

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

**A STUDY OF THE EPISTLES TO THE
THESSALONIANS**

VOLUME 47

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Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7901

This year we are studying Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, and it can be argued that chronologically they are the first letters we have to any of the churches of God. There are no letters from his first missionary journey, and the letter to Philippi—the first stop in Macedonia—is plainly much later.

Taking the gospel to Macedonia, and therefore Europe, was not in mind when Paul and Silas set out from Antioch, but the closing of doors by the Holy Spirit, and the important vision, compelled them (now joined by Timothy and Luke) to go there. The record is remarkable for the persecution and harassment associated with such a plainly God-ordered campaign, and contributors have pointed out that the perseverance and steadfastness of the workers are indications of their submission to divine leading and strengthening by the Holy Spirit. The part played by Silas and Timothy, and perhaps Luke, is vital in the development of the work and planting of the assembly, and the team concept is a very important consideration of Paul's work, here and elsewhere.

Consideration of the Thessalonians' conversion from idols to serve the living God, and their spiritual development should prove instructive and stimulating to students in churches of God, and Paul's mission and letters answer many of our own questions.

A. B. R.

Mr. GEORGE PRASHER, Jr.

In the minutes of the meeting that added Mr. G. Prasher, Jr. to the editors of Bible Studies it was said 'Editors of Bible Studies reported that much valuable help had been given them by our brother George Prasher Jr., of Manchester, and they desired... adding him to their number'. That was in 1943, and apart from the time when he was abroad on the Lord's work, Mr. Prasher has been very active

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on the magazine for over thirty years. His original writing, characterised by its high quality and clear style, has always been of great interest and help to Bible students, and his editorials and comments have greatly enhanced the value of Bible Studies. Readers have appreciated his clear interpretation of what have been, at times, very difficult passages and subjects, and he has made a massive contribution towards making Bible Studies the repository of sound Bible exposition that it is to the Fellowship.

Fellow editors have always found him gracious and congenial to work with, while wondering often at his prodigious capacity for work. He is going to join the editors of Needed Truth, but we are happy that he has agreed to make himself available for consultation for it is difficult to think of Bible Studies without 'G. P., Jr. ' Eds.

NOTE ON ENSAMPLE

The word 'ensample' is associated with 'imitate'. It is *tupos*, meaning a die, from *tupto*, to strike, as by repeated blows. The picture is of a die striking a metal blank, for example, until the imprint of the die is plain on the blank.

The word *tupos* (used 16 times) is translated in various ways according to the context, e. g. the print of the nails (John 20: 25); Adam was the figure of Him that was to come (Rom. 5: 14). Three times the word 'ensample' appears along with 'imitator'.

7. Phil. 3: 17—'Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which so walk, even as ye have us for an ensample'.

2. 1 Thes. 1: 6, 7—'And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord.... So that ye became an ensample to all that believe'.

3. 2 Thes. 3: 19—'... ourselves an ensample unto you that ye should imitate us'.

Consistent imitation makes the imitator more and more like his subject, and the figure of the die giving the blank its form introduces the thought of a permanent impress which becomes clearer with each blow. Rom. 6: 17 says 'But thanks be to God that whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form (*tupos*) of teaching whereunto ye were delivered... ye became servants of righteousness'. The Romans accepted the imprint

of the teaching and so were changed from bondservants of sin to bondservants of righteousness. In 1 Tim. 4: 12 Timothy was told to be an 'ensample to them that believe' and the list that follows reads like the repeated hammering of the die on the hearts and lives of the saints—'in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity', until they had the marks of the true and practical Christian. Similarly Titus is told 'In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works'. (2: 7). Timothy and Titus were to show in their lives what was right and in such a way as to mark the lives of others.

The outstanding thing about the Thessalonians as shown in 1 Thes. 1 is that the imitators became the ensample. They were so wonderfully established by their experience and obedience to the truth and to Paul that in turn they put their mark on others.

It is this cycle of imitators becoming ensamples that has given Christian disciples the same mark and characteristics down the ages.

A. B. R.

TAKING THE GOSPEL TO MACEDONIA

From Paisley: Paul's second apostolic journey took him into Europe beginning at Philippi, the first city in the district of Macedonia. After much labour and persecution, Paul and Silas moved on to Thessalonica via Amphipolis and Apollonia.

Unlike Philippi, Thessalonica had a synagogue, giving the apostle the opportunity of preaching the word directly to the Jews, in accordance with the principle 'to the Jew first, and also to the Greek' (Rom. 1: 16). It was also through Paul's preaching in the synagogue that the Greeks of the nobility heard the word. As was the custom in the cities of the Dispersion, the devout Gentiles of honourable estate were drawn to the synagogue. Indeed it was to the latter that Paul's preaching had its greatest appeal, such that after three sabbaths, there was of the Greeks who believed 'a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few' (Acts 17: 4).

This response from the Greeks stirred up the unbelieving Jews to jealousy in accordance with the divine plan (Rom. 10: 19). Thus the superficially pious Jews stirred up the rabble against the brethren setting the city in an uproar and

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dragging one Jason before the rulers. At this point the lives of Paul and Silas were in real danger causing them to be sent on under cover of night to the city of Bereoa.

Undaunted the apostle Paul went straight into the synagogue at Bereoa preaching the same message as had provoked the Jews in Thessalonica. Here again the response was good, the word being received 'with all readiness of mind' (Acts 17: 11). But this time Paul's word was compared daily with the writings of God to verify the truth of the apostle's teaching.

In addition to the Jews who believed there was a good response from many Greek men and women of honourable estate; but when the Jews in Thessalonica heard the report of the preaching in Bereoa, they pursued the Lord's servants with implacable wrath.

One of the lessons emerging from the narrative is that persecution is a stimulus to the spread of the gospel and its acceptance. Another lesson is of God's faithfulness in preserving the testimony among new born disciples. In the natural course of events we might have supposed that the departure of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy from the cities of Macedonia would have led to the ruin of the churches of God therein, but as Paul's epistles to the Philippians and the Thessalonians attest, God's grace overruled the expectation of man.

T. Summer hill

From Birkenhead: This was Paul's second missionary journey and in all he travelled some 2, 500 miles. The guidance of the Holy Spirit was upon the mission in every detail including the choice of companion (Acts 15: 36-40). Travel in those days must have been hazardous, but we read of the leading of the Holy Spirit again in Acts 16: 6, 7 in relation to their journey. Having reached Troas they were at the coast and a decision had to be made with regard to the direction of their voyage. Further guidance came in the form of a vision and Paul embarked for Macedonia. By way of Neapolis, Philippi and Amphipolis Paul and Silas reached Thessalonica [Comment 1]. Paul's approach to the spreading of the gospel appears to be according to a set pattern in that he preached in the synagogues (Acts 17: 1, 2). That the Holy Spirit controlled Paul's work is evident in that we read that Jews and Greeks believed and consorted with

Paul and Silas. Opposition however remained among some Jews and Paul and Silas were forced to flee to Berea where we read that converts having received the word 'examined the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so' (Acts 17: 11). Trouble was again stirred up against them and Paul was sent away by the 'brethren'.

We noticed that in Acts 16: 10 the pronoun 'they' is replaced by 'we' indicating a personal involvement in the happenings and it is suggested that Luke joined the party at this point in order to care for Paul.

Although Acts 16: 12 speaks of Philippi as first of the district, Thessalonica was, as Salonika still is, a busy port and a leading town of the area at which many of the religious leaders would gather, hence Paul's choice. Notwithstanding this we understand Philippi to be the first church of God to be established in Europe.

Some discussion took place on the different titles used in Acts 16: 6, 7 (i. e. Holy Spirit and Spirit of Jesus) and it was felt that on the basis of Ephesians 4 these were different titles given to the Holy Spirit.

R. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams

From Derby: The incidents in the suggested reading led us to consider divine guidance. Paul and his friends had intentions for Asia but were conscious of restraint by 'the Spirit of Jesus'.

We thought that Paul had a clear consciousness of God's forbidding; perhaps in a direct inner voice. Then came Paul's vision by night which we think was more than a dream—it had God's direction. We see therefore that God both leads and restrains His servants. This applies to ourselves; but we think that Paul had a greater awareness of God's speaking than we have. The man in Paul's vision may not have been a particular individual but the vision does suggest that God was working in Macedonia before the gospel was taken there.

In Thessalonica Paul's approach was orthodox in manner, that is in the synagogue, but it was new in subject content for he reasoned from the then recognised scriptures towards their fulfilment in the person of the Lord Jesus.

N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

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From Hamilton (Scotland): (i) Thessalonica was founded in 316 B. C. by Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's generals. The city was previously named Therme; one of the twenty-six cities in the district destroyed by soldiers under the command of Cassander, who re-named it after his wife, Alexander the Great's sister. Its splendid harbour and its excellent situation, at the junction of the road running north to the Danube and the Via Egnatia, the Roman road stretching across Macedonia to the Adriatic Sea, made it a most important commercial centre as well as being the administrative centre of the province.

(ii) *The Messengers.* In Acts 17: 1-5 we have the divine record showing the activity of Paul, Silas and Timothy.

