{<444>}1 Corinthians 14:40. It does not refer here to mere honesty in the transaction of business, but to their general treatment of those who were not professing Christians. They were to conduct themselves toward them in all respects in a becoming manner — to be honest with them; to be faithful to their engagements; to be kind and courteous in their conversation; to show respect where it was due, and to endeavor in every way to do them good. There are few precepts of religion more important than those which enjoin upon Christians the duty of a proper treatment of those who are not connected with the church.

And that ye may have lack of nothing Margin, no man. The Greek will bear either construction, but the translation in the text is probably the correct one. The phrase is to be taken in connection not merely with that which immediately precedes it — as if “their walking honestly toward those who were without” would preserve them from want — but as meaning that their industrious and quiet habits; their patient attention to their own business, and upright dealing with every man, would do it. They would, in this way, have a competence, and would not be beholden to others. Learn hence, that it is the duty of a Christian so to live as not to be dependent on others, unless he is made so by events of divine Providence which he cannot

foresee or control. No man should be dependent on others as the result of idle habits; of extravagance and improvidence; of the neglect of his own business, and of intermeddling with that of others. If by age, losses, infirmities, sickness, he is made dependent, he cannot be blamed, and he should not repine at his lot. One of the ways in which a Christian may always do good in society, and honor his religion, is by quiet and patient industry, and by showing that religion prompts to those habits of economy on which the happiness of society so much depends.

1 Thessalonians 4:13. *But I would not have you to be ignorant* I would have you fully informed on the important subject which is here referred to. It is quite probable from this, that some erroneous views prevailed among them in reference to the condition of those who were dead, which tended to prevent their enjoying the full consolation, which they might otherwise have done. Of the prevalence of these views, it is probable the apostle had been informed by Timothy on his return from Thessalonica; ^{<5106>}1 Thessalonians 3:6. What they were we are not distinctly informed, and can only gather from the allusions which Paul makes to them, or from the opposite doctrines which he states, and which are evidently designed to correct those which prevailed among them. From these statements, it would appear that they supposed that those who had died, though they were true Christians, would be deprived of some important advantages which those would possess who should survive to the coming of the Lord. There seems some reason to suppose, as Koppe conjectures (compare also Saurin, Serm. vol. 6:1), that the case of their grief was two-fold; one, that some among them doubted whether there would be any resurrection (compare ^{<6152>}1 Corinthians 15:12), and that they supposed that they who had died were thus cut off from the hope of eternal happiness, so as to leave their surviving friends to sorrow “as those who had no hope;” the other, that some of them believed that, though those who were dead would indeed rise again, yet it would be long after those who were living when the Lord Jesus would return had been taken to glory, and would be always in a condition inferior to them. See Koppe, in loc. The effect of such opinions as these can be readily imagined. it would be to deprive them of the consolation which they might have had, and should have had, in the loss of their pious friends. They would either mourn over them as wholly cut off from hope, or would sorrow that they were to be deprived of the highest privileges which could result from redemption. It is not to be regarded as wonderful that such views should

have prevailed in Thessalonica. There were those even at Corinth who wholly denied the doctrine of the resurrection (<4652>1 Corinthians 15:12); and we are to remember that those to whom the apostle now wrote had been recently converted from paganism; that they had enjoyed his preaching but a short time; that they had few or no books on the subject of religion; and that they were surrounded by those who had no faith in the doctrine of the resurrection at all, and who were doubtless able — as skeptical philosophers often are now — to urge their objections to the doctrine in such a way as greatly to perplex Christians. The apostle, therefore, felt the importance of stating the exact truth on the subject, that they might not have unnecessary sorrow, and that their unavoidable grief for their departed friends might not be aggravated by painful apprehensions about their future condition.

Concerning them which are asleep It is evident from this that they had been recently called to part with some dear and valued members of their church. The word sleep is frequently applied in the New Testament to the death of saints. For the reasons why it is, see the notes on <4811>John 11:11; <4813>1 Corinthians 11:30; 15:51.

That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope That is, evidently, as the pagan, who had no hope of future life; compare notes on <4812>Ephesians 2:12. Their sorrow was caused not only by the fact that their friends were removed from them by death, but from the fact that they had no evidence that their souls were immortal; or that, if they still lived, that they were, happy; or that their bodies would rise again. Hence, when they buried them, they buried their hopes in the grave, and so far as they had any evidence, they were never to see them again. Their grief at parting was not mitigated by the belief that the soul was now happy, or by the prospect of again being with them in a better world. It was on this account, in part, that the pagans indulged in expressions of such excessive grief. When their friends died, they hired men to play in a mournful manner on a pipe or trumpet, or women to howl and lament in a dismal manner. They beat their breasts; uttered loud shrieks; rent their garments; tore off their hair; cast dust on their heads, or sat down in ashes. It is not improbable that some among the Thessalonians, on the death of their pious friends, kept up these expressions of excessive sorrow. To prevent this, and to mitigate their sorrow, the apostle refers them to the bright hopes which Christianity had revealed, and points them to the future glorious re-union with the departed pious dead. Hence, learn:

(1) That the world without religion is destitute of hope. It is just as true of the pagan world now as it was of the ancient pagans, that they have no hope of a future state. They have no evidence that there is any such future state of blessedness; and without such evidence there can be no hope; compare notes on ~~4112~~ Ephesians 2:12.

(2) That the excessive sorrow of the children of this world, when they lose a friend, is not to be wondered at. They bury their hopes in the grave. They part, for all that they know or believe, with such a friend for ever. The wife, the son, the daughter, they consign to silence — to decay — to dust, not expecting to meet them again. They look forward to no glorious resurrection when that body shall rise, and when they shall be reunited to part no more. It is no wonder that they weep — for who would not weep when he believes that he parts with his friends for ever?

(3) It is only the hope of future blessedness that can mitigate this sorrow. Religion reveals a brighter world — a world where all the pious shall be reunited; where the bonds of love shall be made stronger than they were here; where they shall never be severed again. It is only this hope that can sooth the pains of grief at parting; only when we can look forward to a better world and feel that we shall see them again — love them again — love them forever — that our tears are made dry.

(4) The Christian, therefore, when he loses a Christian friend, should not sorrow as others do. He will feel, indeed, as keenly as they do, the loss of their society; the absence of their well-known faces; the want of the sweet voice of friendship and love; for religion does not blunt the sensibility of the soul, of make the heart unfeeling. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, and religion does not prevent the warm, gushing expressions of sorrow when God comes into a family and removes a friend. But this sorrow should not be like that of the world. It should not be:

(a) such as arises from the feeling that there is to be no future union;

(b) it should not be accompanied with repining or complaining;

(c) it should not be excessive, or beyond that which God designs that we should feel.

It should be calm, submissive, patient; it should be that which is connected with steady confidence in God; and it should be mitigated by the hope of a future glorious union in heaven. The eye of the weeper should look up

through his tears to God. The heart of the sufferer should acquiesce in him even in the unsearchable mysteries of his dealings, and feel that all is right.

(5) It is a sad thing to die without hope — so to die as to have no hope for ourselves, and to leave none to our surviving friends that we are happy. Such is the condition of the whole pagan world; and such the state of those who die in Christian lands, who have no evidence that their peace is made with God. As I love my friends — my father, my mother, my wife, my children, I would not have them go forth and weep over my grave as those who have no hope in my death. I would have their sorrow for my departure alleviated by the belief that my soul is happy with my God, even when they commit my cold clay to the dust; and were there no other reason for being a Christian, this would be worth all the effort which it requires to become one. It would demonstrate the unspeakable value of religion, that my living friends may go forth to my grave and be comforted in their sorrows with the assurance that my soul is already in glory, and that my body will rise again! No eulogium for talents, accomplishments, or learning; no pegans of praise for eloquence, beauty, or martial deeds; no remembrances of wealth and worldly greatness, would then so meet the desires which my heart cherishes, as to have them enabled, when standing around my open grave, to sing the song which only Christians can sing:

*Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb,
Take this new treasure to thy trust;
And give these sacred relics room
To seek a slumber in the dust.*

*Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear
Invade thy bounds. No mortal woe
Can reach the peaceful sleeper here,
While angels watch the soft repose.*

*So Jesus slept: God's dying Son
Pass'd thro' the grave, and blest the bed;
Rest here, bleat saint, until from his throne
The morning break, and pierce the shade.*

*Break from his throne, illustrious morn;
Attend, O Earth, his sovereign word;
Restore thy trust — a glorious form —
Call'd to ascend, and meet the Lord. — WATTS*

1 Thessalonians 4:14. *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again* That is, if we believe this, we ought also to believe that those who have died in the faith of Jesus will be raised from the dead. The meaning is not that the fact of the resurrection depends on our believing that Jesus rose, but that the death and resurrection of the Saviour were connected with the resurrection of the saints; that the one followed from the other, and that the one was as certain as the other. The doctrine of the resurrection of the saints so certainly follows from that of the resurrection of Christ, that, if the one is believed, the other ought to be also; see the notes on **1 Corinthians 15:12-14**.

