

Blessed Assurance

A 4 Blocks Study of the Book of 1 Thessalonians

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14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Book Introduction

Authorship

“Paul is widely regarded as the author of 1 Thessalonians, as evidenced by how compatible the vocabulary, style, and theology are with his other letters. The mention of Silas (“Silvanus”) and Timothy as co-senders (1:1) may indicate Paul’s care to present the missionaries as a united band in order to offset any Thessalonian disappointment that Paul had not come to visit them again but had sent Timothy instead (see 2:17–18; 3:1–2, 6, 11).”¹

Setting

Thessalonica was the capital city of Macedonia (a Roman province). Its population was over 100,000, which meant this was a rather large city in the Roman Empire. Being a natural harbor city, many passed through and lived in the city from a variety of different backgrounds. It was “a flourishing center of trade and philosophy” (*). The area commonly followed religions such as the Greco-Roman Pantheon (The group of gods worshipped in ancient Greek and Roman mythology) and the Emperor’s cult. Egyptians and Jews were also common in the area.²

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Earlier in his ministry, Paul, accompanied by Timothy and Silas preached in the Thessalonian synagogues over the course of three weeks. Their ministry was fruitful, with many Jews and Gentiles coming to belief and salvation through Jesus. This was abruptly ended after people reported them to the local government, the people claimed Paul and his companions were stirring people against Caesar.

Some time later, Timothy had gone to visit the church in Thessalonica, and had reported what he had seen to Paul. 1 Thessalonians was the response to Timothy’s report. Written around 49-51 AD, the letter addresses the questions of the believers in Thessalonica about such things as Jesus’ return, deceased believers, and final salvation. Paul also addresses the concerns of the people on the persecutions they had been subject to, as well as whether or not Paul would return to Thessalonica. In his letter, Paul sought to reassure the people of the hope they have in Christ, in light of recent deaths in their congregation as they await Christ’s return.³

¹ Crossway Bibles, [*The ESV Study Bible*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2301.

² *ESV study bible: English standard version.* (2023).

³ *ESV study bible: English standard version.* (2023).

Key Themes⁴

1. The wrath of God comes on those who reject the gospel. 2:16; 5:3
2. Jesus' death and resurrection are the basis for the Christian's hope. 4:14; 5:10
3. Christians are destined not for wrath but for salvation at Jesus' coming. 1:10; 5:4, 9
4. Christians who die will participate fully in the second coming. 4:14–17; 5:10
5. Those who respond to the gospel have been elected by God in prehistory and called by God, and they continue to be called by God throughout their earthly lives. 1:4; 2:12; 4:7; 5:9, 24
6. Christians should live lives of comprehensive holiness. 3:13; 4:3–8; 5:23
7. Christians must never shirk their responsibility to work. 4:9–12; 5:14
8. The authenticity of the gospel is confirmed by the integrity of its preachers. 1:5; 2:1–12
9. Joy, especially in suffering, is a mark of the Christian. 1:6; 5:16
10. Christians experience the realities of the prophesied new covenant. 4:8–9
11. Faith, hope, and love are essential and universal traits of the Christian. 1:2–3; 5:8

⁴ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2303.

Repeated Words

θεός (*theos*) God - 36x
ὤμας (*humas*) you - 32x
ἡμῶν (*hēmōn*) of us - 32x
ὤμων (*humōn*) of you - 28x
εἰς (*eis*) toward - 26x
κύριος (*kurios*) lord: God - 24x
ἀδελφός (*adelfos*) brother - 19x
οὐ (*ou*) no - 18x
πᾶς (*pas*) all - 17x
Ἰησοῦς (*iēsous*) Jesus - 17x
ὤμῖν (*humin*) to you - 14x
μή (*mē*) not - 13x
ἀλλά (*alla*) but - 13x
οἶδα (*oida*) to know - 13x
εἰμί (*eimi*) to be - 12x
γίνομαι (*ginomai*) to be - 12x
ἀπό (*apo*) away from - 11x
καθώς (*kathōs*) as/just as - 11x
διὰ (*dia*) through/because of - 10x
Χριστός (*christos*) Christ - 10x
ὤμεῖς (*humeis*) you - 10x
ἡμᾶς (*hēmas*) us - 10x
λόγος (*logos*) word - 9x
ὅτι (*hoti*) that/since: that - 8x
πίστις (*pistis*) faith - 8x
παρακαλέω (*parakaleō*) to plead/comfort - 8x
ἡμεῖς (*hēmeis*) we - 7x
ἐπὶ (*epi*) upon/to/against - 6x
ἡμέρα (*hēmera*) day - 6x
οὔτε (*oute*) neither - 6x
εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*) gospel - 6x
νύξ (*nux*) night - 6x
πάντοτε (*pantote*) always - 6x
ἄνθρωπος (*anthrōpos*) a human - 5x
πατήρ (*patēr*) father - 5x
ὅτι (*hoti*) that/since: since - 5x
πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) spirit/breath: spirit - 5x
πιστεύω (*pisteuō*) to trust (in) - 5x
ζᾶω (*zaō*) to live - 5x
ἀγάπη (*agapē*) love - 5x
ἀλλήλων (*allēlōn*) one another - 5x

People/Places in Context of 1 Thess.

Paul

- ❖ Writer of 1 Thess. And most of the letters in the New Testament
- ❖ Apostle of Christ, Early Missionary
- ❖ See [Authorship](#)

Silvanus

- ❖ Also known as Silas
- ❖ A partner to Paul, accompanied him on his second missionary journey
- ❖ Acts refers to him as Paul's chosen partner after he departed from Barnabas

Timothy

- ❖ Timothy, of Lystra in south Galatia, was a son of a Jewish mother and Greek father
- ❖ He became partners with Paul when Paul passed through his hometown early on his second journey.
- ❖ Timothy had just returned from a visit to the Thessalonian church, and his report is Paul's major source of information as he writes⁵

Macedonia

- ❖ Macedonia A region within the Balkan Peninsula north of Greece. The name of an ancient kingdom and Roman province. The Apostle Paul conducted mission work in Macedonia, planting churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and probably Beroea.
- ❖ Macedonia's inhabitants shared various religious and cultural features with the Greek world⁶

Achaia

- ❖ ACHAIA (Ἀχαΐα, Achaia). A Roman province that included most of southern and central Greece, with its capital in Corinth.⁷
- ❖ A place that was influenced by the faith of the believers from Thessalonica

⁵ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2305.

⁶ Paul A. Hartog, "Macedonia," in The Lexham Bible Dictionary, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁷ John D. Barry, David Bomar, et al., eds., "Achaia," in The Lexham Bible Dictionary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).



Week 1 | 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

See [Book Introduction](#)

Summarize the Passage

“Paul begins by greeting the Thessalonian church and expressing gratitude for their faith, love, and hope. He commends them for their work produced by faith and their labor prompted by love. Paul shares how the Gospel came to them not only in words but also in power and the Holy Spirit, leading to their transformation. The Thessalonians became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Paul highlights their turn from idols to serve the living God and to wait for Jesus, who delivers them from the coming wrath.”⁸

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

People or places, see [People/Places in Context of 1 Thess.](#)

Definitions:

“Affliction”

- ❖ θλίψις (thlipsis) pressure

“Idols”

- ❖ εἰδωλον (eidolon) idol

“Wrath”

- ❖ ὀργή (orgē) wrath

Questions:

What was the “affliction” the Thessalonians were facing?

- ❖ Acts 17:5–9
- ❖ As Paul and Silas evangelized in Thessalonica, some believed, but many did not. Opposition rose up from the Jews. They went to the city officials, and riots formed to run them out of town.
- ❖ A man named Jason was the owner of the host home Paul and Silas stayed in during their time in Thessalonica. The Jews persecuted him as well.
- ❖ They referred to these new believers as “These men who have turned the world upside down.”

⁸ (“STEP Bible”, n.d.judgment)

- ❖ Eventually, this riot faded out, but affliction in the form of persecution had continued.

What was the “wrath” that Paul spoke of here?

He is likely referring to the day of the Lord mentioned in 1 Thess. 5, where judgement will come for those who are not believers⁹: 1 Thess. 5:1–5 says the Day of the Lord will come like a “thief in the night”

- ❖ Sudden destruction is coming
- ❖ The Believers, however, are “children of the light” so this day will not surprise them
- ❖ Jesus delivers them from the destruction (or wrath) to come

What idols were being worshiped?

Many of the believers had previously worshiped idols. The Roman Imperial Cult was the most common, though Greek and Egyptian deities were worshiped as well.

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

ἐν (en) in/on/among - 10x

θεός (theos) God - 7x

κύριος (kurios) lord: God - 4x

Ἰησοῦς (iēsous) Jesus - 4x

ἡμῶν (hēmōn) of us - 7x

ὁμῶν (humōn) of you - 6x

ὁμας (humas) you - 4x

γίνομαι (ginomai) to be - 4x

ἀπό (apo) away from - 4x

λόγος (logos) word - 3x

ὁμῖν (humin) to you - 2x

οἶδα (oida) to know - 2x

Χριστός (christos) Christ - 2x

πίστις (pistis) faith - 2x

πατήρ (patēr) father - 2x

πνεῦμα (pneuma) spirit/breath: spirit - 2x

Book Themes:

Faith, Love, and Hope (v. 3)

⁹ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008)

Jesus' Second Coming (vv. 3, 10)

- ❖ Hope in His return

Faith in suffering, Persecution (v. 6)

Scripture References:

"Grace to you and peace"

- ❖ A common greeting in many of Paul's letters, as well as other writers

Other references to "Faith, Hope, and Love"

- ❖ (cf. 5:8; Rom. 5:2–5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5–6; Eph. 4:2–5¹⁰)

The affliction they faced in Thessalonica, see [Affliction](#)

- ❖ (Acts 17:5-9, 2 Thess. 2:14)

¹⁰ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2305.

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Faith is often hard for us (v.3)

- ❖ Verse 3 references the "work of faith" of the Thessalonian church
- ❖ To some extent, this faithful living is not in our nature
- ❖ What makes this even harder is that our faith is often met by opposition from the Enemy or other people

We have a need for Him to choose us (v. 4)

- ❖ Because of our sinful nature, we have a desperate need for Him to reach out and call us into a close, saving relationship with Him

Much affliction, persecution (v. 6)

- ❖ When people's lives are radically changed by the Gospel, they often face opposition and persecution from the Enemy and nonbelievers

Idolatry (v. 9)

- ❖ Idolatry occurs in all of our lives
- ❖ This happens when we see something as more important than God
- ❖ Often this looks like us placing our hope, worth, and identity in something of this world
- ❖ In biblical times, people would worship non-living, wooden or stone idols rather than the true and living God. This is essentially what we do when we put worldly things ahead of Him.
- ❖ Psalm 115 speaks of these idols, saying they cannot hear, speak, or feel, and those who worship them become like them

The wrath to come, judgment (v. 10)

- ❖ Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned, because of this, we cannot stand in the righteous judgement of a perfect God, we don't live up to the standard
- ❖ Because of this, wrath and judgement come in the Day of the Lord, and sinners who don't follow God as their Lord and Savior will have to face this wrath

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

You are His (v. 1)

- ❖ You are in God the Father and Jesus our Lord (v.1), you are under His protection, you are close to His heart, you are under His gaze, you are connected to Him, you are with Him. You are His. That is your identity.¹¹

He is the source of grace and peace (v. 1)

- ❖ Paul's greeting wishes the very blessings that God provides, for the Thessalonians and for Paul

Jesus Christ brings us hope (v. 3)

- ❖ As sinners, we were destined for hope and wrath from a just God
- ❖ Jesus paid the price for our sins, and will deliver us when He returns
- ❖ Rest in this "hope that will not put us to shame" (Romans 5:5)

God's love and sovereignty, He chose His Church (v. 4)

- ❖ This is an incredible truth: The Holy God of the Universe, who created all and is over all, chooses His Church

Spirit's transformative power (vv. 5-10)

- ❖ His Spirit should transform our lives and the world around us, just as it did for the Thessalonians

In Christ, there is joy in affliction (v. 6)

- ❖ Believers are not promised a life of peace. In fact, Scripture says that, in some ways, our lives will get harder when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior
- ❖ What we are promised, however, is that Christ is closer than any affliction we will face in this world
- ❖ Through Christ, we can have unexplainable joy, strength, and peace in the midst of these afflictions

Faith in His name spreads across the world (v. 8)

- ❖ His truth in this Gospel message is so life-changing that it can bring revival, spreading like wildfire to unreached people

He is living and true (v. 9)

- ❖ Our God is unlike any false god or idol we see in other cultures

¹¹ Duncan, 2023

- ❖ Our God is living, near, and true
- ❖ He is not dead like the idols, He is not distant, and He is more real than we could ever imagine
- ❖ When we chase after false gods, we become like them: numb, dead, and left in darkness, but when we follow the true, living God, we become children of the light, experiencing life in ways we never have before

He is coming, and He delivers us (v.10)

- ❖ The hope Paul talks about comes from trusting that the Lord is in control and Jesus will return as He promised
- ❖ Because we trust in His promise, we know that He will return and save His people from the destruction that is to come
- ❖ Though we bet it all on this hope, Jesus provides us a “hope that will not put us to shame” (Romans 5:5) because He comes through every time

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

Our hope lies in Jesus' promise, that He will return from the dead and deliver His people. We have no other hope. It is only because of who He is and what He did on the Cross that we are able to leave a life of sin behind, for our lives have been transformed.

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Give thanks to God for your co-laborers in the gospel, your brothers and sisters in Christ (v.2)

Work in faith, Labor in love, Be steadfast in hope (v.3)

- ❖ Paul opens his letter encouraging these believers for these three things
- ❖ These are three marks of true believers: to step out and work in acts of faith, to work to love and serve those around us, and to hold firm to the hope of Jesus despite distractions or lies

Respond to conviction (v. 5)

- ❖ Once saved, believers receive the Spirit who convicts and leads people in the way of the Lord
- ❖ Our job as Christians, is to draw near to the Spirit as He draws near to us, understanding how He is leading us and yielding to His direction
- ❖ This is what makes our lives look so different after salvation

Faith should produce fruit (v. 5)

- ❖ Conversion and faith leads to a brand new life, you are BORN AGAIN
- ❖ Does this mean you will be perfect after becoming a Christian? No. But it does mean that you have a relationship with the Almighty, and the ability to abide in His presence and be transformed by the only One who can bring true change. So
- ❖ What if the Holy Spirit's Transformative power doesn't change us as much as it changed them?
 - Don't lose heart
 - Abide more in His presence
 - Yield more to His what He is trying to do in your life
 - Note that these are not active commands, its fruitless to wear yourself thin trying to create this change for yourself, because only He can provide it

In your affliction, receive the Word with joy (v. 6)

- ❖ Don't be surprised when affliction comes to you, even though you are in Christ
- ❖ Everyone has afflictions, often Christians have more, but the distinction is that they have joy in the midst of it
- ❖ As Christians we know that whatever we lose, we cannot lose Christ

Be an example to believers (vv. 7-8)

- ❖ Spread His Word
- ❖ Both by words and actions
- ❖ Live in a way that is worth imitating, do this by imitating Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit
- ❖ If people were to imitate you, what would be the result?

Turn and Serve (v.9)

- ❖ Paul sees evidence of their salvation in the fact that they repented (turned away) from their old ways of life, and committed to a life of service to the Lord
- ❖ We are called to do the same things with our personal idols

Wait and hope in Him (vv. 3, 10)

- ❖ Be patient for the Lord to do His work in this world and in your life
- ❖ "Make the Gospel visible" by living a life that is consistent with the Good News and its transforming power¹²
- ❖ Find peace in the fact that the Lord delivers His people

Big Idea:

Rest secure in and be transformed by the Gospel. It is the source of all hope and peace for those who are in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹² Duncan, 2023

Week 2 | 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

In Chapter 1, Paul opens by encouraging the believers in Thessalonica. He recounts their strong faith, hope, and love as a church, and their radical transformation that came about as the Gospel came to them in power. He affirms their status as believers, saying that it is clear that they are secure in their faith, as evidenced by this transformation. Even more so, this Word has gone out and spread to the surrounding cities. He finishes with a message of hope, calling them to wait for the Lord's eventual return.