- (a) The Place: a synagogue of the Jews (v. 1);
- (b) The Purpose: reasoned with them from the scriptures (v. 2);
- (c) The Pattern: opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that 'this Jesus whom I proclaim' (Gr. katangelo) is the Christ (v. 3);
- (d) The Product: and some of them were persuaded and consorted with Paul and Silas (v. 4).

However, in 1 Thes. 1: 5 we have enumerated the powerful effect of the Gospel.

(1) in power; (2) in the Holy Spirit; (3) and in *much assurance*. These three vital elements in the Gospel were channelled through the Scriptures and the personal, powerful witness of the messengers. In 1 Thes. 2 we have certain of their characteristics revealed: —

- (a) Their boldness: 'We waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God in much conflict' (vs. 1-2).
- (b) Their faithfulness: 'approved of God to be intrusted with the Gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God' (vs. 3-6).
- (c) Their tenderness: 'but we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children' (vs. 7-9).
- (d) Their firmness: 'as a father with his own children exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying (vs. 10-12).

(iii) *The Church of God in Thessalonica.* Concise yet

profound are the words used to describe the motivating force of faith in the lives of the saints in the Church of God in Thessalonica (**1 Thes. 1: 9-10**).

- (a) 'ye turned *unto* (Gr. *pros*) God from idols';
- (b) 'to *serve* (Gr. *douleuo*) a living and true God';
- (c) 'to *wait* for His Son from heaven'.

Matthew Carruthers

From Hayes: Why were Paul and his companions forbidden by the Spirit to preach in Asia or go into Bithynia? Could it be that the Spirit knew that Philippi and Thessalonica were just ripe for the Gospel at this particular time? Would Paul and his companions have missed Lydia if they had delayed? We are not told. Also we are not told how the Spirit made known His will. This led us to discuss guidance in our own lives. An open mind and a complete willingness to accept the guidance, however different the path may be from that which we would choose for ourselves, are prerequisites for knowing the Holy Spirit's leading.

Is it possible for believers to be granted today a clear vision as Paul was, or was this confined to the apostles and the first days of this dispensation? [Comment 2].

Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia and is still a large and flourishing town. It was on the Egnatian Way, the road which started at Apollonia, on the eastern shore of the Adriatic opposite to Brundisium, which was linked to Rome by the Appian Way. The Egnatian Way went eastward to Byzantium (Istanbul) and therefore linked the Western and Eastern parts of the Roman Empire. There was a large Jewish community in Thessalonica and Paul went to them first (as was his custom) with the message that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and that God had raised Him from the dead.

It is evident from the Gospels and the Acts that many Gentiles worshipped the true God revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures, having found no satisfaction in the myths concerning the Greek and Roman gods. Many such attended the synagogue in Thessalonica and these received the message more readily than the Jews. This caused the Jews to be jealous, when they saw the devout Greeks, including women influential in the city accepting the teaching of Paul and a disturbance followed. Unwittingly they paid a great tribute to **Paul** and his companions—they that have turned

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the world upside down'. This was less than twenty years after the Crucifixion. In order to avoid further disturbance, which might bring trouble to those who had received the message, Paul and Silas were sent to Bereoa.

It is difficult to ascertain how long Paul was in Thessalonica. Reading the narrative in the Acts, one first gets the impression that it was three weeks but it seems incredible that a church could have been planted and built up in that time [Comment 3]. From 1 Thes. 2: 9 it appears that Paul earned his living whilst preaching and teaching and this suggests an extended stay. C. R. Stoner

From Kingston-upon-Thames: *Background and Preparation.* Taking the gospel to Macedonia was the work of Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke on what is often described as Paul's second missionary journey.

In the early days following Paul's conversion and during his first journey, the names of Barnabas and Saul are often linked together and Barnabas is always named first. This begins to change when Saul becomes Paul and from ch. 13: 43, Paul begins to take a leading part in the Lord's work. What is seen here is the emergence of the 'apostle of Gentiles' (Rom. 11: 13 see also Acts 9: 15, 22: 21) and his preparation by God for the work in Macedonia. The way was thus prepared for a major step forward in obeying the Lord's commandment (Mat. 28: 19); Paul did so with the full support and fellowship of his brethren.

Following the first journey, Paul and Barnabas were sent by the brethren in Antioch to Jerusalem to speak with the apostles and elders on the matter of the keeping of the law of Moses. After the ensuing conferences, Paul and Barnabas were sent back to Antioch, with Judas and Silas, carrying an epistle from the apostles and elders to the Gentile believers (15: 23-29).

After some time Judas returned to Jerusalem and Paul, realising the need of nourishment for young growth (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 6) made known his desire to visit brethren in the cities where he had previously preached the gospel (15: 36). The Church of God in Antioch had teachers and prophets (13: 1) thus making a healthy launching point for the work. Paul and Barnabas disagreed as to whom they should take with them, resulting in 'a sharp contention' and the parting

asunder of the two men who had been strong companions and worked so hard and well in the work of the Lord, hazarding their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (9: 27; 11: 25-30; 12: 25; 13 and 14) 'Paul chose Silas and went forth, being commended by the brethren' (15: 40—another example of unity in action) and so started his journey visiting the churches and delivering the decrees from Jerusalem (16: 4).

The journey through Cilicia, Galatia, Phrygia and Asia

At Lystra Paul met Timothy who was probably saved on the occasion of Paul's previous visit (1 Tim. 1: 2). An important note on Timothy's background is found in 2 Tim. 3: 14-15. He was well known and commended in the district for his godly work (16: 2). Paul desired that Timothy should join him and Silas on the journey but because his father was a Gentile and to minimise the risk of offence, Paul found it expedient to circumcise him (16: 3).

The guidance of the Holy Spirit is clearly stated in 16: 6, 7. The Spirit guided them in the matters of *journeying* and *speaking*. There was to be no delay nor detour. They went through' (15: 41, 16: 4, 16: 6) 'passing by' (16: 8) 'straight-way' (16: 10) 'straight course' (16: 11). Unbeknown to them their whole journey was a direct course for Macedonia. This was not the time in God's purpose for further preaching in areas where Paul and Barnabas had before been shamefully treated (13: 50; 14: 5, 19) and which had Churches of God as lights of testimony. Although prayer is not mentioned in connection with this journey, it is nevertheless implied, in that they recognised and acknowledged the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They must have known the experience of watching and praying (Col. 4: 2), the corresponding godly fear and meekness (Ps. 25: 9), and the willingness to do His will and not their own (John 7: 17) for they were in no doubt as to who was guiding them (16: 6, 7, 10 cp. 1 Thes. 2: 18). It is often reasoned that because of the change from 'they' (16: 8) to 'we' (16: 10) Luke joined Paul, Silas and Timothy at Troas. A similar change of words occurs in 15: 41 'he'; 16: 1 'he' and 16: 4 'they'. Using the same kind of reasoning we might conclude that Paul travelled alone through Syria and Cilicia to Derbe and Lystra before being joined by Silas.

P. J. Brennan

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From Lagos: 'Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come' (Josh. 5: 13-14). Joshua soon learned that the leadership was the Lord's and he was but instrumental in the fulfilment of God's plans. The work whereunto I have called them' presupposes a plan to be fulfilled under the divine Holy Spirit (Acts 13: 2). The command to separate Barnabas and Saul was to the Church of God in Antioch; and with the commendation of the brethren 'from thence they sailed' (Acts 13: 4).

At the beginning of the second phase of the same 'work' which must develop towards the Macedonian province, the two leaders, Paul and Barnabas, were brought to test over the matter of John Mark. Humility of spirit and the discernment of the Holy Spirit's leading were the crucial issues over which Barnabas sadly stumbled when he took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. Paul and Silas teamed up and were distinguished 'being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord' (Acts 15: 40). At Lystra the team welcomed Timothy 'the son of a Jewess which believed . . . well reported of by the brethren' (Acts 16: 1, 2). The change from 'they' (Acts 16: 4, 6-8) to 'we' (16:: 10, 11) suggests the inclusion of Luke 'the beloved physician' in the team at Troas.

The Gospel of the grace of God is 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 4: 6). It reveals the need of sin-depraved hearts to build on the foundation of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The glory revealed 'in the face of Jesus Christ' bespeaks God's power to set free and to exalt the repentant sinner from the pit of sin-corruption' into the liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. 8: 21). These are the unsearchable riches of Christ which Lydia, the purple seller, the demoniac soothsaying maid and the Roman jailor embraced. We note the widely different life background of these converts, and regardless of this, God demonstrated His power and grace 'in all wisdom and prudence'. Lydia and her household hearing 'the things which were spoken by Paul' believed and were baptized. The Roman jailor 'and all his' believed the word of the Lord and the same hour of the night they were baptized (Acts 16). The pattern of church planting in Philippi was the same

as in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 41-42). Thessalonica and Berea saw the repeats of the work by the same divine Holy Spirit in the hearts of 'women... and of men, not a few' culminating in churches of God being planted in both cities (Acts 17: 1-15).