Which sleep in Jesus A most beautiful expression. It is not merely that they have calm repose — like a gentle slumber — in the hope of awaking again, but that this is “in Jesus” — or “through” (**διὰ** ^{<1223>}) him; that is, his death and resurrection are the cause of their quiet and calm repose. They do not “sleep” in paganism, or in infidelity, or in the gloom of atheism — but in the blessed hope which Jesus has imparted. They lie, as he did, in the tomb — free from pain and sorrow, and with the certainty of being raised up again.

*They sleep in Jesus, and are bless'd,
How kind their slumbers are;
From sufferings and from sin released,
And freed from every snare.*

When, therefore, we think of the death of saints, let us think of what Jesus was in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Such is the sleep of our pious friends now in the grave; such will be our own when we die.

Will God bring with him This does not mean that God will bring them with him from heaven when the Saviour comes — though it will be true that their spirits will descend with the Saviour; but it means that he will bring them from their graves, and will conduct them with him to glory, to be with him; compare notes, ^{<814B>}John 14:3. The declaration, as it seems to me, is designed to teach the general truth that the redeemed are so united with Christ that they shall share the same destiny as he does. As the head was raised, so will all the members be. As God brought Christ from the grave, so will he bring them; that is, his resurrection made it certain that they would rise. It is a great and universal truth that God will bring all from their graves who “sleep in Jesus;” or that they shall all rise. The apostle does not, therefore, refer so much to the time when this would occur — meaning that it would happen when the Lord Jesus should return — as to the fact that there was an established connection between him and his people, which made it certain that if they died united with him by faith, they would be as certainly brought from the grave as he was. If, however, it means, as Prof. Bush (Anastasia, pp. 266,267) supposes, that they will be brought with him from heaven, or will accompany him down, it does not prove that there must have been a previous resurrection, for the full force of the language would be met by the supposition that their spirits had ascended to heaven, and would be brought with him to be united to their bodies when raised. If this be the correct interpretation, then there is probably an allusion to such passages as the following, representing the coming of the Lord accompanied by his saints. “The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.” ^{<814B>}Zechariah 14:5. “And Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh, with thousand of his saints;” Jude 14. “Who,” says President Dwight (Serm. 164),

“are those whom God will bring with Him at this time? Certainly not the bodies of his saints ... The only answer is, he will bring with him `the spirits of just men made perfect.’”

1 Thessalonians 4:15. *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord* By the command or inspired teaching of the Lord. Prof. Bush (Anastasis, p. 265) supposes that the apostle here alludes to what the Saviour says in **Matthew 24:30,31**, “And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven,” etc. It is possible that Paul may have designed a general allusion to all that the Lord had said about his coming, but there cannot have been an exclusive reference to that passage, for in what he says here there are several circumstances mentioned to which the Saviour in Matthew does not allude. The probability, therefore, is, that Paul means that the Lord Jesus had made a special communication to him on the subject.

That we which are alive See this fully explained in the notes on **1 Corinthians 15:51**. From this expression, it would seem, that some of the Thessalonians supposed that Paul meant to teach that he himself, and many of the living, would survive until the coming of the Lord Jesus, and, of course, that that event was near at hand. That this was not his meaning, however, he is at special pains to show in **2 Thessalonians 2:1-10**.

And remain unto the coming of the Lord Those Christians who shall then be alive.

Shall not prevent them which are asleep Shall not precede; anticipate; go before. The word prevent with us is now commonly used in the sense of hinder, but this is never its meaning in the Scriptures. The word, in the time of the translators of the Bible, was used in its primitive and proper sense (praevenio), meaning to precede, or anticipate. **Job 3:12**, “Why did the knees prevent me?” That is, why did they anticipate me, so that I did not perish, **Psalms 79:8**, “Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us;” that is, go before us in danger. **Psalms 119:147**, “I prevented the dawning of the morning and cried;” that is, I anticipated it, or I prayed before the morning dawned. **Matthew 17:25**, “Jesus prevented him, saying;” that is, Jesus anticipated him; he commenced speaking before Peter had told him what he had said; compare **Psalms 17:13**; **59:10**; **88:13**; **95:2**; **1 Samuel 22:6,19**; **Job. 30:27**; **41:11** The meaning here is, that they who would be alive at the coming of the Lord Jesus, would not be “changed” and received up into glory before those who were in their graves were raised up. The object seems to be to correct an opinion which prevailed among the Thessalonians that they who should survive to the coming of the Lord Jesus would have great advantages over those who had died. What

they supposed those advantages would be — whether the privilege of seeing him come, or that they would be raised to higher honors in heaven, or that they who had died would not rise at all, does not appear, nor is the origin of this sentiment known. It is clear, however, that it was producing an increase of their sorrow on the death of their pious friends, and hence it was very important to correct the error. The apostle, therefore, states that no such disadvantage could follow, for the matter of fact was, that the dead would rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:16. *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven* notes, ^{<4011>}Acts 1:11.

With a shout The word here used (^{<2752>}κλευσμα), does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means a “cry” of excitement, or of carging on; an outcry, clamor, or shout, as of sailors at the oar, Luc. Catapl. 19; of soldiers rushing to battle, Thuc. 3:14; of a multitude of people, Diod. Sic. 3:15; of a huntsman to his dogs, Xen. Ven. 6:20. It does not mean here, that the Lord would himself make such a shout, but that he would be attended with it; that is, with a multitude who would lift up the voice like that of an army rushing to the conflict.

With the voice of the archangel The word archangel occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Jude 9, where it is applied to Michael. It properly means a chief angel; one who is first, or who is over others — ^{<758>}αρχων. The word is not found in the Septuagint, and the only archangel, therefore, which is named in the Scriptures, is Michael; Jude 9; compare ^{<607>}Revelation 12:7. Seven angels, however, are referred to in the Scriptures as having an eminence above others, and these are commonly regarded as archangels. ^{<602>}Revelation 8:2, “And I saw the seven angels which stood before God.” One of these is supposed to be referred to in the Book of Tobit, 12:15, “I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.” The names of three only of the seven are mentioned in the Jewish writings: Michael, the patron of the Jewish nation, ^{<703>}Daniel 10:13,21; 12:1. Gabriel, ^{<706>}Daniel 8:16; 9:21; compare ^{<4019>}Luke 1:19,26. Raphael, Tobit 3:17; 5:4; 8:2; 9:1,5; 12:15. The Book of Enoch adds that of Uriel, pp. 187,190,191,193. Michael is mentioned as one “of the chief princes,” ^{<703>}Daniel 10:13; and as “the great prince,” ^{<701>}Daniel 12:1; compare notes on ^{<402>}Ephesians 1:21, and see an article by Prof. Stuart in the Bibliotheca Sacra. No. 1, on Angelology. It seems evident from the

Scriptures, that there is one or more among the angels to whom the name archangel properly belongs. This view is in accordance with the doctrine in the Scriptures that the heavenly beings are divided into ranks and orders, for if so, it is not unreasonable to suppose that there should be one or more to whom the most exalted rank pertains; compare ^{<617>}Revelation 12:7. Whether there is more than one to whom this name appropriately belongs, it is impossible now to determine, and is not material. The word here (in Greek) is without the article, and the phrase might be rendered, “with the voice of an archangel.” The Syriac renders it, “with the voice of the prince of the angels.” On an occasion so august and momentous as that of the coming of the final Judge of all mankind; the resurrection of the dead, and the solemn transactions before the tribunal of the Son of God deciding the destiny of countless million for ever, it will not be inappropriate that the highest among the heavenly hosts should be present and take an important part in the solemnities of the day. It is not quite certain what is meant here by “the voice of the archangel,” or for what purpose that voice will be heard. It cannot be that it will be to raise the dead — for that will be by the “voice of the Son of God” (^{<618>}John 5:28,29), and it seems most probable that the meaning is, that this will be a part of the loud shout or cry which will be made by the descending hosts of heaven; or perhaps it may be for the purpose of summoning the world to the bar of judgment; compare ^{<619>}Matthew 24:31.

And with the trump of God The trump which God appoints to be sounded on that solemn occasion. It does not mean that it will be sounded by God himself; see the notes on ^{<620>}Matthew 24:31.

And the dead in Christ Christians.

Shall rise first That is, before the living shall be changed. A doctrine similar to this was held by the Jews. “Resch Lachisch said, Those who die in the land of Israel shall rise first in the days of the Messiah.” See Wetstein, in loc. It is implied in all this description, that the interval between their resurrection and the change which will occur to the living, will be brief, or that the one will rapidly succeed the other compare notes, ^{<621>}1 Corinthians 15:23,51,52.