Summarize the Passage

Paul seems to make a defense for his conduct during his first visit. He recounts the purpose and the boldness he and his companions were driven by when they came to proclaim the Gospel. He then goes on to explain how they came in truth with pure motives, to preach the Gospel in a way that was entirely loving to the people in Thessalonica. This may have been difficult and required some sacrifice, but it was worth it to encourage and exhort the people in Thessalonica who were called to God's Kingdom and Way.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions¹³:

"In vain"

- ❖ κενός (kenos) empty
 - pointless, without purpose

"Flattery"

- ❖ κολακεία (kolakeia) flattery
 - excessive or insincere praise

"Pretext for greed"

- ❖ πρόφασις (profasis) pretense
- ❖ πλεονεξία (pleonexia) greediness
 - misleading appearance/behavior where people might assume there was greedy intent

"Apostles"

- ❖ ἀπόστολος (apostolos) apostle, representative

¹³ <https://www.dictionary.com/>

- One called by God to take His message into the world (“one who is sent out”)
- Specifically for Paul, these were a select few people, including Paul and the original disciples, that had special authority to proclaim the Gospel with power as Jesus commanded
- If Jesus was a sheriff, these men were deputies, not equal in rank but could rightly claim the authority of the sheriff wherever they went

“Exhort”

- ❖ παρακαλέω (parakaleō) to plead/comfort
 - to urge, advise, or caution earnestly
 - Could be a call/invitation into something that the exhorter is already in

Questions:

What happened in Philippi?

Acts 16:19-39

- ❖ In these verses, Paul and Silas stayed in Philippi on their way to Macedonia
- ❖ They converted many, one of whom was a young girl who had a spirit which allowed her to tell fortunes. Paul and Silas cast the spirit out of the girl, leading to a revolt in the city. Paul and Silas were beaten badly and thrown into prison.

“Despite experiencing fierce persecution in Philippi, Paul did not shrink from proclaiming the Gospel in Thessalonica, even when it led to further suffering”¹⁴

Why does Paul feel the need to defend himself?

- ❖ Paul opens up this chapter by explaining his motives and methods for ministry in Thessalonica
- ❖ It seems as though this passage is in direct response to accusations against Paul that are not known to us
- ❖ John Stott, in his book *The Message of the Thessalonians*, attempts to lay out potential grievances from these Thessalonian dissenters:
 - “He ran away... and hasn’t been heard from since! Obviously he’s insincere, driven by the most selfish motives. He’s just one of those many phony teachers who tramp up and down the Egnatian Way. In other words he’s a fraud. He’s in his job only for what he can get out of it in terms of money, prestige, or power. So when opposition arose, he found himself in personal

¹⁴ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008)

danger, he took to his heels and ran! He doesn't care about you Thessalonian disciples of his; he has abandoned you! He's much more concerned about his skin than your welfare."¹⁵

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

ἐν (en) in/on/among - 10x

θεός (theos) God - 7x

ἡμῶν (hēmōn) of us - 7x

ὕμῶν (humōn) of you - 6x

ὕμᾱς (humas) you - 4x

κύριος (kurios) lord: God - 4x

Ἰησοῦς (iēsous) Jesus - 4x

γίνομαι (ginomai) to be - 4x

ἀπό (apo) away from - 4x

λόγος (logos) word - 3x

Χριστός (christos) Christ - 2x

πίστις (pistis) faith - 2x

πατήρ (patēr) father - 2x

πνεῦμα (pneuma) spirit/breath: spirit - 2x

Book Themes:

- ❖ Proclaiming the Gospel even in suffering
- ❖ The Kingdom/Family of Christ
- ❖ Works of Faith

References:

- ❖ Acts 16:19-24 → The “affliction in Philippi”

Other Literary Elements:

- ❖ Father and Mother imagery

¹⁵ The Message of the Thessalonians, Stott, p 46

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Accusations and Mistrust (v. 1-12)

- ❖ Paul opens this chapter by providing a defense for himself, as if his methods and motives had been challenged
- ❖ His message was good and true, yet people still tried to push false claims against him
- ❖ See [Why was Paul defending himself?](#)

Suffering and Shameful Treatment (v. 2)

- ❖ The truth is that bad things often happen to good people, Scripture promises that when we proclaim the Gospel, there are times that we will be met with opposition.
- ❖ This shows the sinful nature of this world, that even perfect truth drives people to hatred and conflict

Everything Paul Claims he is Not:

- ❖ **Error, impurity, and deception in speech**
- ❖ **Pleasing Man Over God**
- ❖ **Flattery**
- ❖ **Greed**
- ❖ **Seeking Glory**
- ❖ **Making Demands/Entitlement**
 - It's likely that many teachers had come through the city of Thessalonica before. Often they were driven by these motives, so it makes sense that some accused Paul of being like them.
 - Our nature is to be self-serving, so it is common for us to work with sinful intentions or methods like those above^

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

God and His Gospel Give Us Boldness (v. 2)

- ❖ If the message they were preaching was not true, there is no way Paul and Silas would proclaim it in such a dangerous city
- ❖ It was only through the power of the Holy Spirit and the truth of the message they carried that they were able to go into a violent place with great boldness

The Truth of the Gospel is Worth the Work, Sacrifice, and Suffering of this World (vv. 2,8,9)

- ❖ V. 2 - They knew they would suffer from persecution in Thessalonica
- ❖ V. 8 - They loved the Thessalonian church so much that they gave themselves, serving them with sacrificial love
- ❖ V. 9 - They worked day and night so that they could hear the Gospel and pay them nothing for it
- ❖ They counted the cost, and the glory of the Gospel was worth every hardship

God Tests Our Hearts (v. 4)

- ❖ He is the perfect judge
- ❖ He is personally with you as you go out, steering your heart toward Him

The Opposite of the Temptations/False Claims Paul Faced:

- ❖ **Truth, Purity, Honesty (v. 3)**
- ❖ **Pleasing God over man (v. 4)**
- ❖ **Selflessness, Pure Motives (v. 5)**
- ❖ **Emptying Yourself in Humility (v. 6)**
 - ❖ In 1 Corinthians 1:11, Paul says to the Corinthian church, "imitate me as I imitate Christ". In all of his righteousness (pure motives, selfless nature, sacrificial love) we see a glimpse of God's perfect righteousness.
 - ❖ Paul was only able to live above reproach and act with pure motives because of the transforming nature of the Spirit
 - ❖ It is our nature to be selfish and sinful, but as we abide with Christ we can be empowered to share the Gospel like Paul and Silas did[^]
 - "Paul taught us not to make human praise the motive for doing right, but to do what is worthy of praise for

the sake of others. Good people are content with doing good.”¹⁶

Gentleness (v. 7)

- ❖ Paul makes a shocking comparison, describing his relationship with these young believers as one like that of a nursing mother
- ❖ This is exactly how Christ loves us. Though we are helpless and completely dependent on Him, He meets us in our weakness with love and gentleness

Pouring out oneself, sacrificial love (vv. 8-9)

- ❖ Paul and Silas loved the Thessalonians so deeply that they made sacrifices, humbling themselves to serve this young church
- ❖ They gave “their own selves” out of love

Encouragement and Exhortation Out of Love (v. 12)

- ❖ Driven by his love, Paul calls these believers to a heavenly standard
- ❖ Just like earlier in the text, Paul compares himself to a parent. Rather than a mother this time, he compares himself to a father in how he “exhorted [...] and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God,”
- ❖ God has a standard of righteousness, and He uses other believers as His method of stirring people along toward that standard

God Calls Us Into His Own Kingdom and Glory (v. 12)

- ❖ This theme of God calling the Thessalonian people into a new family/Kingdom continues as they are called to the same “kingdom and glory” as other believers
- ❖ This means unity under His Kingship and separation from the sinful standards of the world as we pursue His glorious calling

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

As Jesus walked on this Earth, He was the perfection of everything Paul claims in this passage. He spoke complete truth, He gently loved, humbly served despite His divine authority, and did it all for the glory of God. He is the reason we have this Gospel to proclaim and He strengthens us as He sends us out. Now He is seated at the right hand of the King we serve, as He calls us into His Kingdom and glory.

¹⁶ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Church History Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2023)

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Boldly Proclaim the Gospel

- ❖ Paul and Silas carried the Gospel boldly into a place where they knew they would meet suffering.
- ❖ When suffering came, they were forced to flee, but Paul still cares for the people of this church and their growth.
- ❖ Notice that the motivation for this was love (v. 8) and out of this love they gave the Good News and even gave their “very own selves”, making sacrifices out of love for this group.

Live Above Reproach

- ❖ Living above reproach means to act in a way that is blameless.
- ❖ Obviously no one is perfect, Paul and Silas included, but they acted in such a way that no one had any right to accuse them of any wrongdoing.
- ❖ Paul is able to give an honest account of his actions and intentions to deny any false accusations that came his way. We must be prepared to do the same.

Listen to God as He tests your heart

- ❖ He is a perfect judge, knowing your heart intimately
- ❖ As God tests our heart, He reveals any sinful way within us (Psalm 139:23-24)

Don't Let the Glory of Man Outweigh God

- ❖ Our intentions when serving, loving, or ministering to others should be to honor God
- ❖ Don't compromise what God has called you to by seeking the approval of man

Love Sacrificially

- ❖ Paul worked hard to set an example for us to love and serve believers or those we are ministering to

- ❖ Jesus did this (Philippians 2:7) by serving those around Him, though they were sinners
- ❖ He even expanded this sacrificial love to His enemies

Know Who Your King is

- ❖ The Gospel has a lot of incredible promises of present goodness and future glory, but to be called into a kingdom means to submit to the King
- ❖ This means that no other person, gift, accomplishment, or desire should sit on the throne of your heart

Know Where Your Glory Lies

- ❖ If we are not confident of our glory in Heaven, we will be tempted to seek glory and riches in this life (these could be approval, fame, pleasure, money, etc.)
- ❖ We need to be looking ahead at our reward in Heaven, not forfeiting it because we long for our reward today (Matthew 6)

Big Idea:

The King has called you. Bow down at His throne and walk in a manner worthy of Him.

Week 3 | 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

Chapter 2 opened up with Paul defending the motives and methods of his ministry alongside Silas. He explained that in going to Thessalonica to proclaim the Gospel, he was driven by love and pure motives and that he walked blamelessly among them so they would have no reason to doubt. Because of the truth of the Gospel, Paul felt boldness to minister even in suffering. Throughout his time, he loved gently like a mother and encouraged/exhorted strongly as a father to the Thessalonian believers. He ends by pointing to God, saying that He calls us into His Kingdom and Glory.

Summarize the Passage

Paul continues by thanking the Lord for the belief of the Thessalonians. Being an apostle of the Lord, he claims a sort of divine authority on the Gospel he and Silas preached. Comparing the Thessalonian church to the church in Judea, he once again commends them for their faith in the midst of opposition. It was the mission of the Jews in Judea to stop the Gospel from being spread to the Gentiles. Not only was this opposing the church in Judea, but it “opposed all mankind”, getting in the way of God’s plan to spread the Gospel to the ends of the Earth.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions:

“Receive”

- ❖ παραλαμβάνω (paralambanō) to take
 - To take along, to take with

“Became imitators”

- ❖ μιμητής (mimētēs) imitator
 - “Became” is a past tense word which means the action is happening to them. The Thessalonians didn’t make themselves imitators, the Word of God at work in them made them imitators.

Questions:

What opposition did the church in Judea face? And how did they respond?

- ❖ “The Thessalonians have endured afflictions from their own countrymen, just as the Jewish Christians in Judea were enduring afflictions from their countrymen, the Jews”¹⁷
- ❖ Jews in Judea were divided, some followed Jesus while others refused to believe that He was the Messiah. The non-Christian Jews persecuted those who believed and further attempted to prevent the Gospel from spreading to the Gentiles
- ❖ The Church in Judea held firm in their faith during this time of intense persecution, just as the Thessalonians later did

What does “fill up the measure of their sins” mean?¹⁸

- ❖ Our God is patient and longsuffering. Any sin grieves His heart, but He patiently gives us mercy. Eventually though, when a person rejects the Gospel and Jesus as the Messiah (as these specific Jews in Judea had), they “fill up the measure of their sins”, meaning that they have pushed past the point of God’s loving patience, and He gives them over to their sins. This means that His wrath will be poured out in full.
- ❖ Imagine if God gives us a bucket, and, though we are undeserving, He gives us grace as long as that bucket is not completely full. These Jews sinned to the point where that bucket was filled up, meaning that they sinned to the point where God was no longer willing to withhold His judgement.

How has wrath come upon the Jews in Judea?¹⁹

- ❖ Essentially, the Jews are struggling, but there are a few different options that Paul is potentially pointing toward
- ❖ He could mean:
 - The Judean famine (44-47 AD)
 - The riot and massacre in Jerusalem (48-49 AD)
 - The expulsion of the Jews from Rome (49 AD)
 - Or in the future: The destruction of the Temple in 70 AD
 - Many theologians think it is this. Though it happened in the future, their punishment was certain by the time that Paul wrote the letter to the Thessalonians
 - Far future: ultimate judgment at Jesus’ Second Coming that is so sure it can be spoken of as if it has already happened

¹⁷ Duncan, 2023

¹⁸ Riley, Mike. “The Phrase ‘Fill Up Their Sins’ — A Question.” GEWatkins.net, <https://gewatkins.net/the-phrase-fill-up-their-sins-a-question/>. Accessed 28 Jan. 2026.

¹⁹ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008)

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

- ❖ θεός (theos) God - 14x
- ❖ ἐν (en) in/on/among - 13x
- ❖ ἡμῶν (hēmōn) of us - 9x
- ❖ ὑμᾶς (humas) you - 7x
- ❖ ὑμῶν (humōn) of you - 7x
- ❖ γάρ (gar) for - 7x
- ❖ ἀδελφός (adelfos) brother - 4x
- ❖ οἶδα (oida) to know - 4x
- ❖ εἰμί (eimi) to be - 4x
- ❖ λόγος (logos) word - 4x
- ❖ ἑαυτοῦ (heautou) himself - 4x
- ❖ εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) gospel - 4x
- ❖ ἄνθρωπος (anthrōpos) a human - 4x
- ❖ Ἰησοῦς (iēsous) Jesus - 3x

Definitions²⁰:

- ❖ “Judea” - Originally the nation of Judah, then became a Roman province called Judea, Jerusalem is the capital
 - The earliest gatherings of Believers were the churches in Judea
- ❖ “Gentiles” - non-Jews
- ❖ “Receive” - To take with you, to take along

Book Themes:

- ❖ Imitators (v. 14)
- ❖ Faith in suffering (v. 14)
- ❖ Coming Wrath and Justice (v. 16)

References:

- ❖ Matthew 23:29-35
 - Jesus addresses the Judean Jews using language that Paul would later imitate in 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16
 - They were referred to as “murderers of the prophets”²¹
 - Jesus said they were offspring of those who murdered the prophets in the earlier ages, and that they would do many similar acts in the near future

²⁰ <https://www.dictionary.com/>

²¹ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008)

- Paul criticizes the Judean Jews, saying they have done what Jesus predicted and have continued to do so

Other Literary Elements:

- ❖ Comparison
 - Paul likens the church in Thessalonica to the church in Judea, comparing the suffering and opposition faced by the churches
- ❖ Case Study
 - Paul seems to take a break from addressing the Thessalonian church to focus on the opposition of the Jews in Judea

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

The Word of Man has no power to save (v. 13)

- ❖ If the Thessalonians would have taken Paul's words as the simple words of man, they would have abandoned the message or remained unchanged by it

Suffering because of the Gospel (vv. 14-15)

- ❖ The Gospel is naturally offensive, it goes against the ways of the culture around us
- ❖ Often the true Gospel will get met with opposition (persecution, judgement, ostracizing) from sinful or legalistic unbelievers

Man's violent opposition to the Gospel (v. 15)

- ❖ The Gospel will sometimes upset hard-hearted souls so much that they resort to violence
- ❖ When people persecute believers, Jesus makes it clear that they persecute Jesus Himself²² (Acts 9:4)

Division, Gatekeeping, Selfishness (v. 16)

- ❖ When we see the saving grace of the Gospel, we should want to go out and share it. Often though, we hold it with tight hands, either neglecting to or refusing to share it with others
- ❖ How might we act like the Jews in today's world?