E. Bassey, S. Coker

From Leeds: In Acts 16 and 17 we saw how very much the early evangelists were led of the Spirit to areas which He knew were 'white unto harvest'. Bearing in mind Paul's direct revelations from Christ we find it only natural for the Spirit of Jesus to be mentioned as well as the Holy Spirit. Although not synonymous we felt that the unity of the Trinity was illustrated in this term [Comment 4]. The identity of the man from Macedonia is open to question but the specific request to 'come over... and help us' could not be ignored by the apostle and his team. Perhaps this call finally shows the different avenues of service, Paul to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews. Even so in his entry to Macedonia, Paul went first to those who knew about God and then on to the Greeks. His searching out of the Jewish community, both in Philippi beside the river, and in Thessalonica is evidence of his desire to tell those of his own race the 'good news' of salvation. The Jews already expected a Messiah and This Jesus, whom I proclaim unto you, is the Christ' said Paul to the assembly in the synagogue at Thessalonica. Step by step Paul reasoned, opened and alleged about His Saviour. Naturally there were those who rebelled against the Gospel but this seemed to strengthen those who believed. We see in Acts how much Paul relied on faith in his God and the guidance of the Spirit in his work of proclamation and establishment.

Going out from the Council of Jerusalem Paul had a great commission of his own to people far away from the time and life of Christ; to people who worshipped foreign gods and knew not the one true God. How wise Paul was to write about the whole armour of God, knowing from his own experiences how much depended on reliance on the true Rock of our Salvation! In every situation we find Paul in, in his outreach, we see him relying on God his Father, and appealing to Him for aid in every way. He could write about the lashes he received and the ill treatment meted out to him, borne for the sake of the Gospel. *P. M. Jefferson*

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From Liverpool: (1) *Acts 16: 6-12*. Paul, Silas and Timothy were working in an area which seemed to them to have potential for further outreach. God, however, had other plans and they were directed by the Holy Spirit until they reached the sea. The reason soon became clear, the harvest field was waiting over the sea in Europe. God's Spirit overruled what seemed to be the obvious plan of action, and those in close contact did not miss His leading. It is obvious from the change to the personal pronoun (v. 10) that Luke has now joined the party for the first time.

(2) *Acts 16: 6-7; 1 Thes. 2: 18*. We wondered how we could distinguish between the Holy Spirit saying: 'No, don't go there', and Satan hindering the work of the Lord. We noted that the word 'forbidden' (16: 6) means to hinder or restrain, and 'did not allow' (16: 7) means to not permit, whereas 'hindered' (1 Thes. 2: 18) means to cut into, used of 'placing an obstacle sharply in the path; hence metaphorically, of detaining a person unnecessarily' (Vine). The forbidding of the Holy Spirit will always bring to light some alternative course of action, whereas Satan would seek to bring all activity to a halt, and to do so he will use methods which God's Spirit would not use.

(3) *Acts 17: 1-15*. We saw here the principle found to be true even today that where the Lord works, Satan is all too ready to attack and to try to bring the work to an end. From 1 Thes. 1: 6 and 2: 14 it is apparent that the converts continued to undergo persecution even after Paul's departure. It is worthy of note that today's problems with unruly crowds roused by hatred is not a new phenomena.

Paul's plan of attack, he 'reasoned with them from the Scriptures' is important for us to follow today in our gospel preaching, not only in public but whenever we witness for the Lord. Don't be surprised if it ends in opposition!

As a final point the attitude of the Bereans is exemplary. We should accept nothing without 'examining the Scriptures to see if these things are so' (17: 11 RSV).

David Webster, Tony Jones

From Melbourne: Paul received visions from the Lord on numerous occasions, including the one calling him to Macedonia. Indeed, his spiritual life started with the vision on the Damascus road. On each occasion the words 'I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision' were true of Paul's

response. We discussed how he received the vision. Was he asleep at the time? Was it in the form of a dream? However, we were agreed that visions such as the apostle received, are not given in our day [Comment 5]. God makes His will clear to us but not by visions. In Thessalonica Paul knew how to reason with his hearers out of the Scriptures. It is not just enough for us today to be familiar with the Scriptures. We must also know how 'to reason' as Paul did. Yet in Thessalonica he was hindered in his work by his own people, the Jews. These Jews who caused the uproar would compare with the 'sons of Belial' of the Old Testament. We noticed what they had to say about these early Christians, These that have turned the world upside down.... ' Such was the effect of the Holy Spirit's power in those early days. Paul allowed himself to be protected by the brethren and soon we find him in Berea. As in Thessalonica he again headed in Berea for the 'synagogue of the Jews'. Nothing stopped the great apostle from presenting the risen Christ, who had suffered on Calvary, to his own people. The Bereans, more noble than the Thessalonians, searched the Scriptures daily. May there be many 'noble' Christians today who 'daily' use their Bibles! The Bereans reminded us of Apollos mentioned in Acts 18: 24, who was mighty in the Scriptures. A knowledge of God's word will make us 'noble' and 'mighty'.

M. McFarlane, D. Mawhinney

From Methil: It is good to notice the leading of the divine Spirit of God in the movements of the brethren and that fellowship of subjection, the one to the other, in the matter of the testimony. They first of all were subject to the Spirit Himself, having been forbidden of Him meanwhile to speak the word in Asia (16: 6) and would again have gone into Bithynia, but again the Spirit suffered them not. Paul in his vision at Troas saw the man of Macedonia, and heard his appeal, 'come over into Macedonia, and help us'. It was a clear call, for we hear no further indications of the Spirit to anything else. We note, too, the change of pronoun in verse 10, from 'they' to 'we'; so that Paul, Silas (15: 40), Timothy (16: 1-3) and Luke, the writer, formed the company.

Paul in ch. 17 keeps to the principle 'to the Jew first', an expression which we have often in the Acts, which Romans

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and other scriptures support; see also the Lord's words to the Samaritan woman (John 4: 22). He preaches a suffering Christ, His resurrection, and the fact that 'This Jesus whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ'. It would seem that some Jews believed (17: 4). Among those who had heard and believed, and **who** constituted the greater number, were devout Greeks and chief women. It would seem that some of those were already Jewish proselytes but that many indeed were Gentiles who 'turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true **God**' (1 Thes. 1: 9).

The servants of the **Lord** were there in Thessalonica for possibly less than three full weeks [See Comment 3], but a mighty work for the Lord was accomplished by them. We are shown (vv. 5-9) **how** low the opposing Jews could stoop when 'moved with jealousy'—the same motive which prompted the Jews to deliver up the Lord Jesus to death (Mat. 27: 17-18). Here they stirred up the loiterers, market loungers and **a** general rabble, against the servants of the Lord, who with such power of the Spirit in their presentation of the gospel had, as these Jews were forced to admit, 'turned the world upside down'.

Some of us thought that v. 11 would indicate that it was the Jews of Berea who 'were more noble' than those Jews of Thessalonica (vv. 11-12) [Comment 6].

Again in Berea **we** find the hostile Jews from Thessalonica stirring up strife against the apostles, and inciting the mob as they had already done in Thessalonica.

Thus we have the result of the gospel proclaimed in Macedonia; a Church of God in Thessalonica; a good work done in Berea; many 'turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come' (1 Thes. 1: 19, 10).

Great was the deliverance they had, who thus turned from idols not only to know about a true and living God, but to know Him as Father, the relationship into which the Lord Jesus, through His blessed Person and work of redemption has brought all believers.

Andrew McIlree, Snr.

From Nottingham: It is important as we begin this study to notice that this was God's work in which Paul, Silas and Timothy were engaged. They were simply His servants,

going where He led, and for no other reason. So, when they were forbidden by Him to speak the word in Asia, they obeyed knowing that it was the Lord's work and His tinning would be perfect. Later on, the gospel was to be preached in Asia and churches of God planted.

As they passed through Phrygia and Galatia the way was made clearer to them, firstly by another 'closed door' as the Holy Spirit prevented them from going into Bithynia. They now travelled to Troas on the coast and here the Lord both confirmed to them that they were where He wanted them and showed them where to go next. They made arrangements immediately to go to Macedonia concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel there. They needed that assurance certainly for they were called to suffer for the gospel and faced great opposition and open hostility.

In Thessalonica they followed Paul's usual custom of going in the first instance to those who knew the Scriptures and who were used to discussing them. The place Paul went to was the synagogue where he knew he would find such people. It would appear that he had the freedom there to read and discuss the Scriptures.

His message was in two parts:

- (i) that the Christ must suffer and rise from the dead and,
- (ii) that the Jesus he proclaimed was in fact the Christ.

It is interesting to note how in his preaching and discussions he considered his audience and tailored his message to meet their needs. It would be no use proving that Christ must suffer if his hearers had no conception of Christ. That is often the case today. This audience knew about the Messiah, that mighty, triumphant One who would overthrow Gentile rule and reign Himself. They did not realise that the Christ must suffer and die first, nor that He would rise from the dead. This then was Paul's starting point, bringing God's message to meet their needs. He made clear the issues and caused a division among them, some accepting the message but others reacting violently against it. *Paul Webster*

COMMENTS

1. **(Birkenhead):** Accompanied by Timothy and Luke.