^{<622>}**1 Thessalonians 4:17.** *Then we which are alive* Those who shall then be alive; see ^{<623>}1 Thessalonians 4:15. The word here rendered “then” (^{<1899>}επειτα), does not necessarily mean that this would occur immediately. It properly marks succession in time, and means “afterward,

next, next in the order of events;” ^{<2167>}Luke 16:7; ^{<8121>}Galatians 1:21; ^{<3044>}James 4:14. There may be a considerable interval between the resurrection of the pious and the time when the living shall be caught up to meet the Lord, for the change is to take place in them which will fit them to ascend with those who have been raised. The meaning is, that after the dead are raised, or the next thing in order, they and the living will ascend to meet the Lord. The proper meaning of the word, however, denotes a succession so close as to exclude the idea of a long interval in which other important transactions would occur, such an interval, for example, as would be involved in a long personal reign of the Redeemer on earth. The word demands this interpretation — that the next thing in order after the resurrection of the righteous, will be their being caught up with the living, with an appropriate change, into the air — though, as has been remarked, it will admit of the supposition of such a brief, momentary interval (^{<1722>} ^{<823>} ^{<1722>} ^{<4493>} ^{<3788>} ^{<4551>}1 Corinthians 15:51,52) as shall be necessary to prepare for it.

Shall be caught up The word here used implies that there will be the application of external force or power by which this will be done. It will not be by any power of ascending which they will themselves have; or by any tendency of their raised or changed bodies to ascend of their own accord, or even by any effort of their own will, but by a power applied to them which will cause them to rise. Compare the use of the word ^{<726>} ^{<4112>} in ^{<4139>}Matthew 11:12, “the violent take it by force;” ^{<4139>}Matthew 13:19, “then cometh the wicked one and snatcheth away;” ^{<4165>}John 6:15, “that they would come and take him by force;” ^{<4102>}John 10:12, “the wolf catcheth them;” ^{<4189>}Acts 8:39, “the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip;” ^{<4712>}2 Corinthians 12:2, “such an one caught up to the third heaven;” also, ^{<4128>}John 12:28,29; ^{<4230>}Acts 23:10; Jude 23; ^{<4615>}Revelation 12:5. The verb does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. In all these instances there is the idea of either foreign force or violence effecting that which is done. What force or power is to be applied in causing the living and the dead to ascend, is not expressed. Whether it is to be by the ministry of angels, or by the direct power of the Son of God, is not intimated, though the latter seems to be most probable. The word should not be construed, however, as implying that there will be any reluctance on the part of the saints to appear before the Saviour, but merely with reference to the physical fact that power will be necessary to elevate them to meet him in the air. Will

their, bodies then be such that they will have the power of locomotion at will from place to place?

In the clouds Greek, “in clouds” — εν ^{<1722>} νεφελαις ^{<3507>} — without the article. This may mean “in clouds;” that is, in such numbers, and in such grouping as to resemble clouds. So it is rendered by Macknight, Koppe, Rosenmuller, Bush (Anasta. 266), and others. The absence of the article here would rather seem to demand this interpretation Still, however, the other interpretation may be true, that it means that they will be caught up into the region of the clouds, or to the clouds which shall accompany the Lord Jesus on his return to our world. ^{<1240>}Matthew 24:30; 26:64; ^{<1102>}Mark 16:26; 14:62; ^{<6107>}Revelation 1:7; compare ^{<2073>}Daniel 7:13. In whichever sense it is understood, the expression is one of great sublimity, and the scene will be immensely grand. Some doctrine of this kind was held by the ancient Jews. Thus rabbi Nathan (Midras Tillin, 48:13) says, “What has been done before will be done again. As he led the Israelites from Egypt in the clouds of heaven, so will he do to them in the future time.”

To meet the Lord in the air In the regions of the atmosphere — above the earth. It would seem from this, that the Lord Jesus, in his coming, would not descend to the earth, but would remain at a distance from it in the air, where the great transactions of the judgment will occur. It is, indeed, nowhere said that the transactions of the judgment will occur upon the earth. The world would not be spacious enough to contain all the assembled living and dead, and hence the throne of judgment will be fixed in the ample space above it.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord This does not mean that they will always remain with him in the air — for their final home will be heaven — and after the trial they will accompany him to the realms of glory; ^{<1234>}Matthew 25:34, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom,” etc. The time during which they will remain with him “in the air” is nowhere mentioned in the Bible. It will be as long as will be necessary for the purposes of judging a world and deciding the eternal doom of every individual “according to the deeds done in the body.” There is no reason to suppose that this will be accomplished in a single day of twenty-four hours; but it is impossible to form and conjecture of the period which will be occupied.

^{<1018>}**1 Thessalonians 4:18.** *Wherefore comfort one another* Margin, “exhort.” The word comfort probably best expresses the meaning. They

were to bring these glorious truths and these bright prospects before their minds, in order to alleviate, the sorrows of bereavement. The topics of consolation are these: first, that those who had died in the faith would not always lie in the grave; second, that when they rose they would not occupy an inferior condition because they were cut off before the coming of the Lord; and third, that all Christians, living and dead, would be received to heaven and dwell forever with the Lord.

With these words That is, with these truths.

REMARKS ON 1 THESSALONIANS 4

1. This passage (^{<SM13>}1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) contains a truth which is to be found in no pagan classic writer, and nowhere else. except in the teachings of the New Testament. For the elevated and glorious view which it gives of future scenes pertaining to our world, and for all its inestimable consolations, we are wholly indebted to the Christian religion. Reason, unassisted by revelation, never dared to conjecture that such scenes would occur; if it had, it would have had no arguments on which the conjecture could be supported.

2. The death of the Christian is a calm and gentle slumber; ^{<SM13>}1 Thessalonians 4:13. It is not annihilation; it is not the extinction of hope. It is like gentle repose when we lie down at night, and when we hope to awake again in the morning; it is like the quiet, sweet slumber of the infant. Why, then, should the Christian be afraid to die? Is he afraid to close his eyes in slumber? Why dread the night — the stillness of death? Is he afraid of the darkness, the silence, the chilliness of the midnight hour, when his senses are locked in repose? Why should death to him appear so terrible? “Is the slumbering of an infant an object of terror?”

3. There are magnificent scenes before us. There is no description anywhere which is more sublime than that in the close of this chapter. Great events are brought together here, any one of which is more grand than all the pomp of courts, and all the sublimity of battle, and all the grandeur of a triumphal civic procession. The glory of the descending Judge of all mankind; the attending retinue of angels, and of the spirits of the dead; the loud shout of the descending host; the clangor of the archangel’s trumpet; the bursting of graves and the coming forth of the million there entombed; the rapid, sudden, glorious change on the million of living people; the consternation of the wicked; the ascent of the

innumerable host to the regions of the air, and the solemn process of the judgment there — what has ever occurred like these events in this world. And how strange it is that the thoughts of people are not turned away from the trifles — the show — the shadow — the glitter — the empty pageantry here — to these bright and glorious realities!

4. In those scenes we shall all be personally interested. If we do not survive until they occur, yet we shall have an important part to act in them. We shall hear the archangel's trump; we shall be summoned before the descending Judge. In these scenes we shall mingle not as careless spectators, but as those whose eternal doom is there to be determined, and with all the intensity of emotion derived from the fact that the Son of God will descend to judge us, and to pronounce our final doom! Can we be too much concerned to be prepared for the solemnities of that day?

5. We have, in the passage before us, an interesting view of the order in which these great events will occur. There will be:

(1) the descent of the judge with the attending hosts of heaven;

(2) the raising up of the righteous dead;

(3) the change which the living will undergo (compare ^{4152}1 Corinthians 15:52);

(4) the ascent to meet the Lord in the air; and

(5) the return with him to glory. What place in this series of wonders will be assigned for the resurrection of the wicked, is not mentioned here. The object of the apostle did not lead him to advert to that, since his purpose was to comfort the afflicted by the assurance that their pious friends would rise again, and would suffer no disadvantage by the fact that they had died before the coming of the Redeemer. From ^{4153}John 5:28,29, however, it seems most probable that they will be raised at the same time with the righteous, and will ascend with them to the place of judgment in the air.

6. There is no intimation here of a “personal reign” of Christ upon the earth. Indeed, there is no evidence that he will return to the earth at all. All that appears is, that he will descend “from heaven” to the regions of “the air,” and there will summon the living and the dead to his bar. But there is no intimation that he will set up a visible kingdom then on earth, to continue a thousand or more years; that the Jews will be re-collected in

their own land; that a magnificent city or temple will be built there; or that the saints will hover in the air, or reign personally with the Lord Jesus over the nations. There are two considerations in view of this passage, which, to my mind, are conclusive proof that all this is romance — splendid and magnificent indeed as an Arabian tale — but wholly unknown to the apostle Paul. The one is, that if this were to occur, it is inconceivable that there should have been no allusion to it here. It would have been such a magnificent conception of the design of the Second Advent, that it could not have failed to have been adverted to in a description like this. The other consideration is, that such a view would have been exactly in point to meet the object of the apostle here. What could have been more appropriate in comforting the Thessalonian Christians respecting those who had died in the faith, than to describe the gorgeous scenes of the “personal reign” of Christ, and the important part which the risen saints were to play in that great drama? How can it be accounted for that the apostle did not advert to it? Would a believer in the “personal reign” now be likely to omit so material a point in a description of the scenes which are to occur at the “Second Advent?”