Wrath is coming (and has come for some) (v. 16)

- ❖ Our consistent, unrepentant sin provokes the just wrath of an all-powerful God. We are sinners deserving His wrath and need a Savior to deliver us

²² Duncan, 2023 (58)

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

He gives us blessings to be grateful for (v.13)

- ❖ Not only was Paul expressing gratitude in general, he was specifically thanking God for the work done in the lives of other believers²³
- ❖ This is unity of the body. Any God-honoring transformation in the lives of other believers gives Paul great joy and thankfulness

His Word is true, and it has power to transform (v. 13)

- ❖ Paul is simply a vessel by which God uses His Word to reach the hearts of sinners. The Gospel he preached was not simply the words of man²⁴
- ❖ This is why his message was transformative, for the Word of God is living and active, it's transformative (Hebrews 4:12)

God gives us His son and veteran believers to imitate (v. 14)

- ❖ God is the ultimate substance of what is worth imitating. The church at Thessalonica imitated what was done at the church in Judea by holding onto their faith in the midst of suffering. In turn they became worth imitating themselves

The Gospel is worth suffering for (v. 14)

- ❖ God allows us to go through trials for His name, but He strengthens us in them → He who is in you is stronger than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4)
- ❖ In doing this, we are connected with Christ who suffered for our sake, to Deliver us from the wrath to come

God's ultimate plan is salvation to all peoples (v. 16)

- ❖ It was God's plan from the beginning to save the Gentiles along with the Jews
- ❖ All are united in Christ, regardless of any prior difference (1 Corinthians 12:13)

God's just wrath (v. 16)

- ❖ He is a God that does not let sin go unpunished, all who oppose Him will fall

²³ Duncan, 2023 (53)

²⁴ Duncan, 2023 (54)

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

Jesus faced direct persecution for this. Though He was undeserving, He was constantly persecuted (and continues to be persecuted) for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of salvation (to the Jews and Gentiles). In our suffering for the sake of the Gospel, we get a taste of the sufferings of Jesus, and thus draw closer to Him.

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Give gratitude

- ❖ Express gratitude to God and others for how He is moving in the lives of fellow believers
- ❖ This turns us from grumblers into grateful. It promotes a culture of selflessness, humility, and encouragement

Don't be surprised when suffering comes for the sake of the Gospel

- ❖ 1 Peter 4:12 → Don't be surprised when the fiery trial comes!!
- ❖ Be bold in living out the Gospel, even if it causes some conflict
 - This does not mean to be hurtful or hateful with the Gospel, but simply hold strong to Christ-like convictions and don't be surprised when people have an issue with it
- ❖ 1 Peter 4:12-19 → "entrust your souls to the faithful Creator while doing good"

Take Scripture as the Word of God, not the word of man

- ❖ Stop reading the Bible as a suggestion, it is the WORD OF GOD
- ❖ Don't just hear the Word; the word "receive" means to take with you wherever you go!!
- ❖ How would your life look different if you did this? Do we really do this even if we say we do?

Imitate good examples

- ❖ Find strong believers who have faced similar situations and imitate them as they pursued the Lord
- ❖ Alternatively, be a good example to imitate

Please God and love mankind

- ❖ Jesus preached a Gospel of radical love and unity
- ❖ This is not a suggestion, it is the heartbeat of His Gospel! See everyone as sinners in need of grace and love, just as you are

Unite under His name

- ❖ The Gospel message is life changing and transformative! It has the power to save!
- ❖ Don't gatekeep, Say So!! (Psalm 107)

Big Idea:

Receive the Word, and be transformed by God.

Week 4 | 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

In chapter 2, Paul expresses more thanks for the Thessalonians and their transforming faith. He opens up the chapter by giving a defense for how he and Silas presented the Gospel to the Thessalonians. Essentially, He claimed how his intentions and conduct were pure as they brought the true Word of God. He goes on to exhort and encourage the believers, and affirm their steadfastness in the midst of trials. Comparing them to the church in Judea, He commends them for staying strong in the faith despite the opposition that had risen up from “their own countrymen”.

Summarize the Passage

Paul expresses his longing to see the Thessalonians again. He tried again and again but in some way Satan hindered them from coming. Paul then encourages the Thessalonians, saying they are His hope and Joy and Crown of Boasting before the Lord.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions²⁵:

“Endeavored”

- ❖ σπουδάζω (spoudazō) be eager
 - make an effort to do something, often with an emphasis on the effort used to make it happen; to strive

“Crown of Boasting”

- ❖ στέφανος (stefanos) crown (woven, sign of victory)
- ❖ καύχησις (kauchēsis) pride
 - ²⁶Crowns or wreaths were often given to winning athletes when the race is finished; in the same way, the early church often viewed their heavenly reward as a heavenly crown
 - Boasting in this sense is not an act of sinful pride, it is like being proud of a friend or a child, in essence this boasting is humble
 - In other translations: “proud reward”, “Crown in which we glory”

²⁵ <https://www.dictionary.com>

²⁶ ESV study bible: English standard version. (2023).

Questions:

Isn't Boasting a Bad Thing?

- ❖ 1 Corinthians 1:31 → so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."
- ❖ This verse shows us that we can boast in the Lord and this can be applied to those who follow Him
- ❖ Boasting in this sense is not an act of sinful pride, it is like being proud of a friend or a child, in essence this boasting is humble, as long as Paul is not seeking glory for himself
- ❖ In this verse we see that the crown of boasting is *the Thessalonians*, it's not that he received riches for his work. No, the Spirit is what is transforming the believers. So rather than receiving a commission, they themselves are his crown.

How did Satan Hinder them?²⁷

- ❖ We don't know exactly how Satan hindered Paul from coming back to Thessalonica but there are a few common suggestions:
 - Potential legal restrictions for them in Thessalonica as a result of the riots that had resulted from their first coming
 - Sin and scandal in the church of Corinth could have been a more pressing issue to deal with
 - Paul's "thorn in [his] flesh" may have hindered him from traveling so far (2 Corinthians 12:7 - "a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan")

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

ἡμῶν (*hēmōn*) of us - 9x

ὑμᾶς (*humas*) you - 7x

ἀδελφός (*adelfos*) brother - 4x

δόξα (*doxa*) glory - 3x

πρόσωπον (*prosōpon*) face - 2x

Book Themes:

- ❖ Second Coming
- ❖ Longing but Unable to Return

Other Literary Elements:

²⁷ Duncan, 2023 (61)

- ❖ Vivid imagery displays the emotions paired with what Paul is saying
 - “Torn away”
 - “Great desire”
 - “Endeavored eagerly”
 - “Again and again”
- ❖ Rhetorical Questions are characteristic of Paul’s writings
 - “For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?”

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Separation (v.17)

- ❖ Though Paul and Silas had longed to be with the Thessalonians, they were separated against their will
- ❖ Often we are separated from those we long to be with, this can be through:
 - Distance
 - Busyness
 - Death
- ❖ In today's world we can be connected so easily with the tap of a phone, but often we feel lonely or disconnected with community. Why is that?

Feel abandoned by people we love (v.17-20)

- ❖ Paul has to reassure them how much he loves them and desires to see them. They could have wondered if Paul even cared for them.
- ❖ We at times feel unloved or cared for by others.

Satan Hinders the Work of God's Kingdom (v. 18)

- ❖ No matter how the group was separated, it is CLEAR that Satan was behind it
- ❖ Quote: ²⁸ "we not only have to deal with the allurements of this world toward sin, or with the enticement of sin that comes from the flesh... We also have to deal with the Devil. There is a being in this world, older than humanity, who has a design to destroy you forever."
 - Do you truly believe this? Where have you seen this?

We are Powerless to Overcome him

- ❖ The fact that Satan still works in this world (1 Peter 5:8-9) opens up the idea that there is a Spiritual realm with beings far more powerful than us at work in this world
- ❖ Any glimpse at this world makes it clear that we are not able to stand against these spiritual forces alone, we are weak

²⁸ Duncan, 2023 (62)

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

God's family spans space and time (v. 17)

- ❖ Look at verse 17, though they were separated in person, they were not separated in heart
- ❖ This is true of all believers, no matter how they are separated, they maintain this connection through the Spirit of the Living God

Jesus is coming back! (v. 19)

- ❖ Jesus has promised that He will come back, and when we stand with Him we can endure the wrath to come

The One who dwells in us, is greater than he who is in the world

- ❖ We are absolutely too weak to stand against Satan and his forces alone, let that reality sink in
- ❖ But praise be to God! He is our help and our strength
- ❖ Without a doubt we know that "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4)
- ❖ It's foolish to think you can stand against the schemes of the devil by yourself, but it's even more foolish to think that the Spirit that God has given you is not strong enough to overcome these forces

He equips us with spiritual weapons to fight against the attacks of the Enemy²⁹

- ❖ Ephesians 6:10-20 → The Armor of God
- ❖ Praise God that He has equipped us for the moments where Satan tries to hinder us

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

We are God's masterpiece. He loved us and longed for us so deeply that He came down to meet with us face to face. He overcame the Devil's schemes so that one day, we can be presented before Him in glory. Faith in Jesus secures us in the Family of God.

²⁹ Duncan, 2023 (63)

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Long to connect with your faith family

- ❖ Push past the separation of the modern world wherever we can
- ❖ Long to meet with one another face to face

Know Satan will do whatever he can to hinder the work of the Gospel

- ❖ 1 Peter 4:12 → Don't be surprised when suffering comes upon the believer
- ❖ Know that when you suffer, you draw nearer to Christ who suffered on your behalf

Participate in Kingdom work with a deep love for others (v. 19)³⁰

- ❖ Paul has been beaten, persecuted, ran out of town, judged, and far more, why does he do all this?
 - He does this for THEM, they are his hope and joy
- ❖ When the world values money, fame, comfort, or pleasure, the Christian has their hope and joy in something else
 - Don't be driven by the wrong things (money, popularity, human glory, etc.), your heart posture determines your level of obedience
 - The eternal significance of ministering to souls is far greater than anything this world can offer
- ❖ You are worth so much to God (Ephesians 2:10 - His "masterpiece")
- ❖ Good ministers or mentors have this same heart, so self sacrifice is natural
 - You are not a burden, but a hope and a joy

Big Idea: In Christ, the greatly desired ones, greatly desire one another.

³⁰ Duncan, 2023 (64)

Week 5 | 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

In Chapter 2, Paul reflects on his time in Thessalonica, defending his ministry against accusations. He emphasizes that he did not come with deceit or flattery but preached the Gospel boldly, despite suffering. Paul expresses his deep affection for the Thessalonians, comparing his relationship with them to that of a nursing mother and her children. He recalls how he worked day and night to support himself while sharing the Gospel. Paul encourages them to stand firm in their faith and praises them for accepting the message as the word of God.

Summarize the Passage

Paul could no longer bear to be away from the Thessalonians, so he sends Timothy to get a report on how they are doing. He hears of their continued suffering, which is expected, and is comforted by their strong faith even in the middle of suffering. But, he is fearful that “the Tempter” would shake them, rendering their efforts for the Gospel fruitless.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions³¹:

“Exhort”

- ❖ Παρακαλέω - parakaleō (to plead/comfort)
 - to urge, advise, or caution earnestly; admonish urgently

“Establish”

- ❖ Στηρίζω - stērizō (to establish)
 - bring into being on a firm or stable basis

Questions:

Why were the three in Athens?³²

- ❖ Paul went to Athens alone after being pushed out of Macedonia. It is there where he conducted work concerning other churches he helped plant. Silas and Timothy soon met him there, but were sent out to Philippi and Thessalonica respectively from there.

What does Paul mean by saying Timothy is “God’s coworker”?³³

³¹ <https://www.dictionary.com>

³² ESV study bible: English standard version. (2023).

³³ ESV study bible: English standard version. (2023).

- ❖ This is “a remarkably lofty title (see 1 Cor. 3:9). Paul seems to be highlighting Timothy’s credentials to offset any negative sentiment on the part of the Thessalonians at Paul’s sending his junior associate to them instead of coming himself.”
- ❖ He is highlighting God’s use of Timothy as a vessel for His purposes, just as He uses Paul
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 3:9

Who is destined for what?

- ❖ ³⁴Christians are destined to suffer tribulation for their faith. Apparently the Thessalonians had been taken aback by the unrelenting persecution.

Who is the “Tempter”?³⁵

- ❖ This is Satan, the Enemy, the Adversary
- ❖ He is a spiritual being whose mission it is to oppose the Gospel and work against all of God’s plans

What does Paul mean in saying that he is worried their labor might be in vain?³⁶

- ❖ If Satan had succeeded in tempting the Thessalonians to abandon their newfound faith, Paul’s missionary work would have been fruitless.

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Themes:

- ❖ Paul, Timothy, and Silas exhorting these new believers in Thessalonica
- ❖ Standing firm in faith, in the midst of affliction
- ❖ Separation of Paul from this church

References:

- ❖ Acts 17:15 - Paul in Athens
- ❖ 1 Cor. 3:9 - God’s coworkers

Other Literary Elements:

- ❖ “Therefore” → Calling back to the previous passage
 - “For this reason” → does the same thing in v. 5
- ❖ Repetition:
 - “Just as you know”

³⁴ ESV study bible: English standard version. (2023).

³⁵ ESV study bible: English standard version. (2023).

³⁶ ESV study bible: English standard version. (2023).

- “We could bear it no longer”

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Forced separation (v. 1)

- ❖ Paul couldn't stand being away from this new church, he was separated from his brothers and sister in Christ to the point where it was unbearable
- ❖ Often things don't go exactly to plan, we are not in full control of the situations we are in. Sometimes this means we cannot be near those we love.

Sacrifice needed to send Timothy (v. 2)³⁷

- ❖ Paul had to be left alone when sending Timothy to get this report

Afflictions faced by believers (vv. 3-4)

- ❖ This is a constant theme in 1 Thessalonians, believers will face affliction
- ❖ Paul even goes so far as to say that "we were destined for this", that believers are destined to face affliction, so don't be surprised when it comes
- ❖ This had come to pass and will continue

Fear and doubt (v. 5)

- ❖ Paul feels a sense of fear and anxiety concerning this new church
- ❖ He knows that the Tempter has power, and he is worried that Satan's deception will lead them away from the walk before their walk even begins

The Tempter seeks to make the Gospel fruitless (v. 5)

- ❖ There is a being out there whose entire mission is to limit the effect of the Gospel and draw people away from the Lord

Experience fruitless labor in evangelism (v.5)

³⁷ ESV study bible: English standard version. (2023).

- ❖ There are times when the gospel lands on deaf ears and hardened hearts

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

Paul's Sacrificial Love of the Church is a picture of the way Jesus loves the Church (v. 1)

- ❖ Paul was willing to be left alone for the good of the church he loved
- ❖ "Where there is love unfeigned and a sincere desire after the church's good, it will make the man endued with it postpone his own good and comfort unto theirs, his own temporal good to their spiritual, and his own convenience to their necessity. Paul's sincere and ardent affection to their good made him spoil himself of all good company and willing to be left at Athens alone" - James Fergusson³⁸

God has called us His "coworker in the gospel of Christ" (v. 2)³⁹

- ❖ God allows us to come alongside him in the work of his Kingdom
- ❖ What a title this is!!
- ❖ To affirm Timothy's authority Paul refers to him as a "coworker of God". His identity is not in his youth or level of recognition, it is in his alignment with God's mission.
- ❖ This shows a remarkable closeness with God. Timothy's will and mission reflected God's plan. He is working as a vessel of the Lord in "establishing and exhorting" the believers in Thessalonica

God is sovereign even over affliction and trials

- ❖ Affliction is our destiny, but faith is our calling
- ❖ God calls us to stand firm in the faith when we experience suffering, and He walks with us in the midst of it
- ❖ This is less of a command and more of an encouragement. When trials come, hold firm to the One who is holding on to you, walking beside you every step of the way
- ❖ 1 John 4:4 → He is greater than the Tempter, He is our Defender

He affectionately desires his Church

- ❖ Paul's desire and heart for the Thessalonians is a picture of God's heart for his Church

³⁸ *A Brief Exposition of the First and Second Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*

³⁹ ESV study bible: English standard version. (2023).

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

As Paul loved the Church in Thessalonica and longed to see them, God loves us and longs for us. Just as Paul sends his “son” Timothy, God sent His son Jesus down to establish and exhort us. He faced the suffering we should have faced and defeated the Tempter so that we can face each day, and eternity, able to withstand the affliction that comes.