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2. (Hayes): Paul's experience of restraint by the Holy Spirit plus the vision of the man calling him to Macedonia is not the sort of experience reported by many disciples today, and your own paper states the 'prerequisites for knowing the Holy Spirit's leading', without signs associated with apostolic gifts and times. Some disciples today say they have had such visions, but they are not necessary by any means.

3. (Hayes): Paul was in the synagogue three sabbath days and then left it, but it is likely that he stayed in the house of Jason for some time; which would explain why Jason's house was later assaulted. Paul says the Philippians 'sent once and again unto my need' (Phil. 4: 16) and they were about 100 miles from Thessalonica, so it can be supposed that this was over a longer period than three weeks, if they sent several times. In addition the work of Silas and Timothy must have been very important. They stayed on after Paul went to Athens, and then were apparently sent back to Thessalonica, later to join the apostle in Corinth (Acts 17: 14, 15; 1 Thes. 3: 1, 2; Acts 18: 5).

4. (Leeds): We believe these terms are two of the titles of the Holy Spirit.

5. (Melbourne): Some today do profess to having 'visions' or metaphysical experiences, but they are not a necessary sign of divine leading.
A. B. R.

6. (Methil): That is the correct interpretation of the verse, in my opinion. It is the Jews in Berea who are being compared with the Jews in Thessalonica.
J. K. D. J.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Liverpool:

Does lack of persecution and problems in a work for God mean that it is not of God?

Surely not! But we should not be surprised that the devil is busy trying to destroy the work of God.

A. B. R.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7902

Having considered in our first study subject the historical account of the work in Macedonia, as given in Acts 17: 1-15, we now proceed to the consideration of the letters written to the Thessalonian church. These letters are probably the first inspired epistles to come from the Apostle Paul; the first instalment of the major contribution he was to make to the collection of inspired writings that would eventually constitute the canon of New Testament Scripture.

There is fairly general agreement in dating this first epistle at about 52 A.D. and in the designating of Corinth as the place from which it was written.

Paul was fully occupied in the early days of his labours in Corinth; there was the daily toil at the tentmakers trade, by which means he supported himself and others financially, and the weekly Sabbath day reasonings in the Jewish synagogue, yet in thought he was often back in Macedonia, and in his prayers the Thessalonian saints were continually remembered.

The good report that Silas and Timothy brought back from Macedonia gave great relief of spirit to Paul and it was with joy that he wrote to commend the Thessalonians for their steadfastness and zeal, to comfort them in their afflictions, to impart further instruction to them, and give expression of his affection for them. Paul links the names of his co-workers Silvanus and Timothy with his own in the opening salutations; they shared in his concern and in his joy (see Acts 18: 5; 1 Thess. 3: 6). *J.K.D.J.*

ACCORDING TO THE RULES: NOTES ON THE OCCURRENCE OF STOICHEO AND STOICHEION

The root of these words is well shown by its first occurrence in the Scriptures. When Paul went to the Temple of the Jews (Acts 21: 24) the brethren at Jerusalem were most concerned that he and his companions stick rigidly to the

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letter of the Law so that the many thousands of the Jews who believed would be convinced that 'thou thyself also walkest orderly (stoicheo), keeping the law'. There was a Law. It set rigid codes of practice. To observe them exactly and scrupulously was to walk orderly or *stoicheo*.

Whatever may have been the right or wrongs of the action proposed to Paul there can be no doubt that God desires that all men 'walk in the steps of our father Abraham' (Rom. 4: 12). That is to say, just as Abraham stepped out in faith and was (in New Testament language) saved, so must all men if they, too, are to be saved. In our day all men must follow strictly and closely his example and place their entire faith in the message they have received from God. Today, of course, this means accepting by faith the work done by the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary as being entirely sufficient for salvation. Such 'walking in the steps' of Romans 4: 12 is again a translation of the verb *stoicheo*.

It is well known that when Abraham so stepped out in faith he turned his back on the highly civilised world of his day. It is of course so with the believer today though, alas, many fail to maintain or perhaps realise what they have done. This is because the world has its own ways, rules and conventions that, wittingly or otherwise, it slavishly follows, and which are deeply embedded in its inhabitants. These rules are described as the 'rudiments (*stoicheion*) of the world'. In that these enslave the sinner, whether a Jew (Gal. 4: 3) or a Gentile (Gal. 4: 9), they spring from the deceitfulness of the human heart, but the bondage is increased by external forces of evil, especially the traditions of men (Col. 2: 8, 20). Thus the world or society of men has its way or walk or conventions. It has certain fundamental principles which are natural to it and which it expects its sons rigidly to observe just as slaves must rigidly observe the rules laid down by their owners. Such rudiments of the world are of course directly opposed to Christ (Col. 2: 8).

There is on the other hand a corresponding way or course or set of rules according to which the child of God is expected to walk. This of course answers to the nature of the new-born heart and similarly has its basic principles which are described as 'the rudiments of the first principles (*stoicheion*) of the oracles of God' (Heb. 5: 12). These are

expanded for us in such scriptures as 'if we live by the Spirit by the Spirit let us also walk' (Gal. 5: 25); 'as many as shall walk by this rule' (Gal. 6: 16) (where the rule is 'far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'); and 'by that same rule let us walk' (Phil. 3: 16) (where the rule is the pressing 'on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' Phil. 3: 14). In all these cases 'walk' is *stoicheo* and has in view the rigid observance by the believer of the fundamental principles or rules of living which it is in his new-born nature to observe.

Thus the consistent use of these words in all the scriptures has in view the existence of a set of rules or elementary principles (*stoicheion*) which adherents are expected rigidly to observe or walk according to (*stoicheo*). This being so some insight may be gained into the elements (*stoicheion*) which are to melt or be dissolved (2 Peter 3: 11, 12). Just as the world of sinners conforms to rules of conduct and just as believers similarly are enjoined to observe strictly a rule of conduct, so the natural world of physical objects is organised according to strict patterns, rules or elementary principles. These are sometimes called 'laws' and are the objects of scientific study and evaluation. We may thus conclude that in the day of the Lord these very so-called 'laws of nature', the apparent order and pattern of the material universe, the rules or elements by which man understands something of its nature or essence, will be dissolved or loosed. Matter as we know it will cease to exist. Thus we are of the opinion that the New Heaven and the New Earth are in no meaningful way the present heaven and earth renovated or restructured but are brand new and will, if it is appropriate to say so, be subject to new 'laws of nature'.

In summary then we may say that just as the material world may be seen as functioning according to certain rules or principles so the world of men has its way too. The latter are against God and His Son and just as they will be removed in eternal fire so too will the scene of their operation, the material universe, be destroyed by fire. It is the purpose of God to create by the new birth a new race of men, which race has its own principles of faith and conduct which, though differing somewhat from age to age, are also

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to be carefully observed. And so it is fitting for such new creatures that the Lord should prepare for them a New Earth and New Heavens wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3: 13). *Ian E. Penn*

TURNING TO GOD FROM IDOLS (1 Thes. 1: 1-10)

From Birkenhead: The conversion of those in Thessalonica must have been very remarkable in that they turned from idol worship to serve a living and true God. The whole tenor of the chapter is summed up in the word 'serve' since Paul is commending them for their behaviour and attitude.

Although the mode of address at the opening of the letter is unusual 'unto the church of the Thessalonians', it is the following words which are of the greatest importance 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' [Comment 1].

Paul evidently had a very warm place in his heart for this church which had so closely followed his teaching and example. He gave thanks 'always' for them in prayer and was deeply impressed by the three characteristics of their devotion.

The first of these is their 'work of faith'. It is stated that they not only heard the gospel, but they acknowledged it as coming from God, and recognised the work of the Holy Spirit amongst them. They also accepted that being elect of God they were chosen by Him and that no glory attached to them for their choice [Comment 9].

Secondly, reference is made to their labour of love' (v. 3). That they recognised not only the necessity to trust in the gospel but also the consequent duty to preach it, was applauded by Paul when he referred to the spreading abroad of the word. He regarded the church as an example to be followed by the others established in the area. These achievements were attained in the face of much affliction surrounding their own hearing of the gospel, but this was outweighed by their joy in the fact that the Holy Spirit was among them. In this connection they received yet another commendation from the apostle in that they became imitators of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy and also of the Lord.

The third characteristic of the church which is mentioned is the hope they had in the return of the Lord Jesus, de-

scribed as their 'patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ' (v. 3). Their labours were supported and difficulties diminished by their thoughts being focused upon the return of their Saviour and by their assurance of deliverance from the 'wrath to come'.
R. C. Halpin, G. H. Roberts

From Derby: The subject of the month's study is found in 1 Thes. 1: 9 but there is much more in the chapter.

The present subject comes in a pastoral letter to a church. This letter was addressed largely to the Gentile brethren for it was they who had been idolaters [Comment 2]. Israel had been idolatrous in the distant past but the Jews in Thessalonica were probably free from that sin [Comment 3]. Paul had two different tasks. One was to convert the Jews to the Lord Jesus as the Christ, and the other was to persuade the Gentiles of the worthlessness of idolatry and the soundness of the Jews' belief in God and then of the revelation of God in the person of the Lord Jesus [Comment 4].