7. The saints will be forever with the Lord. They will dwell with him in his own eternal home; ^{<BIB>}John 14:3. This expression comprises the sum of all their anticipated felicity and glory. To be with Christ will be, in itself, the perfection of bliss; for it will be a security that they will sin no more, that they will suffer no more, and that they will be shielded from danger and death. They will have realized the object of their long, fond desire — that of seeing their Saviour; they will have suffered the last pang, encountered the last temptation, and escaped forever from the dominion of death. What a glorious prospect is this! Assuredly we should be willing to endure pain, privation, and contempt here for the brief period of our earthly pilgrimage, if we may come at last to a world of eternal rest. What trifles are all earthly sorrows compared with the glories of an endless life with our God and Saviour!

8. It is possible that even the prospect of the judgment-day should be a source of consolation; ^{<QMS>}1 Thessalonians 4:18. To most people it is justly an object of dread — for all that they have to fear is concentrated on the issues of that day. But why should a Christian fear it? In the descending Judge he will hail his Redeemer and friend; and just in proportion as he has true religion here, will be the certainty of his acquittal there. Nay, his feelings in anticipation of the judgment may be more than the mere absence

of fear and alarm. It may be to him the source of positive joy. It will be the day of his deliverance from death and the grave. It will confirm to him all his longcherished hopes. It will put the seal of approbation on his life spent in endeavdouring to do the will of God. It will reunite him to his dear friends who have died in the Lord. It will admit him to a full and glorious view of that Saviour whom “having not seen he has loved;” and it will make him the-companion of angels and of God. If there is anything, therefore, which ought to cheer and sustain our hearts in the sorrows and bereavements of this life, it is the anticipation of the glorious scenes connected with the Second Advent of our Lord, and the prospect of standing before him clothed in the robes of salvation, surrounded by all those whom we have loved who have died in the faith, and with the innumerable company of the redeemed of all ages and lands.

NOTES ON 1 THESSALONIANS 5

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter consists of two parts:

I. The continuation of the subject of the coming of the Lord; <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:1-11; and,

II. Various practical exhortations.

In the first part, the apostle states:

(1) that it was well understood by the Thessalonians that the coming of the Lord would be sudden, and at an unexpected moment, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:1,2;

(2) he refers to the effect of his coming on the wicked and the righteous, and says that it would be attended with the sudden and inevitable destruction of the former, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:3; but that the result of his coming would be far different on the righteous; <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:4-11. The prospect of his coming was fitted to make them watchful and sober, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:6-8; and his advent would be attended with their certain salvation; ver 9-11.

In the second part of the chapter, he exhorts them to show proper respect for their spiritual teachers and rulers, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:12,13; to endeavor to restrain the unruly, to support the feeble, and to evince toward all the spirit of patience and forbearance, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:14; to manifest a meek and benevolent manner of life, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:15; to rejoice always, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:16; to pray constantly, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:17; to render thanks to God in every situation, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:18; to cherish the influences of the Holy Ghost on their souls, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:19; to show respect for all the divine prophetic communications, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:20; to consider and examine carefully everything submitted to them for belief; to adhere steadfastly to all that was good and true, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:21; and to avoid the very appearance of evil, <sup><SUB>1</sup> Thessalonians 5:22. The Epistle closes with a fervent prayer that God would sanctify them entirely; with an earnest entreaty that they would pray for him; with a command that the Epistle

should be read to all the churches, and with the benediction; ^{<3162>}1 Thessalonians 5:22-28.

^{<3181>}**1 Thessalonians 5:1.** *But of the times and the seasons* See the notes, ^{<4007>}Acts 1:7. The reference here is to the coming of the Lord Jesus, and to the various events connected with his advent; see the close of 1 Thessalonians 4.

Ye have no need that I write unto you That is, they had received all the information on the particular point to which he refers, which it was necessary they should have. He seems to refer particularly to the suddenness of his coming. It is evident from this, as well as from other parts of this Epistle, that this had been, from some cause, a prominent topic which he had dwelt on when he was with them; see the notes on ^{<3110>}1 Thessalonians 1:10.

^{<3181>}**1 Thessalonians 5:2.** *For yourselves know perfectly* That is, they had been fully taught this. There could be no doubt in their minds respecting it.

The day of the Lord so cometh Of the Lord Jesus — for so the word “Lord” in the New Testament commonly means; see the notes, ^{<4024>}Acts 1:24. The “day of the Lord” means that day in which he will be manifested, or in which he will be the prominent object in view of the assembled universe.

As a thief in the night Suddenly and unexpectedly, as a robber breaks into a dwelling. A thief comes without giving any warning, or any indications of his approach. He not only gives none, but he is careful that none shall be given. It is a point with him that, if possible, the man whose house he is about to rob shall have no means of ascertaining his approach until he comes suddenly upon him; compare notes on ^{<1247>}Matthew 24:37-43; ^{<2173>}Luke 12:39,40. In this way the Lord Jesus will return to judgment; and this proves that all the attempts to determine the day, the year, or the century when he will come, must be fallacious. He intends that his coming to this world shall be sudden and unexpected, “like that of a thief in the night;” that there shall be no such indications of his approach that it shall not be sudden and unexpected; and that no warning of it shall be given so that people may know the time of his appearing. If this be not the point of the comparison in expressions like this, what is it? Is there anything else in which his coming will resemble that of a thief? And if this be the true point

of comparison, how can it be true that people can ascertain when that is to occur? Assuredly, if they can, his coming will not be like that of a thief; comp notes on ^{<400>}Acts 1:7.

^{<518>}**1 Thessalonians 5:3.** *For when they shall say, Peace and safety*

That is, when the wicked shall say this, for the apostle here refers only to those on whom “sudden destruction” will come; compare notes on ^{<128>}Matthew 24:36-42.; ^{<608>}2 Peter 3:3,4. It is clear from this:

(1) that when the Lord Jesus shall come the world will not all be converted. There will be some to be “destroyed.” How large this proportion will be, it is impossible now to ascertain. This supposition, however, is not inconsistent with the belief that there will be a general prevalence of the gospel before that period.

(2) The impenitent and wicked world will be sunk in carnal security when he comes. They will regard themselves as safe. They will see no danger. They will give no heed to warning. They will be unprepared for his advent. So it has always been. it seems to be a universal truth in regard to all the visitations of God to wicked people for punishment, that he comes upon them at a time when they are not expecting him, and that they have no faith in the predictions of his advent. So it was in the time of the flood; in the destruction of Sodom Gomorrah, and Jerusalem; in the overthrow of Babylon: so it is when the sinner dies, and so it will be when the Lord Jesus shall return to judge the world. One of the most remarkable facts about the history of man is, that he takes no warning from his Maker; he never changes his plans, or feels any emotion, because his Creator “thunders damnation along his path,” and threatens to destroy him in hell.

Sudden destruction Destruction that was unforeseen (^{<160>}αἰφνιδίος) or unexpected. The word here rendered “sudden,” occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in ^{<2134>}Luke 21:34, “Lest that day come upon you unawares.” The word rendered “destruction” — ^{<3639>}ολεθρος — occurs in the New Testament only here and in ^{<418>}1 Corinthians 5:5; ^{<510>}2 Thessalonians 1:9; ^{<548>}1 Timothy 6:9, in all of which places it is correctly translated destruction. The word destruction is familiar to us. It means, properly, demolition; pulling down; the annihilation of the form of anything, or that form of parts which constitutes it what it is; as the destruction of grass by eating; of a forest by cutting down the trees; of life by murder; of the soul by consigning it to misery. It does not necessarily

mean annihilation — for a house or city is not annihilated which is pulled down or burnt; a forest is not annihilated which is cut down; and a man is not annihilated whose character and happiness are destroyed. In regard to the destruction here referred to, we may remark:

- (1) it will be after the return of the Lord Jesus to judgment; and hence it is not true that the wicked experience all the punishment which they ever will in the present life;
- (2) that it seems fairly implied that the destruction which they will then suffer will not be annihilation, but will be connected with conscious existence; and
- (3) that they will then be cut off from life and hope and salvation How can the solemn affirmation that they will be “destroyed suddenly,” be consistent with the belief that all people will be saved? Is it the same thing to be destroyed and to be saved? Does the Lord Jesus, when he speaks of the salvation of his people, say that he comes to destroy them?

As travail upon a woman with child This expression is sometimes used to denote great consternation, as in ^{<9806>}Psalm 48:6; ^{<2074>}Jeremiah 6:24; ^{<3049>}Micah 4:9,10; great pain, as ^{<2531>}Isaiah 53:11; ^{<2461>}Jeremiah 4:31; ^{<6162>}John 16:21; or the suddenness with which anything occurs; ^{<2432>}Jeremiah 13:21. It seems here to be used to denote two things; first, that the coming of the Lord to a wicked world will be sudden; and, secondly, that it will be an event of the most distressing and overwhelming nature.

And they shall not escape That is, the destruction, or punishment. They calculated on impunity, but now the time will have come when none of these refuges will avail them, and no rocks will cover them from the “wrath to come.”

^{<3104>}**1 Thessalonians 5:4.** *But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief* The allusion here is to the manner in which a thief or robber accomplishes his purpose. He comes in the night, when people are asleep. So, says the apostle, the Lord will come to the wicked. They are like those who are asleep when the thief comes upon them. But it is not so with Christians. They are, in relation to the coming of the day of the Lord, as people are who are awake when the robber comes. They could see his approach, and could prepare for it, so that it would not take them by surprise.