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Sacrificially love the Church (v. 1)

- ❖ Paul was willing to be left alone for the good of the church he loved
- ❖ "Where there is love unfeigned and a sincere desire after the church's good, it will make the man endued with it postpone his own good and comfort unto theirs, his own temporal good to their spiritual, and his own convenience to their necessity. Paul's sincere and ardent affection to their good made him spoil himself of all good company and willing to be left at Athens alone" - James Fergusson⁴⁰

Exhort and establish one another in faith (v. 2)

- ❖ Timothy sets a good example here, believers are called to encourage, exhort, and establish one another in their faith
- ❖ One of the best ways to face affliction is to establish and exhort one another
- ❖ Galatians 6:2 → the Law of Christ is to bear one another's burdens
- ❖ One of the tools the Lord has given us to get through suffering/affliction is the encouragement of brothers and sisters in Christ
- ❖ Be that for someone, "fill in the gap" for them

Expect affliction, from this world and from the Tempter (vv. 3-5)

- ❖ Paul went so far as to say "we are destined for this"
- ❖ In this short passage Paul looks at the affliction of the physical and spiritual worlds

Know there is a Tempter who longs to steal the Gospel from your heart (v. 5)

- ❖ Paul looks at the one behind all of the afflictions they are facing. There is a spiritual being that's entire life mission is to oppose the Gospel.
- ❖ Know that the Tempter is strong, you cannot fight him alone, but depend on the Spirit of the Living God inside of you.
- ❖ Don't fight unaware, don't fight alone.

⁴⁰ A Brief Exposition of the First and Second Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians

Know that the One who is in you, is greater than he who is in the world

- ❖ 1 John 4:4
- ❖ Yes there is a Tempter seeking to destroy your life, take it seriously, but that shouldn't bring us to fear, anxiety, or passivity. It should push us to rely on the Spirit of the living God that is present in all believers.

Use the tools the Spirit has given you

- ❖ The two main tools God gives us to face affliction are fellow believers and the Armor of God
- ❖ Just like in v. 2, we are to establish and exhort one another, bearing each others' burdens
- ❖ In Ephesians 6, Paul lays out the armor of God: spiritual fruit that we need to take into the battle we fight against the Enemy every day

Big Idea:

BE AWARE! There is an Adversary that opposes the Gospel, but He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Week 6 | 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

In chapter 3, Paul's patience with this separation runs out, so he sends Timothy to get a report on how they are doing. He hears of their continued suffering, which is expected, and is comforted by their strong faith even in the middle of suffering. But, he is fearful that "the Tempter" would shake them, rendering their efforts for the Gospel fruitless.

Summarize the Passage

Paul outlines his distress as he waited for Timothy's report, his relief and thanksgiving upon learning the good news about the Thessalonian Christians, and his longing to see them again.⁴¹

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions:

Good News/Gospel

- ❖ εὐαγγελίζομαι (euangelizomai) to speak good news
 - The "good news" in this passage is a phrase that Paul rarely uses except for when talking about the "good news" of Jesus Christ

Affliction

- ❖ θλίψις (thlipsis) pressure
 - trouble, distress, oppression, tribulation, pressure

Distress

- ❖ ἀνάγκη (anankē) necessity
 - Necessity, constraint, compulsion, obligation of moral duty, distress/trial/affliction/hardship

Thanksgiving

- ❖ εὐχαριστία (eucharistia) thankfulness
 - expression of thanks, thanksgiving, gratitude thankfulness
 - This is where we get the word "eucharist", as in the Lord's supper

Earnestly

⁴¹ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2308.

- ❖ ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ (huperekperissou) super over excessively
 - beyond measure, exceedingly; superabundantly

Standing Fast

- ❖ στήκω (stēkō) to stand
 - to stand, stand firm, be steadfast

Questions:

What does it mean to “return thanksgiving”?

- ❖ Simply means thanking God as a result of all the joys they have received from the Thessalonian believers

Why can't Paul and the Thessalonians see each other?

- ❖ See [How did Satan Hinder them?](#)

Why are they so distressed?

- ❖ This points back to Paul's love for the Thessalonian believers
- ❖ Because of their forced departure and separation that followed, Paul and his team were not able to teach them everything they wanted to. Paul was worried that with an incomplete understanding of the Gospel as their foundation, they would fail to stand firm in the midst of their present sufferings and persecutions⁴²

For now we live? What does that mean?⁴³

- ❖ This is “the reaction of a parent: My children are doing well in the Lord. My children are standing firm in the faith. Thank God, I rejoice. My heart is filled with thanksgiving to the Lord”.
- ❖ Paul is deeply thrilled by this good news, saying that it gave him life!

What were the Thessalonians lacking in their faith?

- ❖ Due to their premature departure from Thessalonica, the missionaries had been unable to complete their usual instruction of Christians in the fundamentals of the faith. One particular lack in their instruction related to the second coming and the final resurrection⁴⁴

⁴² Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2308.

⁴³ Duncan (2023), 72

⁴⁴ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2308.

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

ἡμῶν (hēmōn) of us - 3x

ὕμῶν (humōn) of you - 6x

- This passage focuses far more on the Thessalonians than it does on Paul

πίστις (pistis) faith - 3x

διὰ (dia) through/because of - 3x

Themes:

- ❖ Faith (hope) and love
 - This passage is missing the hope aspect of this common set
- ❖ Longing to see each other again
- ❖ Standing firm in the faith

References:

- ❖ Acts 17 is the historical background of the writing of this letter

Other Literary Devices:

- ❖ Hyperbole/extreme language
 - “Distress and affliction”
 - “Now we live”
 - Praying night and day
- ❖ Rhetorical Question
 - Vv. 9-10; common for Paul to use when writing

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Distress & Affliction (v. 7)

- ❖ We are not omniscient, we can't know everything, so that often leads to anxious thoughts.
- ❖ This distress is the mental anguish we feel when we are not in control.
- ❖ Affliction is more of the physical suffering we may experience, especially as Christians.
- ❖ ⁴⁵In vv. 3-4, we see Paul, though he escaped from Thessalonica, is still facing affliction in his current situation.

Paul's earnest prayer reminds us we are dependent creatures (v.10)

- ❖ Paul talks about praying earnestly day and night. Though he doesn't mean he is literally praying 24/7, he is praying constantly.
- ❖ First, we are not in control, and often don't have the power to change circumstances, so we call out to the God who does

Paul's earnest prayer reminds us of our lack of intentionality to pray and intercede for others (v.10)

- ❖ Paul's prayer reminds us that we are dependent creatures, but it also reminds us that a consistent and vibrant prayer life is often difficult for us
- ❖ It is not a natural reflex for us to pray to God, typically this is not our first response
- ❖ It is also difficult for us to pray "day and night" (constantly) as Paul says he is

Lack in the Thessalonians' faith (v. 10)

- ❖ We don't have it all figured out in the faith. Often we struggle with certain aspects of faith or lack wisdom in certain areas. This is why we need more mature Christians building us up and "supplying what is lacking" in our faith.

Separation

⁴⁵ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2308.

- ❖ Once again, Paul and his companions have been forced apart from the Thessalonians. There are barriers that they are powerless to get past.

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

Faith and Love (v. 6)

- ❖ Faith and love are not natural for us. God holds us in both of these virtues.
- ❖ Our faith is able to hold firm because He strengthens it and holds onto those who call Him Lord.
- ❖ Our love grows because of Him who has loved us first. 1 John 4 goes over this again and again

God designed us for community (vv. 6-8)

- ❖ God strengthens our relationships, gives comfort in our relationships, and gives life in relationships
 - Though we are limited in our ability to be with one another, God is omnipresent. This means He is not limited to one place at one time like we are. Because of this, He is able to strengthen all of our hearts, keeping believers close even when they are separated (whether by space, busyness, death, etc.)
 - Paul is given comfort and life because of the relationship he has with the Thessalonian believers
 - Essentially he is saying *"I was dying inside when I thought you weren't doing well. Now I can live again."*

The Lord is our anchor in affliction (v. 8)

- ❖ Paul said that believers are "destined for [affliction]"
- ❖ Left alone, we are powerless to stand firm in our faith
- ❖ The only way that the Thessalonians (and ourselves) are able to stand firm in the face of affliction is through the courage, strength, and steadfastness He provides
- ❖ 1 John 4:4 → "He who is in you, is greater than he who is in the world"

God is a generous provider (v. 9)

- ❖ Every good and perfect gift is from God. So everything we have to be grateful for is from the Father.
- ❖ We even see that He blesses us in our thankfulness, as we are given joy and contentment as a result of practicing gratitude

Joy for your sake (v. 9)

- ❖ Paul is able to be joyful because of the faith of the Thessalonians

- ❖ He knows how much God values them so he sees their God-given worth and value, and he is encouraged how God is moving in their lives

Earnest Prayer (v. 10)

- ❖ We pray because we have a God who listens
- ❖ We know we don't pray to a God who is ignorant, absent, or out of control, so we can be confident that our prayers will be heard and answered

Bearing each others' burdens (v. 10)

- ❖ God's design for this world was that we support each other in our weakness
- ❖ He sustains us individually as we struggle, but He also sustains us as the body of Christ, empowering us to uplift one another in our weakness

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

The Lord longs to see His people come to faith and hold strong in it. He sent His son to die so that we can withstand the Tempter and has given us His Spirit, His Word, and the Church to supply what is lacking in our faith.

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Pray earnestly day and night

- ❖ Paul prayed that he would meet with the Thessalonians again soon and he prayed for the ability to provide what is lacking in their faith
- ❖ Pray for fellow believers, the unity of the body, and for the Spirit to grow and strengthen them in their faith

Supply what is lacking in others' faith

- ❖ There are 3 main ways to do this:
 - Pray earnestly for them, for the Spirit transforms
 - Speak truth, keep going back to God's Word, for His truth gives life and grows us
 - Leverage your gifts for the good of others, see what God has blessed you with and seek to serve others with it

Sit in gratitude with God

- ❖ Paul was beyond grateful for the strength of the Thessalonians faith
- ❖ What would it look like if we cared this much for the faith of our brothers and sisters? How could our hearts change if we sat in gratitude about these things?

Stand fast in the Lord

- ❖ When believers hold strong in the faith, it is for 2 primary reasons:
 - Practically, it is because they continue to look to God as the supplier of strength, running to Him in affliction/temptation
 - Behind the scenes, we see that God is holding on to us far tighter than we are holding on to Him, so it is His strength carrying us through
- ❖ Know 1 John 4:4 → "He who is in you is greater than He who is in the world"

Get our priorities Straight

- ❖ Paul's delight was not in the blessing, pleasure, and comfort of the Thessalonians. His delight was that they stood firm in the faith in spite of the suffering they were facing.

- ❖ “Is this what we pray for one another, and for our sons and daughters: that they’d stand firm in Christ and that they’d grow in faith and love, and not just that circumstances would be easy?”⁴⁶

Big Idea: Look to the Lord. Find new life in His “Good News”.

⁴⁶ Duncan (2023), 70

Week 7 | 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

In chapter 3, Paul's patience with their separation runs out, so he sends Timothy to get a report on how the Thessalonians are doing. He hears of their continued suffering, which is expected, and is comforted by their strong faith even in the middle of suffering. But, he is fearful that "the Tempter" would shake them, rendering their efforts for the Gospel fruitless. Paul then outlines his distress as he waited for Timothy's report, his relief and thanksgiving upon learning the good news about the Thessalonian Christians, and his longing to see them again. This week's passage is an example of a prayer mentioned in v. 10.

Summarize the Passage

These last three verses are a pastoral prayer from Paul over the Thessalonians (similar to those mentioned in v. 10). Paul concludes his thanksgiving and encouragement with a pastoral prayer for his converts. He prays that he may be able to revisit the community and that the Thessalonians will abound in love, with the result that they will be blamelessly holy at Jesus' second coming. Paul assures the Thessalonians that God will produce the necessary holiness in them⁴⁷

This passage finishes the chain that Paul makes throughout chapter 3.
God's Word → Faith → Love → Holiness

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions⁴⁸:

"Abound"

- ❖ περισσεύω (perisseuō) to exceed
 - to have abundance, more than enough, overflow, to have an excessive amount of something

"Saint"

- ❖ ἅγιος (hagios) holy: saint
 - Holy ones
 - holy, sacred, pure persons

"Holiness"

⁴⁷ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2308.

⁴⁸ <https://www.stepbible.org>

- ❖ ἁγιωσύνη (hagiōsunē) holiness
 - holiness, a characteristic of God, shared by his people, requiring a lifestyle acceptable to God
 - “Set apart”

Questions:

How can our hearts be established blameless before God?

- ❖ Explain the Gospel here
- ❖ Notice that the passage here says, “that HE may establish your hearts blameless in holiness”
 - This is not something that we can do for ourselves
- ❖ The point of the Gospel is that we are saved by grace through faith, that while we were still sinners Christ died so that we may be saved
- ❖ Paul is praying for a deep rooted faith for the Thessalonians, one that multiplies and abounds in love
 - This faith, not their own efforts and works, is what allows sinners like us to be presented blameless before the Lord

You may want to use this to explain it: Romans Road

- ❖ Romans 3:23
 - “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
- ❖ Romans 6:23
 - “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”
- ❖ Romans 5:8
 - “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”
- ❖ Romans 10:9-10
 - “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved”

Who are the “Saints”?⁴⁹

- ❖ The translation of this is “Holy Ones”
- ❖ This is angels, Christians, or (most likely) both

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

⁴⁹ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2308.

ἡμῶν (hēmōn) of us - 5x

κύριος (kurios) lord: God - 3x

"God and Father" → Θεός καὶ πατήρ // Theos kai patēr x2

"Our Lord Jesus" → ἡμῶν Ἐγὼ Ἰησοῦς // Kyrios egō iēsous x2

Themes:

- ❖ Jesus' 2nd coming
- ❖ Abounding in Love
- ❖ Paul hopes to see the Thessalonians again

References:

- ❖ Zechariah 14:5
 - "And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him."

Other Literary Devices:

- ❖ Genre: Prayer
- ❖ Context: Pivot point of 1 Thessalonians
 - End of part 1 (Chapters 1-3, thanksgiving and encouragement)
 - Chapters 4&5 are exhortation and instruction

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Paul is dependent on the Lord to get back

- ❖ As much as he might want to be, Paul is not in control. He longs to get back to the Thessalonians, but is dependent on the Lord to make a way back

Lack in love (need for growth)

- ❖ Love is often difficult for us
- ❖ We are inherently selfish creatures, so to do things that are selfless, sacrificial, and loving is not in our nature. Paul is praying here for this increase because he knows it is by God's strength that we are able to grow in this

We are not holy and blameless before our God

- ❖ The Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so none of us are naturally holy and blameless before a perfect judge like the Father
- ❖ This is why we needed a savior, Jesus Christ, to die for us so that His righteousness can be placed on us

The essence of prayer

- ❖ The essence of prayer (supplication) is that God can do what we cannot
- ❖ In this passage Paul points to a few of these things:
 - He cannot get back to the Thessalonians (v. 11)
 - We cannot will ourselves to grow us so that we abound in love for one another (v. 12)
 - We cannot make ourselves holy and blameless (v. 13)

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

Our God is: Father (v. 11)

- ❖ Often times, the different names used in Scripture can point us to different parts of His character and identity
- ❖ Calling God "Father" points to His triune nature and gives us a new lens to look at His character
- ❖ In a book that is littered with family imagery, calling Him "Father" reinforces these themes of the Christian body being united as a family
- ❖ It points out God's protective, providing, and loving nature; there is a sense of authority and respect, but also closeness and intimacy
 - Not all fathers are like this, but our heavenly Father is the perfection of what a father is meant to be

Our God is: Lord (v. 11)

- ❖ This title reveals part of God's character too, specifically His lordship
- ❖ "Lord" in this case is κύριος (kurios), which can mean God, but also master. This title for Jesus draws on both meanings
 - First, it establishes His divinity
 - Second, it shows His authority
- ❖ It is easy to see Jesus as Savior, but not always as easy to see Him as Lord or master, but know that a good, loving master is worthy of our obedience

He directs Paul's way (v. 11)

- ❖ The Lord directs our paths in life
- ❖ Proverbs 16:9 → "Man makes the plans but the Lord determines His steps"

He supplies the increase and abundance of love (v. 12)

- ❖ Love is not natural to us, but 1 John 4 says that "God is love"
- ❖ He delights in His people growing in love and unity and the longer we spend in His presence the more we look like Him.
- ❖ 1 John 4 also mentions that "we love because He first loved us"; We can only love by reflecting the love of the Creator
- ❖ This love is not just growing, but brought to abundance, it is overflowing for those who abide in Him

He is our righteousness, purity, holiness (v. 13)

- ❖ We are sinners, deserving of judgement, deeply in need of His mercy and grace
- ❖ Because Jesus died on the cross and rose again three days later, He took on Himself the punishment for our sins and defeated death and sin forever for those who believe in Him. Because of this, the Bible says we “become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- ❖ He took our penalty so that we can be presented as holy and blameless before God, so He is the only way that we are justified and sanctified

He is returning with the saints (v. 13)

- ❖ Jesus promises to return and bring about a final redemption, He is good on His word and will do it
- ❖ Not only that but He will return with all the saints
- ❖ This reflects the fear of the Thessalonians that death might separate them from seeing God’s promises; but Paul makes it clear that they will be a part of this ultimate redemption

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

John 3:16 → “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Our Lord loved us so deeply that He sent His Son to die for us. We were once sinners, dead in our trespasses, enemies of God, but now we are in Christ. He has covered us in love and holiness, washing us clean before the Lord and bringing us into a new life marked by that love and holiness.