In Thessalonica most of the opposition was from the Jews; in other places it was from those who indulged in, or profited from, idol worship.

We considered the meaning of the word 'serve' in verse 9 and felt that it had the thought of bondservice rather than that of deacon service. It is the kind of service envisaged by the Lord Jesus in His temptation when He said: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve' (Mat. 4: 10) [Comment 5].

Also noted was the complete change round in the action of the Thessalonians. They turned from idols to the living God.

We noted the nature of the work in Thessalonica as shown in verse 5. This was firstly the work of the Holy Spirit; but the character of the apostle and his friends also had its bearing on the behaviour of those who became believers. This has its lesson for us.
N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

From Hamilton, Scotland: 'Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election' (1 Thess. 1: 4). The words *brother* or *brethren* (*Adelphos*) are used by the Holy Spirit more than 300 times in the New Testament. In Pauline usage the

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simple '*adelphoi*' of address occurs about: —

20 times in 1 Corinthians; 7 times in 2 Thessalonians;
 14 times in 1 Thessalonians; 6 times in Philippians;
 9 times in Galatians; 3 times in 2 Corinthians.

Cf. 'my brethren' (Rom. 9: 3; 15: 14), 'my brethren beloved' (Phil. 4: 1). The frequency of usage in 1 Thes. is indicative of Paul's love for the saints; furthermore this affectionate address is strengthened by the following phrase 'beloved of God', (Gk) *Egapemenoι upo tou theou* (v. 4) a phrase which like 'beloved of the Lord' (2 Thes. 2: 13) is unique in the New Testament.

The apostle continues and applies the next point clearly 'your election'. It is important in our study of election to note and give heed to the various Greek terms used and to their immediate context. The term for election in 1 Thes. 1: 4 is *ekloge* translated in the R. V. of Acts 9: 15 as 'chosen' but as 'election' in Rom. 9: 11; 11: 5; 7, 28; 1 Thes. 1: 4; 2 Pet. 1: 10.

However, there are other Greek terms used in the teaching of election in the New Testament: —

				R. V.
(a)	<i>Eklego</i>	1 Cor. 1: 27	(2)	Chose
		Eph. 1: 4		Chose
(b)	<i>Eklektos</i>	Rom. 8: 33		Elect
		Col. 3: 12		Elect
		Titus 1: 1		Elect
		1 Pet. 1: 1		Elect

Another phrase much loved by the apostle is 'your faith':
 1: 8 'in every place your faith to Godward is gone forth'
 3: 2 'to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith'
 3: 5 'that I might know your faith'
 3: 6 Timothy came... brought us glad tidings of your faith'
 3: 7 'we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith'
 3: 10 'Night and day praying exceedingly... and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith'.

M. Carruthers

From Kingston-upon-Thames: Whilst this letter to the Thessalonian church is stated as having been written by Paul,

Silvanus and Timothy, it does seem as if Paul is the main author (1 Thes. 2: 18; 3: 4, 5). However, it is undoubtedly true that all three would still have a great interest in this church after their experiences in that place. (It is presumed that the 'Silvanus' of v. 1 is the 'Silas' of Acts 17: 1-15).

The letter opens with the phrase 'the church... in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (v. 1) which can be compared with the expression used by the Lord in one of His prayers to His Father (John 17: 20, 21). It illustrates the perfect unity that exists between the Father, Son and the church, which is a powerful testimony.

The writers then go on to say that they always give thanks to God for the church and give their reasons for expressing this thanks (vv. 2, 3). Here, as in the letters to the churches in Colossae, Corinth and Thyatira (Col. 1: 4, 5; 1 Cor. 13: 13; Rev. 2: 19), an association is made between faith, hope and love [Comment 6]. Here in particular is the outworking of these attributes. The Thessalonians performed works because of their faith, and worked above and beyond the call of duty because of their love, and it was the hope that they had that gave them the strength to do these—as it should also be with us (see also James 2: 14; Titus 3: 7, 8; Col. 3: 17; 2 Thes. 2: 17; 1 John 3: 18).

Despite the way the evangelists had been treated in Thessalonica, they could see that the Holy Spirit had convicted some, and that they had not preached in vain (vv. 5, 6). The authors also state the truth of predestination. Thus, whilst the Thessalonians who accepted the gospel had exercised their own free will, the authors could see how God had chosen them aforetime (v. 5, see also Eph. 1: 4).

This church certainly was the light of its world (Mat. 5: 14). Praise was heaped upon the Thessalonians for their faith (v. 8). These persons had gone through a dramatic change in their lives, and it was apparent to the whole region. Paul and his companions knew the atmosphere of hostility in which these Christians would be as a result of this change from their own experiences in Thessalonica.

The writers then touch upon one of the great hopes of the Christian; that of the coming again of Christ (v. 10). This subject is dealt with in much greater depth later in the letter.

R.

I. Hickling

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From Leeds: Three men laboured much in three main places in Macedonia, in Thessalonica, Philippi and Berea. We know that churches of God were established at Thessalonica and Philippi, but possibly one was also established at Berea. It is clear that the Berean Jews are commended in that they were considered more noble than those of Thessalonica for they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily to see for themselves that these things were so (Acts 17: 11).

Most commentators agree that the first epistle to Thessalonica was the first epistle to be written by Paul and that it contains the first use of Greek in the Scriptures.

It was with the stripes caused by the Philippian lictors still unhealed on their back (Acts 16: 23) that Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica for the first time (Acts 17: 1). They were men who certainly bore about, in their bodies, the marks of Jesus (Gal. 6: 17). Paul speaks of having received stripes without measure (**2 Cor. 11: 23**). As they themselves suffered, they preached of the suffering Saviour (Acts 17: 3), the One who was wounded for *our* transgressions, who was bruised for *our* iniquities, and with whose stripes *we* are healed (Is. 53: 5). The unity of those in the church of God in Thessalonica is seen (v. 1). It was the Lord's expressed desire that all may be one (John 17: 20, 21). In the giving of thanks and prayers for the saints (v. 3) remembrance is made not only of their faith, love and hope, but their *work* of faith, their *labour* of love, and their *patience* of hope. These are a trio of pairs of good things to remember—faith, hope, love—work, toil and endurance.

The saints of God have a faith that works, and its out-working should always be manifested. Faith without works is dead (Jas. 2: 17). Love toils, it suffers long (1 Cor. 13: 4), but when faith might falter, love, though weary, continues. There may come a time when love may cease, because the toil seems endless, then hope, especially the hope we have in our Lord (Rom. 5: 1-6) sees the limit in our toil and goes on to the goal ahead. It is a hope that endures.

Those in the church of God in Thessalonica sounded out the reason of the hope that was in them (1 Pet. 3: 15).

Musical instruments are things without life yet they give out sounds (1 Cor. 14: 7). They must produce a clear distinction of sounds (1 Cor. 14: 8). Men of God, in the Spirit,

are those alive unto God; living unto God, they are to give out a sound that is clear and true. *H. R. Dodge*

From Liverpool: Paul begins his letter with a unique phrase: 'unto **the** church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'. In his thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' faith the following points struck us as particularly important: —

'Our prayers' (v. 2)

Prayer was a characteristic of Paul's work, and he must have spent many hours in joyful, thankful intercession. Obviously the church here was growing spiritually, yet Paul realised that prayer should not only be made for churches with problems. To be effective witnesses we must do more praying and preaching.

'Work of faith and labour of love' (v. 3)

In noting that all work is not labour it was suggested that the 'work of faith' is toward God, while the 'labour of love' is toward men [Comment 10]. Work is the outcome of faith (see James 2: 17, etc.) producing positive action (vv. 8, 9). Whilst waiting for the Lord to come again they were (i) spreading the gospel and (ii) helping to encourage other Christians (v. 7).

'Our gospel' (v. 5)

We came to the conclusion that the use of the term 'our' is related to the fact that the gospel became part of Paul and his two helpers. It is an indication of the solemn responsibility that rests upon all of us. Gal. 1: 11-12 shows us that he had not made it up, but received it from the Lord.

'In power' (v. 5)

The gospel is the power (see Rom. 1: 16; 1 Cor. 2: 4): so great was its effect that they were accused of turning the world upside down (Acts 17: 6). If the gospel had come only as words there would have been no Thessalonian church. Such was the power of the gospel that it noticeably affected Paul's life so that he was able to convince them of the truth, the Holy Spirit convicting. Paul practised what he preached.

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'An ensample' (v. 7)

Faith thrives particularly in persecution and affliction. Satan seemed to be at his busiest, yet such was their faith that they became a model for other believers to follow. Instead of ruining their faith Satan's efforts resulted in their faith being known miles away.

'How ye turned to God from idols' (v. 9)

As opposed to lifeless, false gods, God is described as the living and true God (see also Jer. 10: 10). This was a real conversion, a complete change of heart, and led to the establishment of a mainly Gentile church. Turning to God brought them great hope, which idols could never offer. Whilst waiting for the Lord they were engaged in active service.

We noted finally that this hope of the Lord's return is mentioned towards the end of each of the five chapters of the book, and is probably the overall theme of the letter.