1 Thessalonians 5:5. *Ye are all the children of light* All who are Christians. The phrase "children of light" is a Hebraism, meaning that they were the enlightened children of God.

And the children of the day Who live as if light always shone round about them. The meaning is, that in reference to the coming of the Lord they are as people would be in reference to the coming of a thief, if there were no night and no necessity of slumber. They would always be wakeful and active, and it would be impossible to come upon them by surprise. Christians are always to be wakeful and vigilant; they are so to expect the coming of the Redeemer, that he will not find them off their guard, and will not come upon them by surprise.

1 Thessalonians 5:6. *Therefore let us no sleep, as do others* As the wicked world does; compare notes **Matthew 25:5.**

But let us watch That is, for the coming of the Lord. Let us regard it as an event which is certainly to occur, and which may occur at any moment; notes **Matthew 25:13.**

And be sober The word here used (**νηφω** ^{<3525>}) is rendered sober in **1 Thessalonians 5:6,8;** **1 Peter 1:13; 5:8;** and watch in **2 Timothy 4:5;** and **1 Peter 4:7.** It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means, to be temperate or abstinent, especially in respect to wine. Joseph. Jewish Wars, 5. 5, 7; Xenophon, Cyr. 7. 5, 20; and then it is used in a more general sense, as meaning to be sober-minded, watchful, circumspect. In this passage there is an allusion to the fact that persons not only sleep in the night, but that they are frequently drunken in the night also. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, when he comes, will find the wicked sunk not only in carnal security, but in sinful indulgences, and that those who are Christians ought not only to be awake and to watch as in the day-time, but to be temperate. They ought to be like persons engaged in the sober, honest, and appropriate employments of the day, and not like those who waste their days in sleep, and their nights in revelry. A man who expects soon to see the Son of God coming to judgment, ought to be a sober man. No one would wish to be summoned from a scene of dissipation to his bar. And who would wish to be called there from the ball-room; from the theater; from the scene of brilliant worldly amusemen? The most frivolous votary of the world; the most accomplished and flattered and joyous patron of the ball-room; the most richly-dressed and admired

daughter of vanity, would tremble at the thought of being summoned from those brilliant halls, where pleasure is now found, to the judgment bar. They would wish to have at least a little time that they might prepare for so solemn a scene. But if so, as this event may at any moment occur, why should they not be habitually sober-minded? Why should they not aim to be always in that state of mind which they know would be appropriate to meet him? Especially should Christians live with such vigilance and soberness as to be always prepared to meet the Son of God. What Christian can think it appropriate for him to go up to meet his Saviour from the theater, the ballroom, or the brilliant worldly party? A Christian ought always so to live that the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven would not excite the least alarm.

1 Thessalonians 5:7. *For they that sleep, sleep in the night* Night is the time for sleep. The day is the time for action, and in the light of day people should be employed. Night and sleep are made for each other, and so are the day and active employment. The meaning here is, that it is in accordance with the character of those who are of the night, that is, sinners, to be sunk in stupidity and carnal security, as if they were asleep; but for the children of the day, that is, for Christians, it is no more appropriate to be inactive than it is for people to sleep in the daytime.

“It is not to be wondered at that wicked people are negligent and are given to vice, for they are ignorant of the will of God.

Negligence in doing right, and corrupt morals, usually accompany ignorance.” Rosenmuller.

And they that be drunken, are drunken in the night The night is devoted by them to revelry and dissipation. It is in accordance with the usual custom in all lands and times, that the night is the usual season for riot and revelry. The leisure, the darkness, the security from observation, and the freedom from the usual toils and cares of life, have caused those hours usually to be selected for indulgence in intemperate eating and drinking. This was probably more particularly the case among the ancients than with us, and much as drunkenness abounded, it was much more rare to see a man intoxicated in the day-time than it is now. To be drunk then in the day-time was regarded as the greatest disgrace. See Polyb. Exc. Leg. 8, and Apul. viii., as quoted by Wetstein; compare notes, ^{<425>}Acts 2:15; ^{<351>}Isaiah 5:11. The object of the apostle here is, to exhort Christians to be sober and temperate, and the meaning is, that it is as disgraceful for them to indulge

in habits of revelry, as for a man to be drunk in the day-time. The propriety of this exhortation, addressed to Christians, is based on the fact that intoxication was hardly regarded as a crime, and, surrounded as they were with those who freely indulged in drinking to excess, they were then, as they are now, exposed to the danger of disgracing their religion. The actions of Christians ought always to be such that they may be performed in open day and in the view of all the world. Other people seek the cover of the night to perform their deeds; the Christian should do nothing which may not be done under the full blaze of day.

1 Thessalonians 5:8. *But let us, who are of the day, be sober*
Temperate, as people usually are in the daytime.

Putting on the breast-plate of faith and love This is a favorite comparison of the apostle Paul; see it explained at length in the notes on **Ephesians 6:14**.

And for an helmet, the hope of salvation See the notes at **Ephesians 6:17**.

1 Thessalonians 5:9. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath* This is designed as an encouragement to effort to secure our salvation. The wish of God is to save us, and therefore we should watch and be sober; we should take to ourselves the whole of the Christian armor, and strive for victory. If he had appointed us to wrath, effort would have been in vain, for we could do nothing but yield to our inevitable destiny. The hope of a final triumph should animate us in our efforts, and cheer us in our struggles with our foes. How much does the hope of victory animate the soldier in battle! When morally certain of success, how his arm is nerved! When everything conspires to favor him, and when he seems to feel that God fights for him, and intends to give him the victory, how his heart exults, and how strong is he in battle! Hence, it was a great point among the ancients, when about entering into battle, to secure evidence that the gods favored them, and meant to give them the victory. For this purpose they offered sacrifices, and consulted the flight of birds and the entrails of animals; and for this armies were accompanied by soothsayers and priests, that they might interpret any signs which might occur that would be favorable, or to propitiate the favor of the gods by sacrifice. See Homer, *passim*; Arrian's Expedition of Alexander, and the classic writers generally. The apostle alludes to something of this kind here. He would excite us to

maintain the Christian warfare manfully, by the assurance that God intends that we shall be triumphant. This we are to learn by no conjectures of soothsayers; by no observation of the flight of birds; by no sacrifice which we can make to propitiate his favor, but by the unerring assurance of his holy word. If we are Christians, we know that he intends our salvation, and that victory will be ours; if we are willing to become Christians, we know that the Almighty arm will be stretched out to aid us, and that the “gates of hell” cannot prevent it.

1 Thessalonians 5:10. *Who died for us* That is, to redeem us. He designed by his death that we should ultimately live with him; and this effect of his death could be secured only as it was an atoning sacrifice.

Whether we wake or sleep Whether we are found among the living or the dead when he comes. The object here is to show that the one class would have no advantage over the other. This was designed to calm their minds in their trials, and to correct an error which seems to have prevailed in the belief that those who were found alive when he should return would have some priority over those who were dead; see the notes on **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

Should live together with him See the notes at **John 14:3**. The word rendered “together” (ἅμα ^{<260>}) is not to be regarded as connected with the phrase “with him” — as meaning that he and they would be “together,” but it refers to those who “wake and those who sleep” — those who are alive and those who are dead — meaning that they would be “together” or would be with the Lord “at the same time;” there would be no priority or precedence. Rosenmuller.

1 Thessalonians 5:11. *Wherefore comfort yourselves* notes, **1 Thessalonians 4:18**.

And edify one another Strive to build up each other, or to establish each other in the faith by these truths; notes, **Romans 14:19**.

Even as also ye do Continue to do it. Let nothing intervene to disturb the harmony and consolation which you have been accustomed to derive from these high and holy doctrines.

1 Thessalonians 5:12. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you* Who they were is not mentioned. It is evident,

however, that the church was not left without appointed persons to minister to it when its founders should be away. We know that there were presbyters ordained over the church at Ephesus, and over the churches in Crete (^{<4017>}Acts 20:17; ^{<5005>}Titus 1:5), and that there were bishops and deacons at Philippi (^{<5003>}Philippians 1:1), and there is every reason to believe that similar officers would be appointed in every newly organized church. The word “know” seems to mean that they were not to make themselves strangers to them — to be cold and distant toward them — to be ignorant of their needs, or to be indifferent to them. While a people are not obtrusively to intermeddle with the business of a minister, any more than they are with that of any other man, yet there are things in regard to him with which they should be acquainted. They should seek to be personally acquainted with him, and make him their confidant and counselor in their spiritual troubles. They should seek his friendship, and endeavor to maintain all proper contact with him. They should not regard him as a distant man, or as a stranger among them. They should so far understand his circumstances as to know what is requisite to make him comfortable, and should be on such terms that they may readily and cheerfully furnish what he needs. And they are to “know” or regard him as their spiritual teacher and ruler; not to be strangers to the place where he preaches the word of life, and not to listen to his admonitions and reproofs as those of a stranger, but as those of a pastor and friend.