Walk through the Gospel here if you didn’t earlier

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Depend on Him

- ❖ Paul did this in 2 ways:
 - Praying constantly
 - Submitting his plans to God

Understand that we cannot bear fruit on our own

- ❖ Verse: John 15:4-5
- ❖ This passage talks about growing in love for one another and for all, but it's not a command, it's a *prayer*. It is clear that Paul is not just saying "try harder" or "do better", no that's not the Gospel. Paul is asking the Lord to supply the increase.
- ❖ This is hard for us to understand, but look at Psalm 127:1-2. Laborers labor, but the Lord provides the fruit and the rest. This does not mean we can stand idly by, but it does mean that we work hard, depend on the Lord for growth, and appreciate the rest/blessings He gives us

Abound in love

- ❖ Paul creates a direct line in chapter 3, one link we see is that faith leads to love. (God's Word → Faith → love → holiness)
- ❖ This love has two focuses:
 - Love for one another (within the body of believers)
 - Love for all (for the world outside of the church)
- ❖ "That is [Paul's] aim in ministry and his goal in teaching and instruction: that they would be disciples who love"⁵⁰
- ❖ "Anyone who thinks he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this love of God and neighbor, has not yet succeeded in understanding them." (Augustine)

Find the root of holiness

- ❖ Love in this passage is the root of Holiness
- ❖ We see in this passage that our holiness comes from the Lord, so what do we do with this?

⁵⁰ Duncan (2023), 75

- Don't seek to muster up holiness in yourself
- Abide in His presence
- Let His grace sanctify you
- ❖ ⁵¹Look at 2 Peter 1:3 → We know that the knowledge of God's Word and the strength that the Spirit provides is all we need to grow in faith, love, and holiness
- ❖ What does it look like to get this wrong? And right?

Big Idea: Let God's Word lead to faith, then love, then holiness by the power of the Spirit.

⁵¹ Duncan (2023), 76

Week 8 | 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Note: Be clear about the nature of this type of sin: almost everyone struggles in one way or another, there is no shame or condemnation in Christ Jesus, emphasize the importance of bringing things into the light, and make sure to open up resources for guys and girls

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

Paul expresses concern for the Thessalonians and had sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage them in their faith, fearing that they were unsettled by persecution. Timothy returned with good news about their faith and love, bringing joy to Paul, who prays for their continued growth and expresses his desire to see them again, thanking God for their steadfastness amid challenges. The book pivots at this point, going from thanksgiving and encouragement to instruction and exhortation.⁵²

Summarize the Passage

Paul shifts his writing into the primary purpose of the letter, to instruct and exhort. He begins doing this by addressing sexual immorality, a topic that was especially prevalent in Thessalonica at the time. He urges them to not live lives that are uncontrolled, living like the world, and harming God and those around them. The Lord has called them to holiness.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions⁵³:

“Received”

- ❖ παραλαμβάνω (paralambanō) to take with

“Sexual Immorality”

- ❖ πορνεία (porneia) sexual sin; a generic term for sexual sin of any kind
 - In the greek, there is an image here of something being bent or warped, so God's holy sexual ethic has been warped

“Instructions”

- ❖ παραγγελία (parangelia) order
 - This refers to marching orders of military authority
 - The instructions were contained in their original teaching

⁵² <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV@reference=1Thess.4&options=HNVUG>

⁵³ <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV@reference=1Thess.4&options=HNVUG>

“Holiness/Sanctification”

- ❖ ἁγιασμός (hagiasmos) holiness, set apart
 - To sanctify is to “make holy”, to set something apart
 - Often in the NT, this word is used to describe how we are being formed into the image of King Jesus, looking more like Him

“Avenger”

- ❖ ἔκδικος (ekdikos) avenging
 - “Avenge is now restricted to inflicting punishment as an act of retributive justice or as a vindication of propriety”⁵⁴
 - This is just retribution for an act against someone

“Solemnly”

- ❖ διαμαρτύρομαι (diamarturomai) to testify solemnly
 - grave, serious, somber, sober

“Transgress”

- ❖ ὑπερβαίνω (hyperbainō) to wrong; to overstep/trespass
 - “Control his own body” → Literally: “possess their own member”
 - The image here is that you are not letting your body, or a part of your body, control your actions

Questions:

Why is Paul saying “Finally” if there are two more chapters to go?

- ❖ “We are now getting to the point of the letter”⁵⁵

How are they instructed “through Jesus”? What does this mean?⁵⁶

- ❖ The instructions point back to the teachings that they had given the Thessalonian believers while they were there, seen in 4:1
- ❖ Paul phrases the verse like this because it is the knowledge of Jesus (who He is and what He’s done) that informs how we are to live. He is not just saying “do better”, but He is giving us the reason that we should obey and pursue holiness

Why do we need to please God if He already loves us?⁵⁷

- ❖ Think about the Fatherly nature of God here: a good father already loves his kids, no matter what they have done. It is this loving relationship that pushes the child to delight in pleasing the father

⁵⁴ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/avenge>

⁵⁵ Duncan (2023), 81

⁵⁶ Duncan (2023), 86

⁵⁷ Duncan (2023), 84

- ❖ God is not asking them to do these things *so that* they will be loved by Him, but rather it is the love that *drives and informs* the actions to please the Father

Why does he call out the Gentiles in v. 5?

- ❖ Paul is not distinguishing Jew and Gentile here, but rather referring to the people around them in their city (as many in their congregation were Gentiles as well, but their primary identity is now “Christ-follower” not Gentile)
- ❖ Paul is saying here “I know that the culture around you does not abstain from it, but in the church we are going to abstain. We’re going to be different from the world around us”⁵⁸

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

γάρ (gar) for - 7x

- ❖ This passage connects verses using this conjunction
- ❖ It essentially starts with the command of the passage and shows us the foundation of the commands in v. 7

ἐν (en) in/on/among - 6x

- ❖ This passage is constantly pointing out the intentions behind actions

θεός (theos) God - 5x

ἀδελφός (adelfos) brother - 5x

- ❖ Familial language

οἶδα (oida) to know - 3x

ἁγιασμός (hagiasmos) holiness - 3x

Themes:

- ❖ Paul’s exhortation of the believers
- ❖ Holiness

References:

- ❖ Ephesians 5:3 → Sexual purity among the saints
- ❖ 1 Peter 1:15-22 → Pursuing the holiness of He who calls you

Other Literary Devices:

- ❖ Metaphor (how you ought to WALK)
 - “It implies slow, unspectacular, but steady progress”⁵⁹
- ❖ Structure of the passage

⁵⁸ Duncan (2023), 90

⁵⁹ Duncan (2023), 83

- Each verse is a command rooted in verse 7 (the flow of the passage can be seen by following conjunctions such as “for” and “therefore”)
- “7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.” is the root of these commands
- ❖ Tension of Opposites/Contrasting
 - Holiness vs. purity/passion of lusts (vv. 4-5)

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

❖ We need to be sanctified (v. 3)

- God's will for us is that we are sanctified (made holy/set apart)
- The fact is that, before Christ, we are just like the rest of the world, living as one with the world rather than set apart. We are sinful broken people, separated from Christ
- It is only once we have a relationship with the Father and begin to follow Him as Lord that He begins the ongoing process of making us more like Him

❖ Sexual Immorality (v. 3)

- This is a very general phrase on purpose
- The word here (porneia) means sexual immorality, fornication, marital unfaithfulness, prostitution, adultery, a generic term for sexual sin of any kind⁶⁰
- Rather than focus on a specific sexual sin, Paul stays generic because man has found countless ways to go against God's holy sexual ethic (a man and a woman enjoying sex within the covenant of a committed marriage)

❖ Our flesh needs controlling (v. 4)

- Verse 4 mentions controlling our own body
- Our flesh so naturally goes against God's ways that sometimes we fall into sin even though we don't mentally want to (Matt. 26:41 - the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak)
 - The Spirit and the flesh are at war inside of us, it seems like our flesh is an entirely separate entity that we are enslaved to before Christ
- How weak are we that even our own body enslaves us?
 - We see the modern sexual ethic as freedom, but really it is slavery to our own sexual desire

⁶⁰<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV&reference=1Thess.4&options=HNVUG>

- Even Paul struggles with this! → Romans 7:18 “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.”
 - Anyone who has ever struggled with addiction knows this

❖ **Passion of lust (v. 5)**

- Lust here is ἐπιθυμία (epithumia) or desire⁶¹
- It is a fairly general term, but here it is referring to covetousness, wanting something that is not yours to have
- This is the root of all lust and sexual impurity, we long to have something that is **not for us** (someone else's body typically) or **not in the right timing**

❖ **Ignorance of God (v. 5)**

- In verse 5 Paul points to the “Gentiles” (the society around them) saying they do not know God
- There are 2 types of this:
 - Many do not **know about** God, but the Bible says that He has revealed Himself to the World through His creation (ignorance)
 - Many in our culture don't **know** God. Though they may know about Him, they do not know Him personally (distance)
- Paul makes it clear here that there's no way to follow these commands without being transformed by a personal relationship with Jesus

❖ **Our sin affects others (v. 6)**

- This passage makes it clear that our sin affects more people than just ourselves, specifically in this passage, the effects of our sin reach two main groups: “Brothers” and God
 - When we sin sexually it affects our brothers. This means the people around us, both those it directly relates to and those it doesn't. For example, if you indulge in pornography it is hurting yourself, supporting a sinful industry, hurting anyone you are (or will be) in a relationship with, and harming any believers in your community trying to fight sin

⁶¹ <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV@reference=1Thess.4&options=HNVUG>

- Our sin also affects God. As we disregard Him in this matter, we are grieving Him. Psalm 51 says “against you and you alone have I sinned”
- It may seem like our sin is no big deal, that it’s victimless, but it affects far more than just you
- ❖ **We live outside of our calling (v. 7)**
 - God has a perfect plan for you, a design that will help you flourish and honor Him
 - Verse 7 says we are called to holiness, when we sin sexually we are acting outside of His perfect design, not living according to how we are called
 - We are MISSING OUT on the design He has for us
- ❖ **Disregarding God (v. 8)**
 - When we live outside of this calling and act in disobedience, it’s not just like we are disobeying man, we are disobeying a Holy God, thinking we know better than the Creator
 - He is full of grace and mercy, forgiving all who repent, but when we intentionally sin, it hurts Him and our relationship with Him

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

- ❖ **God is pleased by our obedience (v. 1)**
 - God already loves us, so we are not earning His love here
 - God has a plan for how this life works, for His glory and our good, so us acting within that plan pleases Him
 - Ask about what it means to please God, flesh this out
- ❖ **He Pushes us (v. 1)⁶²**
 - It is good for us to be pushed, this means that He cares about us, an apathetic God would just sit back and let us live in sin
 - God's grace calls us higher. When we are "urged in Christ Jesus", we know that He cares about our sanctification (v. 3)
 - In a sense, He is acting as a physical trainer here, with us every step of the way, pushing us to get better even when we don't feel like it
- ❖ **When He calls us to obey, He helps us to obey (v. 1)**
 - It is kind of weird phrasing when Paul says "we urge you in the Lord Jesus", but what He is saying is that he is not urging you to follow these commands and walk in purity by yourself
 - Following these commands by yourself is an impossible task, but Paul is calling us to do it with the Holy Spirit inside of us
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:24 → "He who calls you is faithful, He will surely do it"
- ❖ **Our God is a teacher (v. 2)**
 - Our God is not distant and silent, He longs to guide His people
 - The truth of Jesus Christ and the Gospel is what drives all of these commands
- ❖ **His will is your sanctification (v. 3)**
 - How great is it that we have a God that reveals His will to us! Often we spend so much time searching for what God's specific plan for our lives is, but He has revealed His will to us right here: our sanctification
 - We can say "what a blessing it is to have a God that desires for us to walk in purity", because we know that a rich, joyful life is found in His plans

⁶² Duncan (2023), 82

- ❖ **He calls you to Holiness, Purity, and Honor (vv. 4,5,7)**
 - God has created everything, He knows you deeply and intimately, and He desires for you to live a life of freedom and joy, glorifying Him. This is how you do it^
 - Once again, as He calls you to it, He guides and strengthens you in it

- ❖ **We know God who is able to transform us (v. 5)**
 - Believers step into a relationship with the God of the Universe
 - It is by this relationship that we are able to be transformed, looking different from the world, not being enslaved to our own bodies

- ❖ **The Lord is an Avenger (v. 6)**
 - Our God is a God of justice
 - If you have been hurt or broken by someone else who has sinned in this way, just know that the Lord will make things right either in this life or the next

- ❖ **He gives us His Holy Spirit (v. 8)**
 - Don't miss this last verse
 - When Jesus went to Heaven, He said a Helper would come down, this is the Holy Spirit
 - He is present in every believer, guiding, growing, and sustaining us in our walk with the Lord. He sanctifies us, making us look more like Jesus every day

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

Once we lived like Gentiles, enslaved to our own flesh. Sin ruled in our disobedient hearts. But then Jesus came down and took the penalty for our sins. That old life is now washed away and, though we still sin and mess up, He meets us with grace and He walks with us into His perfect plan of purity. We now have the Spirit with us as we walk this narrow road toward holiness.

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

❖ Know the root of these commands

- Phil. 2:13 → Obey “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”
- We walk in obedience because it is Him that strengthens us to do so
- Be tender with the heart and with full dependence on the Holy Spirit, wage war on the flesh
- The Lord loves you → He knows your sin → He gives abundant grace → He calls you higher for your good and His glory

❖ Follow instructions on how to walk/please God

- Remember! God is a loving Father, we are not trying to earn His love here. Simply know that our loving Father has good plans for us and find delight in obeying Him
- As you grow closer to Him, pray for this desire, to love what He loves and to hate what He hates. Ask for strength to walk in His ways, pleasing Him

❖ Continuously pursuing holiness

- “Do so more and more” → v. 1
- Even if you are doing well in this area, or even if you have improved significantly, there is still a call to pursue purity more and more
- None of us will be completely sanctified until we get to Heaven, so there’s always going to be room to grow while we are here

❖ Abstain from sexual immorality; Control your body

- This is far easier said than done. There is no simple fix for this
- There’s a few things we can know/do:
 - Know that this is a lifelong journey
 - Know that you cannot do it alone (We need the Holy Spirit and accountability)

- Know that this is done by grace (we are not going to become more like Jesus by focusing on legalism and shame, but rather by pursuing Jesus)
- Set up practical boundaries
- Pray and fast

❖ **Know that your sins are not victimless**

- When we sin, we hurt God and others
- Don't let that lead you to shame and isolation, just understand the weight of your sin and go to the Father with it

❖ **Follow your calling**

- Jesus did not die on a cross for us to continue living the same way! The beauty of the Gospel is that He has washed our past sins away, sit in His grace and know He has called us to holiness because He loves us
- *Made for More lyrics*

"I know who I am 'cause I know who You are
 The cross of salvation was only the start
 Now I am chosen, free and forgiven
 I have a future and it's worth the living
 'Cause I wasn't made to be tending a grave
 I was called by name
 Born and raised back to life again
 I was made for more
 So why would I make a bed in my shame
 When a fountain of grace is running my way
 I know I am Yours
 And I was made for more
 Oh hallelujah
 You called out my name
 So I'll sing out Your praise
 Hallelujah
 You buried my past
 And I'm not going back"

❖ **Rely on the Holy Spirit**

- I will say this again: **YOU CANNOT DO IT BY YOURSELF**
- This passage is not just saying to try harder and do better

- Yes it's going to be difficult, but as you draw near to the Spirit, desperately seeking His help, it will become possible to grow in purity

Big Idea: God's Holy Ones have been set apart to live holy lives.

Week 9 | 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

After encouraging and greeting the Thessalonians, Paul shifts his writing into the primary purpose of the letter: to instruct and exhort. He begins doing this by addressing sexual immorality, a topic that was especially prevalent in Thessalonica at the time. He urges them to not live lives that are uncontrolled, living like the world, and harming God and those around them. The Lord has called them to holiness.