David Webster, Tony Jones

From Melbourne: The church of God in Thessalonica is referred to as 'the church of the Thessalonians' (v. 1). Thus the two assemblies here in Australia could also be called 'the church of the Melburnians' and 'the church of the Sydney-siders'.

Paul starts off by praising the believers in the church to which he was writing. What a fine way to start a letter! The work done by the Thessalonians had been 'spread abroad' and that without modern media. The work of churches of God should be well known, not only locally but in far off areas as well.

To the apostle these Christians were very dear. He calls them 'brethren beloved' (v. 4) and reminds them, or perhaps informs them, that they are 'chosen'. The same apostle also taught this truth to the Ephesians (Eph. 1: 4) 'He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. . . . '

The gospel came to these brethren in four ways: in word, in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance (v. 5).

When we are praying for the spread of the gospel today these four points should be kept in mind. The fourth point is translated 'with complete conviction of its truth' in a

modern translation. May this apply to all gospel preachers!

'In much affliction' reminds us of the affliction of many dear brethren in Christ in persecuted countries today; in affliction as they meet in secret, in affliction in prisons (Heb. 11: 33-38).

These people 'turned... from idols' (v. 9). The greatest example of turning from idols is Abraham. The God of glory appeared to him in Mesopotamia. The Thessalonians had something of the experience of Abraham. They changed their whole life style to become a model assembly. They left their idols to do two things: (a) to serve and (b) to wait. These are two opposites and yet they go hand in hand. While we are 'waiting' we should also be 'serving'—in God's house.

D. Mawhinney

From Methil: We note the unique way in which Paul addressed himself to the church of Thessalonica: 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (v. 1). To no other church did he address himself so. Though the letter was written by Paul, we judge that Silvanus and Timothy were united with him in every expression. Silvanus we took to be Silas of Acts 15.

These three servants of God remembered in prayer, without ceasing, the work of faith of those in the church, a work which stemmed from their living faith. 'Faith if it have not works, is dead in itself (Jas. 2: 17). Thus the remembering of their labour (wearisome toil) and hope was before God the Father.

To turn to God from idols must surely involve opposition, and in accepting the word of the preachers, those in Thessalonica endured much tribulation (from men) but had much joy in the Holy Spirit (from God). So they became a living example, or pattern (ensample) to be followed by all new-born believers. Elected or chosen, this election we judge is as seen in Eph. 1. These saints were chosen before the foundation of the world. To them the gospel came, not only in word, but in great power with much assurance. Paul and his companions preached the word, supported by Christian living, and those in Thessalonica followed their example. Such was their testimony that it spread far beyond the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia.

Paul did not require to comment upon the Lord's work

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In the church in Thessalonica, for the report of how they had turned to God from idols was spread abroad. No longer did they serve lifeless idols, but having realised 'that there is no God but one' (1 Cor. 8: 4) they served the living and true God as they waited the return of the One who delivered them from coming wrath.

A. R. Smith

From Nottingham: As in this month's study portion we turn our attention to the first chapter of Paul's first letter to the saints in Thessalonica it is well for us to consider the background of the epistle.

Most scholars recognise the letter as the earliest of the epistles. It must have been written shortly after the return of Timothy to Paul with good news concerning the church at Thessalonica (1 Thes. 3: 6). The date of writing is thought to be about the year 52 A. D.

Linked with Paul in the opening greeting (v. 1) are his two faithful co-workers, Timothy and Silas. There follows in v. 1 a somewhat unique statement 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'. This reminds us of the prayer of the Lord 'that they also may be in us' (John 17: 20, 21). True unity is seen in the relationship of the Father and the Son, and this unity was to be seen in the church of God.

'Grace to you and peace' writes the apostle. Grace is that which reveals God and the great salvation He has provided. It helps us to apprehend God. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Peace is the outcome of grace and as a result of God's work for us and our dwelling in harmony with Him.

It was a joy to the apostle to write to the saints at Thessalonica. He could give God thanks (v. 4) for those who had turned from their idol worship, so rife in their country, to the living God. Similar thanks for the grace of God manifested in the saints at Corinth and Rome are expressed in 1 Cor. 1: 4 and Romans 1: 8 respectively, but contrast the apostle's words to the Galatians (Gal. 4: 11).

Three aspects of grace are mentioned in v. 3. Faith, if it is real, must work. Love must be sincere and produce labour. Hope, if it is not to be ashamed, must be tempered with patience.

The great hope of the Lord's return is a strong theme of this epistle. The apostle directs the minds of the saints not

only backwards to what they were, to the present as to what they are, but also to the future. We, like them, are to wait for the coming One and with our waiting couple watching.

R. Hickling

From Paisley: Although the Acts account concentrates on the progress of the gospel among the Jews and devout Gentiles in Thessalonica, it is apparent from Paul's first epistle that there was a good response from those who worshipped idols. In this we have another example of Jews who sought to serve God failing to find Him, whereas the idolaters, who had been indifferent to Israel's God, were found of Him, and this to the provocation of the self-righteous children of Abraham (Rom. 10: 19-21).

We would also assume that by the time of Paul's first epistle, the church in Thessalonica was mainly composed of converted pagans. This would account for the emphasis upon their turning from idols. This Gentile majority would also explain the absence of Old Testament quotations in both epistles to the Thessalonians. We would also suppose that the early outbreak of persecution had forced the apostle to move on before being able to establish in the faith those newly come to the Lord. When Paul had time to recover his breath at Athens, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to learn the state of the saints there. Clearly he was concerned lest Satan had tempted the saints away from God in his absence (3: 5). However, when Timothy rejoined Paul (now at Corinth) he brought a wonderful report of constancy in the midst of persistent persecution.

In this context we may regard Paul's first epistle as an expression of thanksgiving to God for preserving His saints and a word of encouragement to the Thessalonians, together with teaching on topical matters. Paul and his fellow-workers also confirm their tender affection to the Thessalonians (2: 8). Thus it is that in the first chapter Paul rejoices in the fact that the saints have not deviated one degree from the doctrine and manner of life exemplified in those who brought the gospel to them. But not only were they holding fast; they were also progressing in their witness, such that Paul says: 'in every place your faith to Godward is gone forth' (v. 8). This accords with the historical view of Thessalonica as a flourishing port with trade

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outlets to many parts. In this respect it was like Corinth from where Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians (see Acts 18: 1, 5; 1 Thes. 3: 6).

As the Lord's servants were examples to the Thessalonians, so the latter became examples to their brethren in Macedonia and Achaia [Comment 7]. This was true to the extent that the latter were able to tell Paul and his fellow-workers about their own work among the Thessalonians with the resulting turning to God from idols (v. 9). Here again the epistle enlarges the Acts account by showing us that Thessalonica was at least as superstitious as Philippi, despite the advantages of a synagogue in the former.

In addition to the renunciation of idols, there was a keen expectation of the Lord's return from heaven among the Thessalonians (v. 10). Thus, although the saints were not deeply taught in the word, they had learned of the Lord's coming as part of the first principles. This shows us that the rapture is a truth not to be delayed till days of disciple maturity. Apart from anything else, all those in churches of God who are seeking to continue in the apostle's teaching should know that as often as they keep the Remembrance, they 'proclaim the Lord's death till He come (**1 Cor. 11: 26**).

T. Summerhill

From Vancouver: The first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians, written from Corinth *circa* A. D. 53, opens in a unique way. It is addressed, not to the church of God in Thessalonica, but to 'the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'. Paul writes as if this were the only church in the city and indicates that the saints were separated, though not isolated, from the rest of the population of the city [Comment 8]. He also shows by this introduction that the saints displayed the unity that the Lord prayed for (John **17: 20, 21**) 'that they also may be in us' This unity in God and Christ was widely felt in their collective testimony throughout Macedonia and Achaia, not only to unbelievers, but to those who had already believed. They were an excellent example of discipleship in fellowship.

The first chapter recalls the conversion of the Thessalonians at the time Paul visited them. In 1: 3 Paul remembers their 'work of faith', their 'labour of love' and their 'patience

of hope'. He later explains what these three things meant to the Thessalonian saints (vv. 9 and 10): —

'work of faith' 'ye turned to God from idols' (see Comment 9)

'labour of love' 'to serve a living and true God'

'patience of hope' 'to wait for His Son from heaven'.

The saints were young in Christian experience. Paul and his co-workers Silvanus (probably Silas of Acts 15), and Timothy proclaimed the coming of the Lord at the end of each chapter.

Having come through the crisis of turning to God from idol worship, the Thessalonian saints needed the comfort of hearing again that the Lord Jesus Christ would return for them, perhaps within their own time.

Paul and his fellows imitated the Lord in their witness and testimony, their converts imitated them, and other believers elsewhere found in the Thessalonian saints a pattern to imitate. This is a marvellous example for the churches of God today.