Which labour among you There is no reason to suppose, as many have done, that the apostle here refers to different classes of ministers. He rather refers to different parts of the work which the same ministers perform. The first is, that they “labor” — that is, evidently, in preaching the gospel. For the use of the word, see ^{<6068>}John 4:38, where it occurs twice; ^{<6150>}1 Corinthians 15:10; 16:16. The word is one which properly expresses wearisome toil, and implies that the office of preaching is one that demands constant industry.

And are over you in the Lord That is, by the appointment of the Lord, or under his direction. They are not absolute sovereigns, but are themselves subject to one who is over them — the Lord Jesus. On the word here rendered “are over you” (^{<4291>}προισταμενους) see the notes on ^{<6128>}Romans 12:8, where it is translated “ruleth.”

And admonish you The word here used (^{<3560>}νουθετεω) is rendered “admonish,” and “admonished,” in ^{<6154>}Romans 15:14; ^{<5086>}Colossians 3:16;

<512>1 Thessalonians 5:12; <515>2 Thessalonians 3:15; and warn, and warning, <4044>1 Corinthians 4:14; <5028>Colossians 1:28; <5154>1 Thessalonians 5:14. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, to put in mind; and then to warn, entreat, exhort. It is a part of the duty of a minister to put his people in mind of the truth; to warn them of danger; to exhort them to perform their duty; to admonish them if they go astray.

<515>**1 Thessalonians 5:13.** *And to esteem them very highly in love* To cherish for them an affectionate regard. The office of a minister of religion demands respect. They who are faithful in that office have a claim on the kind regards of their fellow-men. The very nature of the office requires them to do good to others, and there is no benefactor who should be treated with more affectionate regard than he who endeavors to save us from ruin; to impart to us the consolations of the gospel in affliction; and to bring us and our families to heaven.

For their work's sake Not primarily as a personal matter, or on their own account, but on account of the work in which they are engaged. It is a work whose only tendency, when rightly performed, is to do good. It injures no man, but contributes to the happiness of all. It promotes intelligence, industry, order, neatness, economy, temperance, chastity, charity, and kindness in this world, and leads to eternal blessedness in the world to come. A man who sincerely devotes himself to such a work has a claim on the kind regards of his fellow-men.

And be at peace among yourselves See the notes at <4051>Mark 9:50; <5128>Romans 12:18; 14:19.

<5154>**1 Thessalonians 5:14.** *Now we exhort you, brethren* Margin, "beseech." This earnest entreaty is evidently addressed to the whole church, and not to the ministers of the gospel only. The duties here enjoined are such as pertain to all Christians in their appropriate spheres, and should not be left to be performed by ministers only.

Warn them The same word which in <512>1 Thessalonians 5:12 is rendered "admonish." It is the duty of every church member, as well as of the ministers of the gospel, affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this subject. They suppose that it is the duty only of the officers of the

church to admonish an erring brother, and hence many become careless and cold and worldly, and no one utters a kind word to them to recall them to a holy walk with God.

That are unruly Margin, “disorderly.” The word here used (*ατακτος*)^{<814>}, is one which properly means “not keeping the ranks,” as of soldiers; and then irregular, confused, neglectful of duty, disorderly. The reference here is to the members of the church who were irregular in their Christian walk. It is not difficult, in an army, when soldiers get out of the line, or leave their places in the ranks, or are thrown into confusion, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state of irregularity and confusion. As little difficult is it, when the members of a church are out of their places, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state. Many a church is like an army where half the soldiers are out of the line; where there is entire insubordination in the ranks, and where not half of them could be depended on for efficient service in a campaign. Indeed, an army would accomplish little if as large a proportion of it were irregular, idle, remiss, or pursuing their own aims to the neglect of the public interest, as there are members of the church who can never be depended on in accomplishing the great purpose for which it was organized.

Comfort the feeble-minded The dispirited; the disheartened; the downcast. To do this is also the duty of each church member. There are almost always those who are in this condition, and it is not easy to appreciate the value of a kind word to one in that state. Christians are assailed by temptation; in making efforts to do good they are opposed and become disheartened; in their contests with their spiritual foes they are almost overcome; they walk through shades of spiritual night, and find no comfort. In such circumstances, how consoling is the voice of a friend! How comforting is it to feel that they are not alone! How supporting to be addressed by one who has had the same conflicts, and has triumphed! Every Christian — especially every one who has been long in the service of his Master — has a fund of experience which is the property of the church, and which may be of incalculable value to those who are struggling now amidst many embarrassments along the Christian way. He who has that experience should help a weak and sinking brother; he should make his own experience of the efficacy of religion in his trials and conflicts, the means of sustaining others in their struggles. There is no one who would not reach out his hand to save a child borne down rapid stream; yet how often do experienced and strong men in the Christian faith pass by those

who are struggling in the “deep waters, where the proud waves have come over their souls!”

Support the weak See the notes at ^{<510>}Romans 15:1.

Be patient toward all men See the Greek word here used, explained in the notes on ^{<410>}1 Corinthians 13:4; compare ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:2; ^{<412>}Galatians 5:22; ^{<512>}Colossians 3:12.

^{<315>}**1 Thessalonians 5:15.** *See that none render evil for evil* See the notes on ^{<413>}Matthew 5:39,44. The meaning here is, that we are not to take vengeance; compare notes on ^{<517>}Romans 12:17,19. This law is positive, and is universally binding. The moment we feel ourselves acting from a desire to “return evil for evil,” that moment we are acting wrong. It may be right to defend our lives and the lives of our friends; to seek the protection of the law for our persons, reputation, or property, against those who would wrong us; to repel the assaults of calumniators and slanderers, but in no case should the motive be to do them wrong for the evil which they have done us.

But ever follow that which is good Which is benevolent, kind, just, generous; see the notes, ^{<521>}Romans 12:20,21.

Both among yourselves, and to all men The phrase “to all men,” seems to have been added to avoid the possibility of misconstruction. Some might possibly suppose that this was a good rule to be observed toward those of their own number, but that a greater latitude in avenging injuries might be allowable toward their enemies out of the church. The apostle, therefore, says that the rule is universal. It relates to the pagan, to infidels, sceptics, and persecutors, as well as to the members of the church. To every man we are to do good as we are able — no matter what they do to us. This is the rule which God himself observes toward the evil and unthankful (notes, ^{<415>}Matthew 5:45), and is one of the original and beautiful laws of our holy religion.

^{<316>}**1 Thessalonians 5:16.** *Rejoice evermore* See the notes on ^{<418>}Philippians 3:1; 4:4.

^{<317>}**1 Thessalonians 5:17.** *Pray without ceasing* See the notes on ^{<512>}Romans 12:12. The direction here may be fairly construed as meaning:

(1) That we are to be regular and constant in the observance of the stated seasons of prayer. We are to observe the duty of prayer in the closet, in the family, and in the assembly convened to call on the name of the Lord. We are not to allow this duty to be interrupted or intermitted by any trifling cause. We are so to act that it may be said we pray regularly in the closet, in the family, and at the usual seasons when the church prays to which we belong.

(2) We are to maintain an uninterrupted and constant spirit of prayer. We are to be in such a frame of mind as to be ready to pray publicly if requested; and when alone, to improve any moment of leisure which we may have when we feel ourselves strongly inclined to pray. That Christian is in a bad state of mind who has suffered himself, by attention to worldly cares, or by light conversation, or by gaiety and vanity, or by reading an improper book, or by eating or drinking too much, or by late hours at night among the thoughtless and the vain, to be brought into such a condition that he cannot engage in prayer with proper feelings. There has been evil done to the soul if it is not prepared for communion with God at all times, and if it would not find pleasure in approaching his holy throne.

1 Thessalonians 5:18. *In every thing give thanks* See the notes at ^{<4158>}Ephesians 5:20; ^{<4046>}Philippians 4:6. We can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning. Chrysostom, once the archbishop of Constantinople, and then driven into exile, persecuted, and despised, died far away from all the splendors of the capital, and all the comforts and honors which he had enjoyed, uttering his favorite motto — ^{<1391>}δοξα ^{<3588>}τω ^{<2316>}Θεω ^{<3956>}παντων ^{<1752>}ἐνεκεν — “glory to God for all things.” Bibliotheca Sacra, 1:700. So we may praise God for everything that happens to us under his government. A man owes a debt of obligation to him for anything which will recall him from his wanderings, and which will prepare him for heaven. Are there any dealings of God toward people which do not contemplate such an end? Is a man ever made to drink the cup of affliction when no drop of mercy is intermingled? Is he ever visited with calamity which does not in some way contemplate his own temporal or eternal good! Could we see all, we should see that we are never placed in circumstances in which there is not much for which we should thank God. And when, in his dealings, a cloud seems to cover his face, let us remember the good things without number

which we have received, and especially remember that we are in the world of redeeming love, and we shall find enough for which to be thankful.

For this is the will of God That is, that you should be grateful. This is what God is pleased to require you to perform in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the gift of that Saviour he has laid the foundation for that claim, and he requires that you should not be unmindful of the obligation; see the notes, ^{<8135>}Hebrews 13:15.