Summarize the Passage

The focus of these few verses is how to honor others with how the Thessalonians should live their lives. In light of Jesus' return, Paul calls them to continue growing in brotherly love, something they already do well in. He also promotes a life of independence, not calling them to isolate, but to live "quiet lives", working hard to provide for themselves. This is so that they won't be dependent on others, and so non-believers can see how they live responsibly.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions⁶³:

"Taught by God"

- ❖ θεοδιδάκτος (theodidaktos) divinely instructed
 - Many believe that Paul made up this word for this specific purpose
 - This references passages like Isaiah 54:13, where it was said that there will be a day where people are taught directly by God and not the Law and Prophets

"Brotherly Love"

- ❖ φιλαδελφία (filadelfia) brotherly love; family love/kindness
 - "The ethics of family love should apply to the entire Christian community"⁶⁴

"Macedonia"

- ❖ Μακεδονία (makedonia) Macedonia;
 - a greek city state, where Thessalonica was the capital city

⁶³<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV@reference=1Thess.4&options=VNHUG>

⁶⁴Duncan (2023), 99

“Brothers”

- ❖ ἀδελφός (adelfos) brother
 - In this case, a fellow believer in Macedonia

“Outsiders”

- ❖ ἔξω (exō) out/outside(r)
 - Nonbelievers here

Questions:

How were they “taught by God” to love?⁶⁵

- ❖ The prophet Jeremiah taught that one day, God’s people would be taught directly by Himself. This was fulfilled with the new covenant, as believers learn from His Word and the Spirit how to follow God and love others
- ❖ 1 John 2:27 → The “anointing” of our salvation connects us with the Lord, that through abiding we will learn to love others

How are they loving others now?

- ❖ In chapter 1, Paul encourages the church for two main things: faith in affliction and their love for others (1 Thess. 1:3)

What does it mean to live quietly? To mind your own affairs?

- ❖ ⁶⁶“They are to avoid public controversy. They are not to court attention—not to look to draw a crowd to watch what they do. They are just to live quietly and be faithful”
- ❖ To mind your own affairs essentially means to mind your own business. Paul is preaching here against gossip, nosiness, drama, and meddling in others’ lives for the sake of meddling

How are they dependent on others?

- ❖ Some members of the Thessalonian church were refusing to work. Jesus is coming soon, so they figured they could get by not working and simply relying on wealthier members of the church for shelter, food, and assistance⁶⁷
- ❖ This does not mean that church members should not help each other when they are in legitimate need, doing that is an explicit command from the Lord. It simply means that we should not abuse this assistance because of our own laziness.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2308.

⁶⁶ Duncan (2023), 100

⁶⁷ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2308.

⁶⁸ Duncan (2023), 101

- ❖ Often, cynic philosophers of the time would go out into the streets and beg, there's a chance these believers were doing the same

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

ἀδελφός (adelfos) brother - 5x

ἐπιθυμία (epithumia) to urge

"Do this more and more" (vv. 1, 10)

"As we instructed you" (vv. 2, 11)

Themes:

- ❖ Exhortation/Urging
- ❖ Familial language
- ❖ Walking properly in the eyes of outsiders (beyond reproach)

References:

- ❖ Isaiah 54:13 → "All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children."

Other Literary Devices:

- ❖ Reflects back to Ch. 2, where Paul talks about how he, Silas, and Timothy went above and beyond to minister in a way that was beyond reproach

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

We must be taught to love (vv. 9, 10)

- ❖ The word used to describe this love is φιλαδελφία (filadelfia) which means brotherly/family love
- ❖ This type of love is not natural for us, so we as people need to be taught by God to treat people like family
- ❖ This goes for loving fellow believers and unbelievers

We need to be urged from time to time (v. 10)

- ❖ The final two chapters of the book are meant to teach and exhort the Thessalonian believers
- ❖ In verse 9, we see that the Thessalonian believers are doing well to love others, but Paul still sees it fit to stir them on further and further into love
- ❖ It's easy for us to just go through the motions, we need a brother/teacher in the faith to push us when this happens

Living LOUD (v. 11)

- ❖ We can be lovers of crowds, attention, and glory
- ❖ This can push us to desire amazingly outrageous lives of huge significance or act out to stir up drama/attention
- ❖ Even when serving the Lord we can be tempted to "fix it all, know it all, be everywhere for all as fast and as famously as possible"⁶⁹; know this: we were never meant to do that
 - We have been called to day to day obedience, humbly serving the Lord in each present moment, not seeking any glory or fanfare for ourselves

Lack of work/Laziness (v. 11)

- ❖ One of the consistent messages to this church was that Jesus was coming soon
- ❖ Rather than driving people to work in hopeful obedience, it drew them to passivity. Many used it as an excuse to get out of work. They simply

⁶⁹ Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

would bide their time by begging and relying on other church members until the Lord came back

- ❖ This could also include “busybodies”, working for the sake of work

We often don't represent our message well (v. 12)

- ❖ Paul calls these believers to “walk properly before outsiders”
 - Note: he is not saying that we fake it to look good to others
- ❖ Rather, Paul is calling us to live a life that is consistent with our message
- ❖ Living in laziness, drama, or self-glory leaves a bad taste in the mouths of others when we preach a message of hard work, peace, and humility

Dependence on others (v. 12)

- ❖ The Thessalonians who wanted to avoid work by abusing the generosity of other believers were living selfishly
- ❖ Don't abuse the generosity of your parents, professors, friends, etc.
Work hard so that you can sustain yourself and eventually your family

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

God is a teacher (v. 9)

- ❖ ⁷⁰Multiple prophets in the OT point to a day when God would no longer write His Word on tablets, but would write it on the hearts of His people using the Holy Spirit
- ❖ We see two incredible things when we look at v. 9:
 - First, these prophecies were fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit and specifically for the Thessalonians, meaning God is faithful
 - Second, our God delights to draw near to us and lead us in the way we should go, meaning God leads His people

God is love (v. 9)

- ❖ 1 John 4:16 - "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."
- ❖ The people have learned to love because they have abided in God, **who is love**
- ❖ He teaches us to love, and He desires that His children love each other as He loves us

He unites us as a family (v. 10)

- ❖ The Thessalonians have been exhibiting this love to all in Macedonia. Nothing can unite believers across an entire state like a common belief in Jesus Christ
- ❖ ⁷¹Our relationships within the body should be family-like and gospel-centered. This is where true depth and brotherly love happens in our relationships
- ❖ Ryan and Ford - Tell about connection with Bridge City Church in Cincinnati
- ❖ Where do we fall short here?

He calls us to work (v. 11)

- ❖ God calls us to work
- ❖ Even in Eden, before the Fall, we see this: Genesis 2:15 → "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."

⁷⁰Duncan (2023), 98,99

⁷¹Duncan (2023), 100

- ❖ Both rest and work are good, they are part of God's design for us

Jesus lived quietly (v. 11)

- ❖ The ministry of Jesus was not about stirring up attention. For thirty years he stayed quiet. He didn't go after the rich and influential, but the broken and forgotten. He often told people to be quiet about what they had seen. He had trust that God's plan would work as He quietly and diligently obeyed day by day
- ❖ Remember though: Jesus called us to go and make disciples, telling them about Him. So don't let "living quietly" lead you to be passive

He sustains us (v. 12)

- ❖ When we depend on others, often we are not letting the Lord provide for us
- ❖ Sometimes He works through other believers, to help us when we are down. But He also promises to provide for His people, while calling them simultaneously to work. We need to trust the Lord in this, that as we obey and work hard, He will give us what we need.
- ❖ Matthew 6:26 → "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

Greater love has no man than to lay his life down for a brother. Jesus came and lived a quiet life, walking in diligent obedience and loving mercy. In His ultimate act of love, He invites us into His family through His death on the cross then His resurrection from the dead, through which we all can be unified.

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Learn from God how to love

- ❖ 1 John 4:16 - "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."
- ❖ Abide in the Father, so that we can learn how to love

"Do so more and more"⁷²

- ❖ We can never reach the fullness of His love toward others in this life, whenever we chase after holiness and love, this needs to be a constant pursuit, gaining ground until we meet our Father who will clean up our unfinished business

"Live quietly, mind your own affairs, and work with your hands"

- ❖ Don't let Jesus' return lead you to panic or passivity
- ❖ Avoid loving attention
 - "It is good to receive godly praise, but dangerous as all get out to crave it"
- ❖ Mind your own business
- ❖ Work hard according to His purpose

Be motivated to walk properly before outsiders

- ❖ Live like you truly believe the truths you preach
- ❖ You are not perfect, but by claiming you are a Christian, you have put a higher standard on yourself in the eyes of the world around us
- ❖ We are not to live hypocritically, but live a life that is consistent with the things we claim to represent (hard work, peace, brotherly love, humility, etc.)

Be dependent on the Lord alone

- ❖ Trust and obey
- ❖ This means that we work hard to provide for ourselves and not act as a burden on other people

⁷² Duncan (2023), 99

Big Idea: Love your faith family and live in steadfast obedience to the Lord.

Week 10 | 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

The focus of the letter beginning in chapter 4 is to instruct and exhort. He begins doing this by addressing sexual immorality, urging them to not live lives that are uncontrolled like the world does. He then moves toward how to honor others with how the Thessalonians live their lives in light of Jesus' return. Paul calls them to continue growing in brotherly love, something they already do well in. He also promotes a life of independence, not calling them to isolate, but to live "quiet lives". They should work hard to provide for themselves so that they won't be dependent on others, and so non-believers can see how they live responsibly.

Summarize the Passage

Continuing on this vein of living in light of Jesus' return, Paul focuses on those who have died or "fallen asleep". He addresses the concerns that they had, thinking they would miss out on the second coming of Christ. The Thessalonians were uninformed on the theology of Christ's second coming. But Paul makes it clear that, because of the resurrection and the salvation of believers, Christians have a unique hope that they will join with Christ and each other one day.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions:⁷³

"Asleep"

- ❖ κοιμάω (koimaō) to sleep
 - Asleep refers to the dead, relatively common way to describe death at the time

"Precede"

- ❖ φθάνω (fthanō) to precede/arrive, to come before

"Cry of command"

- ❖ κέλευσμα (keleusma) command
 - The imagery here is one of a commander shouting his men into battle⁷⁴

"Archangel"

- ❖ ἀρχάγγελος (archangelos) archangel

⁷³ <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV@reference=1Thess.4&options=HNVUG>

⁷⁴ Strong's Greek #2752

- A chief angel, the only one mentioned in the Bible is Michael in the book of Jude

“Caught up with them”

- ❖ Harpazō - to grab or seize suddenly, to snatch, take away
 - The Greek for “caught up” gives a sense of being forcibly and suddenly lifted upward⁷⁵

“Clouds”

- ❖ Probably not earthly rain clouds but the clouds of glory that surround the presence of God⁷⁶

“To meet”

- ❖ ἀπάντησις (apantēsis) meeting
 - The Greek term is often used of an important dignitary’s reception by the inhabitants of a city, who come out to greet and welcome their honored guest with fanfare and celebration, then accompany him into the city⁷⁷

Questions:

Why does Paul say “by a word from the Lord”? ⁷⁸

This probably refers to something the Lord revealed personally to Paul, which he then states in vv. 15b–17. It either draws on apostolic authority or a divine message/revelation God gave to Paul.

Where does this image of Christ coming come from?

Jesus Himself uses similar imagery in Matthew 24:29-31, referring to His second coming, calling His elect with Him.

What is our hope?

Our hope is in Jesus Christ. He died for our sins to take away the eternal punishment we faced, not only that, but He rose from the dead. Because He did this, He shows that our God has power over death and the grave. There is a promise that He will do the same for us. So, as believers, our hope is in God’s promise, that He has defeated death and will be faithful to raise us with all the saints when He returns.

Who are the “others”?

⁷⁵ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2310.

⁷⁶ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2310.

⁷⁷ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2310.

⁷⁸ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2309.

The “others” are unbelievers. Those who do not have a relationship with the Lord grieve without hope. Their hopelessness comes from the fact that they have no eternal security.

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

κύριος (kurios) lord: God - 8x

κοιμάω (koimaō) to sleep - 3x

For/Therefore - 6x

Themes:

- ❖ Jesus' second coming
- ❖ Hope
- ❖ Encourage one another

References:

- ❖ Matthew 24:29-31

Other Literary Devices:

- ❖ Imagery - 3 sounds mentioned in v. 16
 - the trumpet sound in that time represented things of royalty (battles, kingship, the day of the Lord, resurrection)
- ❖ Comparison - Jesus' death to the death of a believer
- ❖ Understatement/metaphor - “falling asleep”
- ❖ Note the audience of the letter, Paul is not writing to the dead but to the living. The passage focuses on death a lot, but do not miss the purpose. Paul is writing this to the Thessalonians so they can see how to live properly in light of death

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Death/Loss (vv. 13, 14)

- ❖ Passages like this so easily show us our mortality
- ❖ God is immortal, and He offers us eternal life. But now, with our broken bodies in this broken world, we have to face the reality of death. This is a separation from those who are still here alive

Grief (v. 13)

- ❖ This is our response to the death mentioned in the previous point. Because death is a present reality, we face the sorrow and grief that comes from it
- ❖ Healthy grief is not a bad thing, in fact it can be an act of love and gratitude toward God. But this grief can be heavy and hard until the day where sorrow is no more

Lack of knowledge (v. 13)

- ❖ When Paul says "we do not want you to be uninformed", what he is really saying is this: Don't forget this! This truth changes everything!⁷⁹
- ❖ Often times, out of our own ignorance or deception, we struggle with hurt and hopelessness that Jesus is offering to free us from

Hopelessness (v. 13)

- ❖ Without the promise of Jesus Christ, things like death can lead us to hopelessness. The truth is, alone we are powerless against death. We would just be living to die, making this life pointless, and the grief insurmountable.
- ❖ In the 1900s, an ancient letter written by a Greek woman named Irene was uncovered. Over the topic of death she wrote: "Against such things one can do nothing. Therefore comfort one another"⁸⁰. Without Christ, this is our reality that we are powerless to change.
- ❖ What is the difference between this and healthy grief?

⁷⁹ Duncan (2023), 105

⁸⁰ Light from the Ancient East (164)

Need for encouragement (v. 18)

- ❖ Paul writes these things so that the Thessalonians can encourage each other with these words. Often we forget the hope and truth of the Gospel, so we need to remind ourselves of these things.
- ❖ "Even in the most godly, wonderful Christian homes, there is heartbreak and grief. We need the encouragement of the truth of God in the Word of God: of rich, sound biblical theology"⁸¹

⁸¹ Duncan (2023), 109

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

God offers us hope (v. 13)

- ❖ What is our hope here?
 - (Our hope is in Jesus Christ. He died for our sins to take away the eternal punishment we faced, not only that, but He rose from the dead. Because He did this, He shows that our God has power over death and the grave. There is a promise that He will do the same for us. So, as believers, our hope is in God's promise, that He has defeated death and will be faithful to raise us with all the saints when He returns.)
- ❖ Because of these truths, we can go on living while in grief. We can avoid being crippled by the overwhelming depression of a hopeless end.

Our God has defeated death (v. 14)

- ❖ We serve a powerful God!! Not even death can take Him down!!
- ❖ What does this mean for us?
 - Our ultimate enemy has been defeated. Death was something that all people were enslaved to (last time I checked 1/1 people die)
 - When we face loss or our lives are threatened, we can go on living out our purpose, because now "to live is Christ and to die is gain"

He gives us Salvation/Redemption (vv. 14, 16)

- ❖ The Bible is clear:
 - Romans 3:23 – "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"
 - Romans 6:23 – "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"
- ❖ Without Christ, death is final. But praise be to the God who has saved us from this eternal punishment. By no effort of our own, the Lord has made a way through Jesus for us to be saved and ultimately redeemed in glory.

He fulfills Prophecy: He is coming back (vv. 15, 16)

- ❖ There are two incredible things we can see from God's promise here
- ❖ First, we can reflect on how faithful our Lord is.

- 2 Corinthians says “20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”
- In Jesus we see every prophecy and promise of God fulfilled. We know that He has been totally faithful so far, so we can trust in His faithfulness in the promise of His return
- ❖ Second, the promise itself is beautiful, our God will come back for His children
 - Jesus came down as God in the flesh. What a miracle that God would visit His children! But this first visit was not the end. He then sent us “the Helper” (His Holy Spirit) to dwell with us, and He is coming back again soon.