Greg Neely

COMMENTS

1. **(Birkenhead):** A number of our contributors have commented on the mode of address used, yet it is, as our Melbourne friends point out, an appropriate form.
2. **(Derby):** The letter was for the whole church, as you have noted, but it would appear that the majority of those in the church were Gentiles, and they had been idolaters before their conversion.
3. **(Derby):** This was without doubt true. As far as the scriptural record is concerned, God's people were never again charged with idolatry after they returned from captivity in Babylon.
4. **(Derby):** Paul sought to carry out the Lord's directive as given in Mat. 28: 19, 20. He was a man who taught 'the whole counsel of God' (Acts 20: 27).
5. **(Derby):** The thoughts expressed on the meaning of the Greek word *douleuo* translated 'serve' in Thes. 1: 9 are correct, but the word translated 'serve' in Mat. 4: 10 is the Greek word *latreuo*, which means 'to minister unto

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God' (Dr. Strong). The word *latreuo* is translated 'worship' in Phil. 2: 3 (RV). It relates to the service associated with or outflowing from worship.

6. **(Kingston):** There is, of course, no mention of hope in Rev. 2: 19 but it provides another example of the association between faith and love.
7. **(Paisley):** In v. 6 it is recorded that the Thessalonians became 'imitators' (RV) or 'followers' (AV) of the Lord's servants. The Thessalonian saints in turn became 'ensamples' (RV and AV) to others (v. 7). Consult the special article 'Note on Ensample' by A. B. R. for a helpful treatment of the relationship between these words (B. S. 7901 p. 2).
8. **(Vancouver):** The reference to church in the singular (v. 1) is of course in keeping with New Testament teaching. We never read of more than one church of God in any one city. There was, for example, only one church of God in Jerusalem, although there were, no doubt, many companies meeting in different places in the city (Acts 4: 23, 12: 12). *J. K. D. J.*
9. **(Birkenhead):** The work of faith is not the act of faith in belief of the gospel, but the work which arises from faith—'I by my works will show thee my faith' (Jas. 2: 18).
10. **(Liverpool):** I do not see any consistent distinction between work and labour. Nor can we say that the work of faith is towards God, while labour of love is towards men; these are simply twin grounds for action.

P. L. H.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration off the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7903

Paul's conduct towards the Thessalonians was a model for the Christian preacher. He was bold, without personal assertiveness, sound in doctrine, yet not cold and impersonal, honest and upright, without self-righteousness. He regarded the gospel message as a sacred trust, which was to be delivered to men without modification to please their ears or soothe their sensibilities. Far from seeking profit or glory from his position, he gave his whole life to the service of the gospel, even maintaining himself by secular work so that he might not be burdensome.

Such an attitude contrasts strongly with that of a number of leaders of pseudo-Christian sects who have attracted public attention recently. They have amassed fortunes by deceiving the gullible, and their doctrines are 'of error... of uncleanness... in guile'. Although few are likely to go so far, it is all too easy for gifted speakers to become fond of praise, and speak to obtain it. Let us each, whatever our ability, have the apostle Paul's standard before us as the plumbline against which our uprightness may be measured.

P. L. H.

THE SUFFERINGS OF PAUL

It is refreshing to examine once again the fruitful life of the apostle Paul who in the space of some thirty to thirty-five years from conversion to final release in death accomplished so much for the Lord. This paper focuses attention on the sufferings of Paul. 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward' (Rom. 8: 18). These words could serve both as a prologue and an epilogue to the life of this great man of God. His whole spiritual experience was tempered with suffering from first to last.

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Consider **the** two statements 'I persecuted' (**Gal. 1: 13**) and 'I take pleasure... in persecution' (**2 Cor. 12: 10**). These statements are antipodal and they span **a** lifetime. Formerly, **Saul** of Tarsus **was a** persecuting Pharisee actively engaged in seeking to destroy **the** corporate testimony of **the** saints. **Little did he** realise **that as he made his** way to **Damascus,** **the Lord Himself** would apprehend **him** and lay **this** sin to **his charge:** 'Why persecutest thou **Me?**' (**Acts 9: 4**). From henceforth **his life** would **be cast** in **a** new mould; from **the** persecutor to **the persecuted,** for **Christ's** sake. **The** arrogance **had** gone; temporarily blind, contrite, **humble** and praying, **Saul** awaited **the** Lord's guidance. **He was a vessel elect** unto suffering. **Paul,** **the** sent one, **must suffer** in **the** outworking of **the** Lord's plan for **the** extension of **the** kingdom of God (**Acts 9: 16**). **His** experience from journey to journey followed **a familiar** pattern. The opposition **was** often violent, always vocal. Jealousy **was a** major factor **which** catalysed **the** Jewish persecution against **Paul** and **his** companions. **He preached** to **the Jew first,** but **the** Gentiles also **heard** and **believed.** **Such a** development **as that at** Antioch of **Pisidia (Acts 13: 46-48)** **was crucial** to **the** extension of **the** work **at that time** and to **the** subsequent planting of **churches** of God in **that** region. **The** Jews contradicted, **blasphemed** and **stirred up** persecution. **Crisis point was reached** at Lystra. Jews from neighbouring Antioch and Iconium joined forces in **a** concerted **attempt** to extinguish **the light** of hope, **which had** come **with the** preaching and **the** preachers. **The multitude were persuaded** to stone **their** benefactor, **but** God **is** stronger than **His** foes. **The battered, bruised** and bleeding body of **the** almost **lifeless** apostle **was dragged** out of **the** city. **There,** **his** fellow **disciples** witnessed **a miracle** and **the** power of God **as Paul** rose **up,** still bearing in **his** body, no doubt, **the marks** of Jesus. **What a** tragedy for **the** early **churches** had **Paul** been removed from **active service** **at that** early juncture. However, God **spared** **His** servant for **future triumphs** farther afield.

Paul's ministry to **the** saints in **that** area **must have** come **with great** power and persuasion, 'exhorting **them** to continue in **the faith** and **that** through many tribulations **we must enter** into **the** kingdom of God' (**Acts 14: 22**).

And so bonds and afflictions continued for Paul as on the second journey he encountered severe opposition at Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth. At this great commercial centre Paul worked tirelessly for eighteen months, having received words of encouragement by a vision, 'Be not afraid but speak'. A message for our times (Acts 18: 9).

Satan is not slow to exploit the natural covetousness of the human heart. This became evident when at Ephesus, after Paul had been preaching and teaching for some three years, strong opposition came to the divine movement via the silversmiths. 'What agreement hath a temple of God with idols?' Paul asked the Corinthians (2 Cor. 6: 16). Demetrius was discerning enough to see that there was none. His plea to the craftsmen warning them against contracting wealth and the phasing out of the worship of Artemis in the city precipitated wrath and displeasure on those of the Way. Paul desired to enter the theatre but the disciples dissuaded him, possibly fearing for his safety. Later the apostle's address (unique in its setting) to the elders of Ephesus, as he made his way back to Jerusalem, reveals the determination of Paul to serve, irrespective of personal danger or injury, so advancing the cause of the Lord Jesus (Acts 20: 22-24).

Almost without exception Paul refers to suffering in all his epistles, and the apostle's experiences examined in retrospect help us in our service for the Lord. In 2 Corinthians, this most personal of all his letters, intimate details of his sufferings are presented (2 Cor. 11: 24-30). The issue was forced on the apostle in defence of his apostleship. We marvel that any man could endure such physical maltreatment—in floggings, in beatings, in stoning, in repeated sea calamities, even adrift for a day and night. Even the geography of the lands where he laboured was against him; rivers and robbers alike proved perilous. Hungry and thirsty, cold and in need of raiment, yet he gloried in these things which touched on his weakness. He did not glory in visions and revelations granted to him by the Lord (2 Cor. 12). These were personal to Paul and not for communicating to the churches.

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Concomitant with the revelations came the physical affliction—a stake in the flesh (2 Cor. 12: 7 RVM) which he endured for the remaining years of his service.

We take leave of this valiant soldier of Christ Jesus quoting his own words, 'when I am weak, then am I strong' (2 Cor. 12: 10). R. Ross

SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL (1 THES. 2: 1-16)

From Derby: Suffering for the gospel arises firstly with the Lord Jesus even before His crucifixion and (John 15: 20-21) He warned the disciples of their share.

1 Thes. 2: 2 refers to Paul's suffering. His conversion in Acts 9 changed him from persecutor to persecuted. This was revealed to Ananias (Acts 9: 15-16) and experienced almost immediately (Acts 9: 23-25).

Paul in 1 Thes. 2 quoted his experience to his converts. He claimed success (2: 1) while acknowledging suffering at Philippi (2: 2). There had been conflict, but forthrightness with honesty Godward and manward are claimed (2: 3-5). Paul could be dominant, but 2: 6-9 shows that he had also a gentle nature with a great sense of responsible independence.

Without pride Paul claims good character for himself and his fellow workers (2: 10-11) and so is able to exhort his converts to a worthy life (2: 12).

Paul is thankful that his message was accepted as divine revelation (2: 13) and then mentions again suffering caused by the Jews (2: 14-16). Most of Paul's suffering for the gospel came from the Jews when he clashed with idolatry, as at Ephesus and Athens, where there were physical suffering and scorn respectively. There was also physical suffering encountered in travel. The whole is summarised in 2 Cor. 11: 23-33
N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

From Hamilton, Scotland: It is interesting to view the structure of 1 Thes. 2 and to learn from its symmetry lessons that the Holy Spirit would teach. Perhaps the most noticeable division in this chapter is signalled by the use of the

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words 'for' and 'but' (in the Greek language *gar* and *alia* respectively). In order to facilitate our view of the structure, we have created the following table; always keeping in our minds that '*gar*' carries the thought of 'resuming and explaining' whilst '*alia*' has an adversative sense.