^{<3159>}**1 Thessalonians 5:19.** *Quench not the Spirit* This language is taken from the way of putting out a fire, and the sense is, we are not to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Possibly there may be an allusion here to fire on an altar, which was to be kept constantly burning. This fire may have been regarded as emblematic of devotion, and as denoting that that devotion was never to become extinct. The Holy Spirit is the source of true devotion, and hence the enkindlings of piety in the heart, by the Spirit, are never to be quenched. Fire may be put out by pouring on water; or by covering it with any incombustible substance; or by neglecting to supply fuel. If it is to be made to burn, it must be nourished with proper care and attention. The Holy Spirit, in his influences on the soul, is here compared with fire that might be made to burn more intensely, or that might be extinguished. In a similar manner the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, “I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up (*αναζωοπυρειν* ^{<329>}, kindle up, cause to burn) the gift of God;” ^{<5006>}2 Timothy 1:6. Anything that will tend to damp the ardor of piety in the soul; to chill our feelings; to render us cold and lifeless in the service of God, may be regarded as “quenching the Spirit.” Neglect of cultivating the Christian graces, or of prayer, of the Bible, of the sanctuary, of a careful watchfulness over the heart, will do it. Worldliness, vanity, levity, ambition, pride, the love of dress, or indulgence in an improper train of thought, will do it. It is a great rule in religion that all the piety which there is in the soul is the fair result of culture. A man has no more religion than he intends to have; he has no graces of the Spirit which he does not seek; he has no deadness to the world which is not the object of his sincere desire, and which he does not aim to have. Any one, if he will, may make elevated attainments in the divine life; or he may make his religion merely a religion of form, and know little of its power and its consolations.

^{<3160>}**1 Thessalonians 5:20.** *Despise not prophesyings* On the subject of prophesyings in the early Christian church, see the notes on ^{<4540>}1

Corinthians 14:1ff. The reference here seems to be to preaching. They were not to undervalue it in comparison with other things. It is possible that in Thessalonica, as appears to have been the case subsequently in Corinth (compare ^{<449>}1 Corinthians 14:19), there were those who regarded the power of working miracles, or of speaking in unknown tongues, as a much more eminent endowment than that of stating the truths of religion in language easily understood. It would not be unnatural that comparisons should be made between these two classes of endowments, much to the disadvantage of the latter; and hence may have arisen this solemn caution not to disregard or despise the ability to make known divine truth in intelligible language. A similar counsel may not be inapplicable to us now. The office of setting forth the truth of God is to be the permanent office in the church; that of speaking foreign languages by miraculous endowment, was to be temporary. But the office of addressing mankind on the great duties of religion, and of publishing salvation, is to be God's great ordinance for converting the world. It should not be despised, and no man commends his own wisdom who contemns it — for:

- (1) It is God's appointment — the means which he has designated for saving people.
- (2) It has too much to entitle it to respect to make it proper to despise or contemn it. There is nothing else that has so much power over mankind as the preaching of the gospel; there is no other institution of heaven or earth among people that is destined to exert so wide and permanent an influence as the Christian ministry.
- (3) It is an influence which is wholly good. No man is made the poorer, or the less respectable, or more miserable in life or in death, by following the counsels of a minister of Christ when he makes known the gospel.
- (4) He who despises it contemns that which is designed to promote his own welfare, and which is indispensable for his salvation. It remains yet to be shown that any man has promoted his own happiness, or the welfare of his family, by affecting to treat with contempt the instructions of the Christian ministry.

^{<450>}**1 Thessalonians 5:21.** *Prove all things* Subject everything submitted to you to be believed to the proper test. The word here used (**δοκιμάζετε** ^{<1381>}), is one that is properly applicable to metals, referring to the art of the assayer, by which the true nature and value of the metal is

tested; see notes, ^{<4013>}1 Corinthians 3:13. This trial was usually made by fire. The meaning here is, that they were carefully to examine everything proposed for their belief. They were not to receive it on trust; to take it on assertion; to believe it because it was urged with vehemence, zeal, or plausibility. In the various opinions and doctrines which were submitted to them for adoption, they were to apply the appropriate tests from reason and the word of God, and what they found to be true they were to embrace; what was false they were to reject. Christianity does not require people to disregard their reason, or to be credulous. It does not expect them to believe anything because others say it is so. It does not make it a duty to receive as undoubted truth all that synods and councils have decreed; or all that is advanced by the ministers of religion. It is, more than any other form of religion, the friend of free inquiry, and would lead people everywhere to understand the reason of the opinions which they entertain; compare ^{<4471>}Acts 17:11,12; ^{<4015>}1 Peter 3:15.

Hold fast that which is good Which is in accordance with reason and the word of God; which is adapted to promote the salvation of the soul and the welfare of society. This is just as much a duty as it is to “prove all things.” A man who has applied the proper tests, and has found out what is truth, is bound to embrace it and to hold it fast. He is not at liberty to throw it away, as if it were valueless; or to treat truth and falsehood alike. It is a duty which he owes to himself and to God to adhere to it firmly, and to suffer the loss of all things rather than to abandon it. There are few more important rules in the New Testament than the one in this passage. It shows what is the true nature of Christianity, and it is a rule whose practical value cannot but be felt constantly in our lives. Other religions require their votaries to receive everything upon trust; Christianity asks us to examine everything. Error, superstition, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free discussion, by saying that there are certain things which are too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands. In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to examine everything — no matter by whom held; by what councils ordained; by what venerableness of antiquity sustained; or by what sacredness it may be invested. We are to receive no opinion until we are convinced that it is true; we are to be subjected to no pains or penalties for not believing what we do not perceive to be true; we are to be prohibited from examining no

opinion which our fellow-men regard as true, and which they seek to make others believe. No popular current in favor of any doctrine; no influence which name and rank and learning can give it, is to commend it to us as certainly worthy of our belief. By whomsoever held, we are to examine it freely before we embrace it; but when we are convinced that it is true, it is to be held, no matter what current of popular opinion or prejudice maybe against it; no matter what ridicule may be poured upon it; and no matter though the belief of it may require us to die a martyr's death.

~~3182~~ **1 Thessalonians 5:22.** *Abstain from all appearance of evil* Not only from evil itself, but from that which seems to be wrong. There are many things which are known to be wrong. They are positively forbidden by the laws of heaven, and the world concurs in the sentiment that they are wicked. But there are also many things about which there may be some reasonable doubt. It is not quite easy to determine in the case what is right or wrong. The subject has not been fully examined, or the question of its morality may be so difficult to settle, that the mind may be nearly or quite balanced in regard to it. There are many things which, in themselves, may not appear to us to be positively wrong, but which are so considered by large and respectable portions of the community; and for us to do them would be regarded as inconsistent and improper. There are many things, also, in respect to which there is great variety of sentiment among mankind — where one portion would regard them as proper, and another as improper. There are things, also, where, whatever may be our motive, we may be certain that our conduct will be regarded as improper. A great variety of subjects, such as those pertaining to dress, amusements, the opera, the ball-room, games of chance and hazard, and various practices in the transaction of business, come under this general class; which, though on the supposition that they cannot be proved to be in themselves positively wrong or forbidden, have much the “appearance” of evil, and will be so interpreted by others. The safe and proper rule is to lean always to the side of virtue. In these instances it may be certain that there will be no sin committed by abstaining; there may be by indulgence. No command of God, or of propriety, will be violated if we decline complying with these customs; but on the other hand we may wound the cause of religion by yielding to what possibly is a mere temptation. No one ever does injury or wrong by abstaining from the pleasures of the ball-room, the theater, or a glass of wine; who can indulge in them without, in the view of large and

respectable portions of the community, doing that which has the “appearance” at least of “evil?”

1 Thessalonians 5:23. *And the very God of peace* The God who gives peace or happiness; compare notes, **Romans 1:7.**

Sanctify you See the notes at **John 17:17.**

Wholly ὁλοτελεις ^{<3651>}. In every part; completely. It is always proper to pray that God would make his people entirely holy. A prayer for perfect sanctification, however, should not be adduced as a proof that it is in fact attained in the present life.