He is always with us (v. 17)⁸²

- ❖ The Lord will be with us in this life, we will go to Him when we die, and we will be with Him as He returns

He is a God of encouragement (v. 18)

- ❖ Clear teaching about the Lord’s return should result in comfort and encouragement (Paul’s goal), rather than fear and divisiveness.⁸³
- ❖ The purpose of Paul’s teachings is not mere intellectualism, it is to bring comfort to hurting souls
- ❖ Paul calls the community to display God’s design of community: beautifully unified and constantly encouraging

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

We were sinners, destined for death with no hope of redemption. Jesus came down, died the death we deserved, and defeated the grave. Because of this we can live with the hope that the dead will rise when He returns.

John 11:25-26 – Jesus to Martha after the death of Lazarus

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”

⁸² Duncan (2023), 109

⁸³ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2310.

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Grieve with hope

- ❖ What does this look like?
 - Know that if the deceased believed in God, their eternity is secure, and you will see them again
 - Know that you can bring your sorrows and confusion to God, don't let them draw you away from Him
 - Don't let the grief cripple you

Look to Jesus

- ❖ Paul constantly compares believers to Jesus in His writings, not that they're perfect or divine, but that the believer can find so much truth in Him
 - In how to act in holiness, look to Jesus
 - In how to grow in love, look to Jesus
 - In what will happen to us after we die, look to Jesus
- ❖ We have been covered in His righteousness, so when God looks at us He sees the righteousness of His son

Be Sorrowful, yet Rejoicing

- ❖ Paul is not calling them to stop grieving. Ecclesiastes says there is a "time to mourn". It is good to experience those God-given emotions. But God has given us a hope, so that we can hold the tension of sorrow in this world, while experiencing the joy and hope that He offers
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 6:10

Encourage one another in this

- ❖ Not only should we continually remind ourselves of these truths, we are called to remind each other of them too
- ❖ Part of bearing one another's burdens is the gentle encouragement of Biblical truth to a grieving friend

Live like He's coming soon (while we are alive)

- ❖ Remember: this message was meant for the living not the dead!
- ❖ Christ is coming soon, how will you live differently in light of that?

Big Idea: In the face of death, we have hope, because of the One who defeated death.

Week 11 | 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

This is the final chapter of Paul's letter to the Thessalonian people. The first three chapters were an introduction filled with encouragement for the new believers in Thessalonica. He addressed their strong faith in the midst of persecution, their deep love for believers all around, and the hope they have in Jesus' return. In chapter 4, Paul shifts to instruct the Thessalonians further, finishing the teachings that got cut short during his original visit. The whole chapter focuses on living a new life in Jesus, addressing timeless topics such as sexual sin, brotherly love, and grief. The chapter ends pointing to Jesus' second coming.

Summarize the Passage

Paul encourages the Thessalonians to stay alert and be prepared for the Day of the Lord, which will come unexpectedly. He contrasts the darkness of those who are unaware with the light of those who belong to the day, and instructs them to encourage one another and build each other up.⁸⁴

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions:⁸⁵

"Sleep"

- ❖ καθεύδω (katheudō) to sleep; this word is literal, but has two metaphorical uses
 - In the beginning of the passage, sleep refers to a state of unreadiness, being unaware of Jesus' return and living in a way that is unprepared to meet Him face to face
 - Just as in the previous passage, this "sleep" can refer to death, this is the use in v. 10

"Awake"

- ❖ γρηγορέω (grēgoreō) to keep watch
 - Just as "sleep" is used metaphorically, we see that being "awake" doesn't simply refer to the literal meaning, but it is an encouragement to keep watch, staying ready for Jesus' return
 - Awake also refers to the living in v. 10

"Drunk"

⁸⁴<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV@reference=1Thess.5&options=NVHUG>

⁸⁵<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV@reference=1Thess.5&options=NVHUG>

- ❖ μεθύω (methuō) to get drunk
 - Once again, the literal definition, with a metaphorical meaning: not being watchful or ready for Christ's return

"Light"

- ❖ φῶς (fōs) light
 - Refers to both righteousness and divine clarity

"Children of the day"

- ❖ υἱός (huios) son; ἡμέρα (hēmera) day
 - "The children of the day" means "God's people," who walk in light

"Darkness"

- ❖ σκότος (skotos) darkness
 - This can refer to a lack of clarity and moral/spiritual darkness

Questions:

"Times and Seasons"⁸⁶

Paul was simply addressing here when the day of the Lord will occur. The Thessalonians' question likely arose from anxiety, since Paul's answer reassures rather than rebukes them and seems concerned with both the "how" and the "when" of the day of the Lord.

How can we tell what is literal (sleep, drunk, etc)?

This passage is filled with various metaphors that help us to understand the state of humanity in response to Jesus' second coming. They include: light/darkness, sleep/awake, drunkenness/sobriety, day/night, and the image of a pregnant woman going into labor. These are almost all metaphorical (drunkenness is an example of not being awake/sober/watchful, but there are many other ways to be spiritually drunk)

What does he mean by "don't sleep as others do"?⁸⁷

To sleep is to be morally and spiritually disengaged, and/or living without a consciousness of the coming day, as the rest of the world does.

What is "the Day of the Lord"?⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2310.

⁸⁷ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2310.

⁸⁸ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2310.

The phrase day of the Lord is common in the OT Prophets. It refers to the great and terrible day when Yahweh will intervene to punish the disobedient and to save the faithful. In Paul's letters it is equated with the second coming.

Why is he talking about pregnant women?⁸⁹

This is an analogy referring to the judgment and destruction on the day of the Lord. It will be painful, and there will be sudden warnings of an impending time of pain that brings life.

What does it mean to be “children of the light”? Or to “live in darkness”?

Light in this sense has 2 main focuses: clarity and righteousness. The dead/dark/drunken/sleeping are walking around unaware of Jesus' return and are thus unprepared for it. They are also in a state of spiritual darkness, not living in the ways of the Lord. In this sense, it could accurately refer to literal drunkenness, but mostly refers to a lack of readiness for Jesus' return.

The positive metaphors such as light/awake/alive/sober refer to a readiness for Jesus' return and clarity about Jesus' nature and His commands. So it makes sense that these “children of the light”, by nature of their clarity and identity, are people who live more like Jesus.

The only deviation from this is in v. 10, where sleep/awake refers to the dead and alive, similar to Ch. 4.

Has any of this happened yet? When will it happen?

There is plenty of argument on when this will happen or if it has already? Some believe this is currently happening, others believe it will someday soon or far off. The fact of the matter is, that we are not meant to know

Mark 13:23 says: “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father

NOT EVEN THE SON KNOWS! If there is something that not even the Son knows, we can know for sure that it is a fruitless endeavor to try and understand.

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

ἡμέρα (hēmera) day - 4x

νύξ (nux) night - 4x

⁸⁹ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2310.

καθεύδω (katheudō) to sleep - 4x

ἀδελφός (*adelfos*) brother - 2x

Themes:

- ❖ Jesus' 2nd coming
- ❖ Faith, hope, and love
- ❖ The redemption of our souls and resurrection of our bodies (just like in ch. 4); sleeping

References:

- ❖ The armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20)
- ❖ Children of Light (John 12:36)
- ❖ The surprise of the 2nd Coming (Matthew 24)

Other Literary Devices:

- ❖ Opposites/Contrasting:
 - Light/dark
 - Awake/asleep
 - Sober/drunk
 - Alive/dead
- ❖ Metaphors
 - Light
 - Drunkenness
 - Sleep

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Darkness - Ignorance

- ❖ One element of the "darkness" metaphor is a lack of knowledge or clarity. Just as you cannot know your way when walking in the dark, so do we live when we do not have the "light" that God provides
- ❖ We are ignorant to the timing of His 2nd coming and do not naturally know the way to live

Darkness - Debauchery

- ❖ Another aspect of this darkness is a life of temptation and unrighteousness. When it is nighttime, we see crime, violence, and temptation rise up. There is a sense of isolation, a way to hide sins, and a lack of clarity about how to live. The life of darkness seems good to us, but does not honor God.

Death (v. 10)

- ❖ In v. 10, this "sleep" refers to death
- ❖ We are all humans and will die (as long as Christ doesn't return first), this can lead to fear, of death and of separation from God

We want to know God's whole timeline, but we don't (v.1)

- ❖ We want to know God's plan step by step, for our lives and for the redemption of this world. This reveals something about us: a lack of trust and desire for control
- ❖ The fact of the matter is this: we are not omniscient, we do not know His whole plan and neither should we! We should simply live in the present moment by faith, preparing as He has called us to prepare
- ❖ Mark 13:32 says that no one knows but the Father, not even the SON

The Day of Judgement/Wrath – Sudden, inescapable destruction (v. 3)

- ❖ We are sinners, and Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death. We have earned death, wrath, and destruction.

- ❖ For many this will come when He returns. It will be a day of sudden, inescapable judgement. It will be a day of wrath, when His just anger is poured out.
- ❖ It is only by His grace that believers can avoid this wrath

Labor pains (v. 3)

- ❖ Labor pains are a clear evidence of the Fall, as in Genesis 3:16 God says that He will “multiply [woman’s] pain in childbirth”
- ❖ In the metaphorical sense too, it is a painful warning of a greater pain to come for the sinner outside of Christ

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

God of Light - Clarity

- ❖ One aspect of this light metaphor is clarity. If we simply listened to our own instincts, to what we can see or hear or feel here, we would be unaware of God's plan and His ways, leaving us in the dark
- ❖ God delights to light our way though. He seeks to give His children wisdom about what will happen and how to live
- ❖ Psalm 119:105 → Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
- ❖ He guides us and lights our path, often not the whole way at once, but He lights where our feet step as we follow Him in faith

God of Light - Purity

- ❖ The other aspect of this metaphor is righteousness or purity. He has called us "children of the light", which means He has adopted us, saving us from the sinful ways we used to live in the dark, and redeeming us into a new life of purity and righteousness
- ❖ This new life stems from this new clarity and identity

He protects us with Armor of God (Faith, Love, Salvation) (v. 8)

- ❖ The Devil attacks us, praise God that He gives us armor
- ❖ In Ephesians 6 we see a different list, but here we see that the armor of God is made up of three things primarily: Faith, love, and hope
- ❖ Our defense against the schemes of the Enemy is to "live by faith, live in love, and live with hope"⁹⁰
- ❖ God's character is our defense, we can walk by faith because He is faithful, we can love because He first loved us, and we can have hope because He is faithful to follow through on His promises

God's Destiny: Salvation and new life through Jesus (vv. 9-10)

- ❖ Verses 9 and 10 point to God's salvation for us
- ❖ When you are saved you are saved OUT of something FOR something else, these verses lay it out clearly
 - We are saved OUT of the just wrath of God
 - We are saved FOR us to be with Him, in this life and the next
- ❖ We often remember that because we are saved, we don't have to face eternal punishment, but we forget that God has made us to live with Him

⁹⁰ Duncan (2023), 119

Dead or Alive we live with Him

- ❖ Last week we read 1 Thess. 4:17 which ends with “so you will always be with the Lord”
- ❖ We know that nothing in this life, nor in the next, can separate us from the love of Christ for those who are in Christ Jesus

His vague but perfect timing

- ❖ It's uncomfortable for us to not know when something is coming, but we don't have to know! We can trust that we have a God who is in control, and His timing is perfect, so we can surrender our desire to know, because it's not best that we know right now

He will bring a Day of Justice

- ❖ This is a scary day for many, because they will face wrath. But we know that this day is ultimately a day of justice, where sin will be defeated forever.
- ❖ This is a day not only to be expected, but also longed for. Revelation 22:20 cries out “Come Lord Jesus Come!”. “Judgement and salvation may not come when we expect, but they are certainly coming”⁹¹

He gives an encouragement of hope

- ❖ Once again, we receive some incredible truths, so how does Paul finish out the section? By commanding us to encourage one another with these truths
- ❖ God has everything planned out so knowing truth can be a source of hope and encouragement for the believer. Even if the truth is scary or vague at first, these truths give us encouragement

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

We were once children of the darkness, living our own way, unable and unaware of the right way to live. But in our sin, Jesus came down and died for us, so that we could be adopted by our Father, becoming children of the light. So because of this, we can live differently now, in full faith that He is coming to redeem the world.

⁹¹ Duncan (2023), 113

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Stay ready/Sober-minded

- ❖ God allows us to surrender our need to know His timeline, but He doesn't tell us to forget about it entirely. We have been called to stay watchful for the signs of His return

Forsake the darkness

- ❖ "Live in a way that is in line with the light, not the darkness"⁹²
- ❖ We have been freed to live a brand new life in Christ, so the things of darkness (excessive drinking, sexual immorality, pleasure seeking, violence, immorality, etc.) shouldn't mark our life anymore
- ❖ It can be hard to live for the light in our day to day lives, but don't listen to the lies of the world: that "there is nothing after this, so seek your own pleasure and good"⁹³

Put on the Armor of God⁹⁴

- ❖ Our defense against the Enemy's attacks are faith, hope, and love, with these we can live rightly in light of Jesus' return
 - Faith-Living with the trust that our God is good and is working all things for our good and His glory
 - Hope- Living free knowing that we know where we are going, and the Lord will surely redeem all things
 - Love- Living in a way that values others as God does
- ❖ Ephesians 6:10-20 speaks of the Armor of God with other traits

Live sober, moderate, self-controlled lives (Duncan 116)

- ❖ 1 Peter 1:13 → "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"
- ❖ Many people in the world (and even in the church) have this mindset that "whoever dies with the most toys wins"⁹⁵ This is the mindset of

⁹² Duncan (2023), 115

⁹³ Duncan (2023), 120

⁹⁴ Duncan (2023), 118,119

⁹⁵ Duncan (2023), 116

worldly living. In the eyes of unbelievers, this world is all there is, so we should get as much money, pleasure, and possessions as possible

- ❖ So the opposite of that, is living lives of self control and moderation, not living for the moment but preparing and longing for what is to come
- ❖ Missionary Jim Eliot said “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what He cannot lose”
 - This is Gospel living, we can sacrifice the things of this world now because they are temporary, and we set our eyes on things that are eternal

Encourage one another in this

- ❖ These are truths to cling to, not just forget about. We are explicitly told to remind each other of these things, why? Because these truths bring hope and encouragement, so that we can live rightly in light of His return
- ❖ This means we remind each other verbally, and we remind with our actions, living like what we say is true

Realize what really matters in light of His return⁹⁶

- ❖ Because Jesus is coming back, we know what really matters
- ❖ This stuff doesn't truly matter:
 - Getting a high-paying, high respect career
 - Awards or status
 - Money or possessions
 - Pleasure
- ❖ These are good things, but they shouldn't be what defines our lives. They shouldn't be what we treasure. We should treasure our relationship with Jesus, because that is of eternal significance

Big Idea: Look at what's coming and see what really matters now.

⁹⁶ Duncan (2023), 121

Week 12 | 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

Paul switches to a purpose of instructing and exhorting the Thessalonian believers. Chapter 4 addresses living a life of holiness, walking in the new life that Jesus offers through sexual purity, brotherly love, work, and grief. Chapter 5 then focuses on Jesus' return, and how we are to live in light of the second coming: being ready and obedient as we wait for His return. This is the lens through which Paul gives the following commands.

Summarize the Passage

This passage is all about relationships. It starts by outlining what a peaceful church looks like with pastors who humbly lead and members who respect their leaders. It then moves into how the body should walk with one another and be peacemakers. Paul then gives instructions for people to rejoice, pray, and be in gratitude with the Lord. In closing, he gives a call to pursue the things of the Spirit rather than sin.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions

"Idle"

- ❖ ἄτακτος (ataktos) disorderly
 - Military term referring to soldiers who are out of rank⁹⁷ (general term contextualized for the Thessalonian situation); maybe best translated as "undisciplined"
 - Many of the disorderly people in the Thessalonian congregation were specifically being idle

"Fainthearted"

- ❖ ὀλιγόψυχος (oligopsuchos) fainthearted
 - Timid or discouraged (literally "small-souled"; those both temporarily or long-term weakened in boldness and faith)

"Weak"

- ❖ ἀσθενής (asthenēs) weak
 - Weak, ill, or disabled (spiritually weak, being overpowered by some hardship) – may still be trying hard

⁹⁷ Duncan (2023), 133

“Admonish”⁹⁸

- ❖ νουθετέω (noutheteō) to admonish
 - tough love, as opposed to tender
 - Walking alongside believers, holding the Word of God up to them

“Love”

- ❖ ἀγάπη (agapē) love

Questions:

Who are those who labor among and admonish over you?⁹⁹

Most commentaries say that this refers to the elders/overseers/pastors of the church. These are people that are recognized as leaders by the church, though it may not have been as formal in many of the house church settings of the early church. The question here is whether or not verse 14 refers to the leaders alone or the whole church (I would say the whole church holds a responsibility in doing this, as all are called to lead in some capacity, and take part in encouraging the body).