Your whole spirit and soul and body There is an allusion here, doubtless, to the popular opinion in regard to what constitutes man. We have a body; we have animal life and instincts in common with the inferior creation; and we have also a rational and immortal soul. This distinction is one that appears to the mass of people to be true, and the apostle speaks of it in the language commonly employed by mankind. At the same time, no one can demonstrate that it is not founded in truth. The body we see, and there can be no difference of opinion in regard to its existence. The “soul” (ἡ ^{<3588>} ψυχή ^{<5590>}), the vital principle, the animal life, or the seat of the senses, desires, affections, appetites, we have in common with other animals. It pertains to the nature of the animal creation, though more perfect in some animals than in others, but is in all distinct from the soul as the seat of conscience, and as capable of moral agency. See the use of the word in **Matthew 22:37**; **Mark 12:30**; **Luke 10:27**; **12:20**; **Acts 20:10**; **Hebrews 4:12**; **Revelation 8:9**, et al. In the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy this was distinguished from the higher rational nature (ὁ ^{<3588>} νοῦς ^{<3563>}, τὸ ^{<3588>} πνεῦμα ^{<4151>}) as this last belonged to man alone. This “psyche” (ψυχή ^{<5590>}) “soul.” or life, it is commonly supposed, becomes extinct at death. It is so connected with the bodily organization, that when the tissues of the animal frame cease their functions, this ceases also. This was not, however, the opinion of the ancient Greeks. Homer uses the term to denote that which leaves the body with the breath, as escaping from the ἔρκος ^{<3727>} ὀδοντων ^{<3599>} — “the fence or sept of thy teeth” — and as also passing out through a wound. — This ψυχή ^{<5590>} — “psyche” — continued to exist in Hades, and was supposed to have a definite form there, but could not be seized by the hands. **Ody. 2:207.** See “Passow,” 2; compare Prof. Bush, *Anasta.* pp. 72,73. Though

this word, however, denotes the vital principle or the animal life, in man it may be connected with morals — just as the body may be — for it is a part of himself in his present organization, and whatever may be true in regard to the inferior creation, it is his duty to bring his whole nature under law, or so to control it that it may not be an occasion of sin. Hence the apostle prays that the “whole body and soul” — or animal nature — may be made holy. This distinction between the animal life and the mind of man (the “anima” and “animus,” the ψυχη ^{<5590>} and the πνευμα ^{<4151>}), was often made by the ancient philosophers. See Plato, Timae. p. 1048, A. Nemesius, de Nat. Hom. 1 Cited Glyca, p. 70; Lucretius, 3:94; 116,131; Juvenal, 15:146; Cicero, de Divinat. 129, as quoted by Wetstein in loc. A similar view prevailed also among the Jews. rabbi Isaac (Zohar in Leviticus fol. 29,2), says, “Worthy are the righteous in this world and the world to come, for lo, they are all holy; their body is holy, their soul is holy, their spirit and their breath is holy.” Whether the apostle meant to sanction this view, or merely to speak in common and popular language, may indeed be questioned, but there seems to be a foundation for the language in the nature of man. The word here rendered “spirit” (πνευμα ^{<4151>}), refers to the intellectual or higher nature of man; that which is the seat of reason, of conscience, and of responsibility. This is immortal. It has no necessary connection with the body, as animal life or the psyche (ψυχη ^{<5590>}) has, and consequently will be unaffected by death. It is this which distinguishes man from the brute creation; this which allies him with higher intelligences around the throne of God.

Be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ The apostle does not intimate here that either the body or the vital principle will be admitted to heaven, or will be found in a future state of being, whatever may be the truth on that subject. The prayer is, that they might be entirely holy, and be kept from transgression, until the Lord Jesus should come; that is, until he should come either to remove them by death, or to wind up the affairs of this lower world; see the notes on ^{SMD}1 Thessalonians 1:10. By his praying that the “body and the soul” — meaning here the animal nature, the seat of the affections and passions — might be kept holy, there is reference to the fact that, connected as they are with a rational and accountable soul, they may be the occasion of sin. The same natural propensities; the same excitability of passion; the same affections which in a brute would involve no responsibility, and have nothing moral in their character, may be a very different thing in man, who is placed under a

moral law, and who is bound to restrain and govern all his passions by a reference to that law, and to his higher nature. For a cur to snarl and growl; for a lion to roar and rage; for a hyena to be fierce and untameable; for a serpent to hiss and bite, and for the ostrich to leave her eggs without concern (^{<8394>}Job 39:14), involves no blame, no guilt for them, for they are not accountable; but for man to evince the same temper, and the same want of affection, does involve guilt, for he has a higher nature, and all these things should be subject to the law which God has imposed on him as a moral and accountable being. As these things may, therefore, in man be the occasion of sin, and ought to be subdued, there was a fitness in praying that they might be “preserved blameless” to the coming of the Saviour; compare the notes on ^{<4027>}1 Corinthians 9:27.

^{<3124>}**1 Thessalonians 5:24.** *Faithful is he that calleth you* That is, your sanctification after all depends on him, and as he has begun a work of grace in your hearts, you may depend on his faithfulness to complete it; see the notes on ^{<5143>}1 Thessalonians 4:3; ^{<5106>}Philippians 1:6; ^{<4109>}1 Corinthians 1:9.

^{<3125>}**1 Thessalonians 5:25.** *Brethren, pray for us* A request which the apostle often makes; notes on ^{<8138>}Hebrews 13:18. He was a man of like passions as others: liable to the same temptations; engaged in an arduous work; often called to meet with opposition, and exposed to peril and want, and he especially needed the prayers of the people of God. A minister, surrounded as he is by temptations, is in great danger if he has not the prayers of his people. Without those prayers, he will be likely to accomplish little in the cause of his Master. His own devotions in the sanctuary will be formal and frigid, and the word which he preaches will be likely to come from a cold and heavy heart, and to fall also on cold and heavy hearts. There is no way in which a people can better advance the cause of piety in their own hearts, than by praying much for their minister.

^{<3126>}**1 Thessalonians 5:26.** *Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss* see the notes on ^{<6166>}Romans 16:16.

^{<3127>}**1 Thessalonians 5:27.** *I charge you by the Lord* Margin, “adjure.” Greek, “I put you under oath by the Lord” — ^{<3726>}ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς ^{<5209>}τοῦ ^{<3588>}Κυρίου ^{<2962>}. It is equivalent to binding persons by an oath; see the notes on ^{<4063>}Matthew 26:63; compare ^{<0123>}Genesis 21:23,24; 24:3,37; 1. 25.

That this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren To all the church; compare notes on ^{<5046>}Colossians 4:16. The meaning is, that the Epistle was to be read to the whole church on some occasion. on which it was assembled together. It was not merely designed for the individual or individuals into whose hands it might happen to fall, but as it contained matters of common interest, and was designed for the whole body of believers at Thessalonica, the apostle gives a solemn charge that it should not be suppressed or kept from them. Injunctions of this kind occurring in the Epistles, look as if the apostles regarded themselves as under the influence of inspiration, and as having authority to give infallible instructions to the churches.

^{<5138>}**1 Thessalonians 5:28.** *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...* notes, ^{<5161>}Romans 16:20.

In regard to the subscription at the close of the Epistle, purporting that it was written from Athens, see the introduction, section 3. These subscriptions are of no authority, and the one here, like several others, is probably wrong.

From the solemn charge in ^{<5157>}1 Thessalonians 5:27 that “this epistle should be read to all the holy brethren,” that is, to the church at large, we may infer that it is in accordance with the will of God that all Christians should have free access to the Holy Scriptures. What was the particular reason for this injunction in Thessalonica, is not known, but it is possible that an opinion had begun to prevail even then that the Scriptures were designed to be kept in the hands of the ministers of religion, and that their common perusal was to be prohibited. At all events, whether this opinion prevailed then or not, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Holy Spirit, by whom this Epistle was dictated, foresaw that the time would come when this doctrine would be defended by cardinals and popes and councils; and that it would be one of the means by which the monstrous fabric of the Papacy would be sustained and perpetuated. It is worthy of remark, also, that the apostle Paul, in his epistles to the Thessalonians, has dwelt more fully on the fact that the great apostasy would occur under the Papacy, and on the characteristics of that grand usurpation over the rights of people, than he has anywhere else in his Epistle; see ^{<5121>}2 Thessalonians 2:11. It is no improbable supposition that with reference to that, and to counteract one of its leading dogmas, his mind was supernaturally directed to give this solemn injunction, that the contents of the Epistle which he had written

should be communicated without reserve to all the Christian brethren in Thessalonica. In view of this injunction, therefore, at the close of this Epistle, we may remark:

(1) that it is a subject of express divine command that the people should have access to the Holy Scriptures. So important was this considered, that it was deemed necessary to enjoin those who should receive the word of God, under the solemnities of an oath, and by all the force of apostolic authority, to communicate what they had received to others.

(2) This injunction had reference to all the members of the church, for they were all to be made acquainted with the word of God. The command is, indeed, that it be “read” to them, but by parity of reasoning it would follow that it was to be in their hands; that it was to be accessible to them; that it was in no manner to be withheld from them. Probably many of them could not read, but in some way the contents of revelation were to be made known to them — and not by preaching only, but by reading the words of inspiration. No part was to be kept back; nor were they to be denied such access that they could fully understand it; nor was it to be insisted on that there should be an authorized expounder of it. It was presumed that all the members of the church were qualified to understand what had been written to them, and to profit by it. It follows therefore,

(3) that there is great iniquity in all those decisions and laws which are designed to keep the Scriptures from the common people. This is true:

(a) in reference to the Papal communion, and to all the ordinances there which prohibit the free circulation of the Sacred Volume among the people;

(b) it is true of all those laws in slave-holding communities which prohibit slaves from being taught to read the Scriptures; and

(c) it is true of all the opinions and dogmas which prevail in any community where the right of “private judgment” is denied, and where free access to the volume of inspiration is forbidden. The richest blessing of heaven to mankind is the Bible; and there is no book ever written so admirably adapted to the common mind, and so fitted to elevate the sunken, the ignorant, and the degraded. There is no more decided enemy of the progress of the human race in intelligence, purity, and freedom, than he who prevents the free circulation of this holy volume; and there is no

sincerer friend of the species than he who “causes it to be read by all,” and who contributes to make it accessible to all the families and all the inhabitants of the world.