What does it mean to “esteem highly”?

Simply show respect and honor to those who are in authority in the church. This is in the context of a very relational ministry, which means the members of the church are to show respect but also lovingly engage and help those in leadership.

Is there context of v. 15?

Just the understanding that church members had some division (the gossip, nosiness, and dependency of 4:9-12) and they faced persecution from outside of the church. They were to respond with grace to both parties despite mistreatment.

What does it mean to “quench the Spirit”? To “despise prophecies”?

To quench the Spirit is to “resist the Spirit’s work”¹⁰⁰

To despise prophecies is to “think nothing of them”. Paul wants the Thessalonians to give weight to what people say in the instances of communicating what the Spirit has given them. Many would dismiss any sort of prophetic word immediately, but Paul encourages them to test everything.

⁹⁸ Duncan (2023), 124, 133

⁹⁹ Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2311.

¹⁰⁰ Duncan (2023), 141

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

- ❖ Structure: short sentences, lots of commands, little explanation
 - Audience: suffering believers
 - Motivation: Jesus' return
- ❖ Groups of 3
 - Vv. 12-13 (commands to leaders and lay people)
 - V. 14 (how to address 3 groups)
 - Vv. 16-17 (3 command of God's Will)
- ❖ Absolutes given in vv. 16-18
- ❖ 4 Groups of verses (all pertaining to relationships):
 - 1) Vv. 12-13a → Leaders and Followers
 - 2) Vv. 13b-15 → The church family
 - 3) Vv. 16-18 → Self and God
 - 4) Vv. 19-22 → Individuals with the Spirit specifically
- ❖ Another way of reading v. 14:
 - "And we exhort you, brothers, redirect the undisciplined, encourage the "small-souled", come alongside the weak or weakened, be patient with ALL of them."

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Disrespect between leaders and lay people (vv. 12-13)

- ❖ This picture of respect between leaders and members is often not evident in our churches. This goes both ways:
 - Leaders don't always labor among the people, lead in humility, and admonish out of love
 - Followers don't always respect and submit to leaders in love or esteem them very highly

Lack of peace within the church (v. 13)

- ❖ Churches are made up of sinful people, so even churches face conflict and division within their walls

Idle, fainthearted, or weak (v. 14)

- ❖ We fall short in a myriad of ways
 - Idle: undisciplined
 - Fainthearted: discouraged, disheartened
 - Weak: unable to act in right ways
- ❖ This verse reveals how complicated people are. If people are not doing what they ought to, it can be for very different reasons. Often we are bad at taking the time to look further and determine the reasons.

Repaying evil for evil (v. 15)

- ❖ Our first response to being wronged is to throw evil right back at the other person. We lack grace, mercy, and love, and are quick to hand out "justice"

Not following God's Will (vv. 16-18)

- ❖ God reveals His will to us in three parts here:
 - Rejoice always
 - Pray without ceasing
 - Give thanks in all circumstances
- ❖ Often our joy, gratitude, and prayer life are highly dependent on the circumstances around us. In the situation they were in, facing

persecution and sufferings, it is not natural for us to be joyful, grateful, and prayerful

“Quenching the Spirit”¹⁰¹ (v. 19)

- ❖ To “resist the Spirit’s work”
 - This could happen in a variety of ways:
 - We can ignore convictions,
 - Delay obedience
 - Behave in a way that is contrary to His will
 - Lack faith for big things
 - Walk in “comfortable faith”

Not testing prophecies (v. 20) (despising and full acceptance)

- ❖ There are two responses to receiving words that people feel they were given to tell you by the Spirit:
 - The first is to reject it outright
 - The second is to accept fully without hesitation
- ❖ Paul says both are wrong. He says to “test everything”, especially prophecies or anything the Lord lays on people’s hearts to say

Not holding fast to what is good (v. 21)

- ❖ Our internal value system is skewed. It’s easy for us to undervalue what is good and godly in contrast to what is worldly. So we let go of these things, preferring to chase after worldly things and find our help/joy in those things

Letting some evil in (v. 22)

- ❖ God calls us to abstain from every form of evil here. It is easy for us to minimize and justify our sin, comparing it to the sin of others. Rather, Paul says here to abstain from any and all of it
- ❖ We see in 1 Corinthians 5 that, just as a little yeast leavens a whole batch of dough, a little sin spreads throughout our whole life. So He calls us abstain from evil altogether, as we are children of the light

¹⁰¹ Duncan (2023), 141-142

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

God's grace (v. 15)

- ❖ God leads the way in not returning evil for evil, and does good even to those who do evil
- ❖ This shows His grace and mercy, along with His true justice

God is the ultimate leader/overseer (v. 12)

- ❖ He leads the way He calls leaders to lead
- ❖ He is *over* and *among*, He *labors*, and He *admonishes* the right way

He desires peace (v. 13)

- ❖ He wants there to be peace in His House/Family, which is the church
 - God's heart for peace is the foundation for Paul's commands here
 - Though this peace can be difficult to keep, it is a part of God's design within the family of Christ

He sees us and our hearts (v. 14)

- ❖ More than just a blanket command, God gives us specific instruction in verse 14 for people with 3 different reasons for struggling
- ❖ He looks deeper than our disobedience, seeing our hearts

His will is: joy, thankfulness, and prayer (vv. 16-18)

- ❖ He is a relational, joyful God
 - He gives us reasons to have joy and gratitude
 - He delights when we pray to Him, and is a God that is faithful to hear our prayers
- ❖ HE reveals His will to us!

His SPIRIT (v. 19)

- ❖ He sent His Helper down to aid us along the way, speaking to us and strengthening us in many different ways
- ❖ When rightly yielded to, this Spirit becomes a blazing FIRE in us

He is a God of purity (vv. 21-22)

- ❖ He knows what is good, and He desires that we keep all of what is bad/harmful out
- ❖ In the context of these two verses, we are looking at the truth of God

- There are countless warnings across the New Testament telling us to reject false prophets
- There are also countless verses showing us the value of the truth of the Gospel

He gives us wisdom to test prophecies

- ❖ It is important to test what is of God and what is not, He gives us His Spirit and His Word as tools to help in that
 - James 1:5 → He gives wisdom generously to those who pray for it

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

While we were out of step, fainthearted, and weak, the Lord was patient with us. We chose evil and yet, in His great love, He sent Jesus to die for us and the Helper to sustain us, so that we can walk in a new life of purity, joy, prayer, and gratitude.

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Look into which of the three groups someone is in

- ❖ Don't just get frustrated at obedience or admonish from impatience, but see people's hearts and ask why they may be walking in disobedience to the Lord. Walk alongside them in restoring them.

Be patient with EVERYONE

- ❖ Sanctification takes time, and is only possible with Jesus
 - For the believer, pursue righteousness alongside them, patiently waiting for them to begin to bear good fruit while the Lord heals them
 - Understand the grace and patience that the Lord has with you, so that you can more freely give it out
 - For the unbeliever, withhold judgement and be slow to anger, for they cannot help but pursue unrighteousness
 - You cannot blame an unbeliever for acting like one

Test everything

- ❖ Listen for the Spirit!
- ❖ Hold up Scripture alongside anything that you think might be from God. Give the Spirit the weight and time He deserves
 - Don't simply dismiss prophecies, or accept all of them without thought

Rejoice always, give thanks, pray constantly (to a persecuted people)

- ❖ Look to the goodness of the Gospel so we can live a brand new way in light of our circumstances
 - Even in persecution, suffering, grief, temptation, etc. this was the command for the people (rejoice, pray, give thanks)

Pursue a culture of peace within the church

- ❖ If you lead: labor (work hard), are over and among (exercise authority but do not abuse it; humble yourself to be among the people you lead), and admonish the right way (tough love, walking alongside those you admonish)

- ❖ If you are just a member: respect, esteem, and love authority

Big Idea: Cling to the Spirit who restores cultures and relationships.

Week 13 | 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

Text

What has happened leading into these verses?

This is the final passage of 1 Thessalonians. Everything leading up to this point has been his message of encouragement and exhortation to the Thessalonian believers. This is where he wraps it all up and puts a bow on it. The previous passage addressed corporate and personal worship, how to relate with other believers and with God. This is his benediction following his practical commands.

Summarize the Passage

Paul concludes his letter with a classic benediction. He sends the church out to live a life of holiness and purity, loving others and the Lord as he had called them to before. He points to the Lord who sustains in His calling. He ends with a farewell, as he leaves this young Christian family to grow in faith and love together before they meet/hear from each other again.

Are there any words or elements in the text that need defining, clarifying, contextualizing, etc.?

Definitions:

“Sanctify”

- ❖ ἁγιάζω (hagiazō) to sanctify
 - This happens after salvation, it is the slow process of God making you holier over time

“Body”

- ❖ σῶμα (sōma) body
 - Our physical being

“Spirit”

- ❖ πνεῦμα (pneuma) spirit/breath: spirit
 - the immaterial part of the inner person that can respond to God

“Soul”

- ❖ ψυχή (psuchē) soul
 - the immaterial (and eternal) part of inner person, often meaning the animate self

“Peace”

- ❖ εἰρήνη (eirēnē) peace
 - Harmony, wholeness, completeness, restoration

- Teachers often use the metaphor of a brick wall with no holes or cracks

Questions:

Why does he say to “greet one another with a holy kiss?”

“In that culture, the holy kiss was an expression of love and fellowship”¹⁰². Paul is calling them to be a community that is loving toward one another, and expressive in that love. This doesn’t mean that we have to change up cultural norms to obey this command. Cultural expressions vary in meaning depending on their context. What he is saying is to show outward affection to our brothers and sisters in Christ that makes them feel loved and welcome, not stepping over boundaries or being affectionate with lust in our hearts.

How can we be “kept blameless”?

Notice that, in this passage, the sanctification and the being “kept blameless” are both passive acts. Paul is not urging them to try harder to never sin again until Jesus returns. No, this is a prayer for the “God of Peace” to make you sin less, until you are ultimately sinless when Jesus returns. Until then, praise God that the blood of Jesus covers our multitude of sins.

^Note: this is similar to 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 [HERE](#)

What repetition (passage and letter), book themes, biblical references, and other literary elements do you see?

Repetition:

ἀδελφός (adelfos) brother - 7x

κύριος (kurios) lord: God - 6x

ἡμῶν (hēmōn) of us - 5x

Themes:

- ❖ Jesus’ return
- ❖ Sanctification
- ❖ Grace and Peace

References:

- ❖ 1 Thessalonians 1:1 → “Grace to you and Peace”

Other Literary Devices:

- ❖ Genre: Benediction (send off)
 - vv. 23-24 → Prayer

¹⁰² Duncan (2023), 149

- ❖ He ends the letter the same way he starts: with “grace”¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Duncan (2023), 151

Man

How do we see our need for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, and ultimately our need for salvation? How do we see mankind's condition in this passage? What echoes of the Fall do we see? What in this passage makes our hearts say "This is not how it is supposed to be"? How do we see that we are incomplete? Are there any sins, human limitations, suffering, evil, death, etc. in this passage?

Need sanctification/to be kept blameless (v. 23)

- ❖ Both of these statements are in the passive voice, indicating that there is no way to do these things on our own without God doing this work in us. Left to our own devices we are sinners in a downward spiral, it is only through Him where we can begin to put our sinful ways to death.

Doubt in His faithfulness when faced with His calling (v. 24)

- ❖ Paul gives command after command over the last two chapters of this letter. This could be disheartening to anybody, let alone new Christians facing persecution. Paul needs to remind them that the same God who called them to holiness, will be faithful in their sanctification.

We need grace and prayer (vv. 25, 28)

- ❖ Paul ends his letter with two main requests, prayer for him and grace for them. Even an apostle needs prayer, even these impressive believers need grace.

Need to be put under oath (v. 27)

- ❖ Often we underestimate our need to sit under God's teaching, so Paul feels the need to command it officially, so that we tend to this need

God

What do we learn about God's character from this passage? What parts of God's nature are on display?

God of Peace/Wholeness (v. 23)¹⁰⁴

- ❖ People sinned and found themselves separate from God in His holiness. Time and time again we sinned, hurting the relationship between God and man, but it was Him who made a way so that we could be together again
- ❖ Though we sinned against Him, He willingly sent His son to die for us, so that our relationship could have “Shalom” (be brought to wholeness, restored)

He offers us sanctification (v. 23)

- ❖ It is only through His power that we are able to walk in new life, abandoning sin and looking more like Jesus one day at a time

He keeps us blameless (v. 23)¹⁰⁵

- ❖ There are two major parts to this concept: God makes you blameless and keeps you
 - First, it is only by the blood of the Lamb that we can be seen as blameless, because of His sacrifice, His righteousness is applied to us, not by any work of our own
 - Second, it is only by His faithful hand that we continue to believe day by day. He holds onto the believer so that they never again depart
 - John Piper: “The fact that I wake up in the morning and am still a christian, is entirely due to the preserving grace of God. He has [kept] me.”

He's coming (v. 23)

- ❖ Time and time again this truth has littered the pages of 1 Thessalonians, that Jesus will return. What a blessing it is that the God of Heaven, who once dwelt with us in the Garden, sent His son to live with us and will send Him to return in the end

He calls us and is faithful (v. 24)¹⁰⁶

- ❖ After all of the commands given in the past two chapters, Paul give this encouragement: “He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it”

¹⁰⁴ *ESV study bible: English standard version.* (2023).

¹⁰⁵ Duncan (2023), 147

¹⁰⁶ Duncan (2023), 147

- ❖ The commitment of obedience to the Lord can be daunting, but remember, you are called by God Himself to be holy, and you will not do this on your own strength. It is through the faithfulness of our God that this work will be done in you
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 1:20

He wants a culture of affection (v. 26)

- ❖ Though we may not give “holy kisses” in our culture today, God desires that His children receive one another with warmth and love

His Word is necessary truth (v. 27)

- ❖ Paul's words here are not his own, He mentioned earlier in 1 Thessalonians that his words are not to be received as the words of mere men, but of God. It is crucial for us to sit under God's Word (because it is transformative, wisdom, etc.) so Paul puts them under oath to do it

God's grace (v. 28)¹⁰⁷

- ❖ Notice that Paul begins and ends this letter with grace. The truth of this grace undergirds everything in the letter. It is “the blessing that we all need every day”. It was by this grace that we are saved, and by His grace that we are able to be sanctified, walking in His ways.

How does this passage show us salvation through faith in Jesus?

It is only by God's grace that we are able to be sanctified and kept blameless. Jesus, through His death and resurrection, made a way that we, though we are sinners, could be counted as blameless in His sight. It was an act of grace that Jesus was sent to die for us, and it is through that same grace that we are saved and we are being made to look more and more like Jesus every day. He who has called you to Himself is faithful to complete this work.

¹⁰⁷ Duncan (2023), 151

Action

Are there any explicit commands we should obey?

Are there any examples we should follow?

If what the passage says is true of man/God, what are the logical actions that should follow?

How do the actions of the passage play out in your context?

What truths should you hold on to and meditate upon?

Rely on His sanctification and holiness

- ❖ Don't try to muster up your own sanctification, that will only lead you to frustration and exhaustion. Hold a high value of obedience and holiness, but pray to the Lord that He will grant you these things, and abide in Him so that His work will be done in you

Trust in His faithfulness to His calling

- ❖ When the Lord calls you into something (whether it is a specific calling to you like a certain vocation or opportunity, or a general calling such as the commands in this letter) trust that He is faithful to accomplish what He has called you to
 - We can live with peace because the One who calls us sustains us

Pray for your brothers/sisters

- ❖ If Paul needs prayers then we all need prayers. Don't be afraid to reach out to brother/sisters in Christ when you need prayer for anything, and be intentional to pray with, over, and for other believers

Lovingly greet one another

- ❖ Follow in our version of greeting one another with a holy kiss. Shake hands, give hugs, make handshakes, whatever is appropriate. Make sure people feel welcomed by you

Receive/Read the Word

- ❖ It is crucial to sit under God's teaching so make sure you listen to the Word with intentionality and humility.
- ❖ Let God's Word go from:
 - Your head (hear it and learn)
 - To your heart (believe it)
 - To your hands (let it change the way you live)
 - To your habitat (make change in the culture/environment around you)

Big Idea: He who has called you to Himself, is faithful to keep you and transform you by His grace.

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