FOR

- v. 1—yourselves brethren know our entering into you, that it hath not been found vain,
- v. 3—our exhortation is not of error,
nor of uncleanness,
nor in guile,
- v. 5—neither at any time were we found using words of flattery... nor a cloke of covetousness, God is witness;
- v. 6—nor seeking glory of men,
- v. 9—ye remember brethren our labour and travail: working night and day that we might not burden any of you.

BUT

- v. 2—we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict.
- v. 4—even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which proveth our hearts,
- v. 7—we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children;
- v. 8—ye were become very dear to us.
- v. 13—as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe.

How evocative is the couplet 'labour and travail' which is found in 1 Thes. 2: 9, 2 Thes. 3: 8 and 2 Cor. 11: 27. The meaning of this phrase is highlighted by the fact that it is included in the great catalogue of suffering in 2 Cor. 11: 23-29.

in stripes—above measure
in depths—oft
in perils of rivers, robbers, from my countrymen, the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, in perils among false brethren,
in labour and travail
in watchings often
in hunger and thirst
in cold and nakedness.

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The preaching of Paul must have suffering as a backcloth; only when we realise the privation and the suffering of Paul can we evaluate the greatness of heart that Paul possessed and the immensity of the divine driving power that separated and sent Paul on his missionary journeys. Here in 1 Thes. 2: 9 we have the essential partnership between 'working night and day' and 'we preached unto you the gospel of God'. In vv. 7 and 8 we have Paul's affections for the saints being emphasised, but in v. 10 it is his behaviour that the Holy Spirit stresses, 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves towards you that believe'. Paul in his writings reveals himself in an intensely personal way; in v. 7 he views himself as a nurse; in v. 11 as a father; in v. 17 as orphaned; what a profile of Paul the Holy Spirit leaves us.

The church of God in Thessalonica has been described as a model church. We have seen in this month's study a model of a man of God suffering for the gospel—labouring night and day—preaching the word of God—a model of activity and affection. Paul closes this chapter with a great affirmation 'For ye are our glory and our joy'.

M. Carruthers

From Liverpool: In this passage Paul is anxious to emphasise that when he went to Thessalonica his motives were of the highest order, and his actions beyond reproach. In view of the fact that Paul seemed pleased with their spiritual progress (see 3: 6) why did he feel it necessary to defend himself at such length? Had somebody been slandering him as happened at Corinth? Was it to get them to 'pull their socks up?' Was he merely boasting? [Comment 1].

There is no evidence in the letter that Paul was being criticised and if he was it had certainly had no adverse effect. There was no need to encourage them either. We see from 1: 7-8 that they were spiritually strong; and it is hardly in Paul's character to boast. One solution may be to understand 'that our visit to you was not in vain' (v. 1 RSV) not as referring to Paul's success in converting them to God, but rather, that he had managed with God's help to show them that persecution could be faced courageously, as he himself had done it before. If a person was blameless

and suffered persecution God gave him the courage to face that persecution.

Another major point arises in v. 4. Paul preached the gospel 'not as pleasing men'; in our gospel preaching we have to be careful to put across all the facts of the gospel although they may be displeasing. However, we should not deliberately set out to be offensive in our presentation. We can certainly be blunt on some occasions whilst at other time we need to be more tactful. We note the way the Lord dealt with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman in John 3 and 4 respectively. Wise men win souls, and we should always present Christ in all His saving power. Finally we are not being kind to people in not telling them the whole truth! There is no place for flattery in our gospel preaching.

D. Webster, A. Jones

From Leeds: Viewed through the eyes of Paul, we here consider the evangelist's view of evangelism.

Paul reflects on his visit and reminds the saints in Thessalonica that they came to preach the gospel despite opposition and because 'God gave us courage' (1 Thes. 2: 2). Chapter 2: 1 links with ch. 1: 9 when he reminds them of the manner of the entering in they had to them; it was not in vain, he reflects, for they themselves who had received the gospel were their glory and joy (v. 20).

Paul reminds us of the need to carefully consider the matter and the manner of the presentation of the gospel of God, whether it be to unsaved or to saved; it is the blessed gospel with which we have been entrusted (v. 4).

He speaks of 'our message'. We preached the truth, Paul says, out of pure motives, and to please God. There are ever those who, through various guises and adopting forms of religion, take a lot of money from their preaching and teaching of spurious gospels, preying on people's hopes and fears but 'our attitude' (v. 7) was that of tenderness and devotion. Paul, the evangelist of God, sincerely cared for and loved deeply the 'babes in Christ Jesus' at Thessalonica. Only mothers, through much travail, can know the experience of childbirth, and Paul likens this to those who were now 'born again ones' as a result of his travail (v. 9, John 3: 3-7). He recalls 'our struggles' (v. 9). The preaching and

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teaching of the gospel of God often meets with much opposition but through sufferings comes joy. Paul continued to labour (work hard) that the saints might be firmly rooted and grounded in the truth (see Eph. 3, v. 17: Col. 2, v. 7). The three of them together had continued to labour, night and day, that they might not be a burden on the saints. Such is the self-denying love and care that a good father shows towards his children (v. 11).

Paul concludes by reminding them (vv. 19 & 20) of our hope, joy and rejoicing and that they themselves were to him all these things. Paul longed for the day when the Lord would return, and his vision was filled with the prospect of being in the presence of the Lord when he and they would stand before the One who, for their sakes, died and rose again. Paul's own hope and joy and rejoicing was ever in those dear ones who had accepted the gospel of God unto the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The J. B. Phillips translation was helpful in our study and we quote from it Paul's desire and object which was 'to help you to live lives worthy of the God who has called you to share the splendour of His own kingdom' (v. 12) [Comment 2].

A W. J. Terrell, H. R. Dodge

From Lagos: The day preceding Paul's departure from Philippi was a sad day of shameful treatment for Paul and Silas. They laid many stripes upon them' at the command of the magistrates 'to beat them with rods' (Acts 16: 22-23). Their physical injuries were enough deterrent to send them back to Antioch, but constrained by the love of Christ they surrendered their will to the leading of the Holy Spirit to continue the witness to the risen Christ in Thessalonica. 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord' (Mat. 10: 25). It is a marvel—the integrity and the unwavering character of these two great custodians of 'the word of the Cross'. 'Yourselves, brethren, know our entering in unto you. We waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict' (1 Thes. 2: 1-2). What grace of boldness to 'take up His Cross daily, and follow'!

Probably the most fierce and very subtle battle fought by Paul and Silas during this campaign was in their day-to-day life to present themselves as ensamples to those that be-

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lieved. Doubtless, these were days when Paul and Silas needed every care and support by the saints—surprisingly, the testimony is quite different. 'Remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you' (Thes. 2: 9).

It would hardly be one year from the beginning of the work in Thessalonica when Paul wrote his epistles to the church. Disciples in the church of God in Thessalonica were already suffering persecutions of their own people in their effort to witness locally. Through the unique grace of the Holy Spirit a royal castle of love was built in Thessalonica, and it must have been a wonder to all who saw it. Paul uses words most touching: 'Even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls because ye were become very dear to us' (1 Thes. 2: 8).

About A. D. 63, after his release from imprisonment in Rome, Paul returned to Macedonia and wrote from there to Timothy in Ephesus warning the young man that the 'good warfare' must be maintained. 'Who then offereth willingly to consecrate himself this day unto the Lord?' (1 Chr. 29: 5). 'Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ' (1 Cor. 10: 1). *E. Bassey, S. Coker*

From Melbourne: In Acts 9 where the conversation of Saul of Tarsus is recorded, we read how Ananias was given a revelation from the Lord regarding the one-time enemy of the faith, that 'He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before Gentiles and Kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how many things he must suffer for My Name's sake'. Henceforth Saul of Tarsus, instead of living as a recognised leader of Israel was to live a life of reproach and suffering, first at the hands of the Jews; then from Gentiles whom the Jews stirred up; then from others who looked upon the wandering preachers of the Cross of Christ as but troublers of their cities, who were worthy only of chains and imprisonment, or being at least driven out. The burden of the Lord was upon them, and very specially upon Paul, as it had also been upon the Old Testament prophets, and they could not do otherwise than deliver the burden, irrespective of the consequences. The suffering was both

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mental and physical. We suggest that such men were **subject to the** normal reaction of **fear or dread**; although comforted by divine promises of support and moral strength, so **there would be mental strain**; **there was also the fact that the** nation whom they loved **had hardened their hearts** against **the message**, causing the apostle to say at Antioch, 'Seeing ye **thrust it** from you, and **judge** yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, **we** turn to **the Gentiles.**' Physical suffering **was also their lot because of the** stoning, scourging, bonds and imprisonment. In **Acts 16** and **17** **we have the** account of **the sufferings of Paul and Silas at Philippi**, when Satan found **the** apostles intruding upon his domain and casting out a demon. There followed **the** laying of false **charges** against **them**, bringing upon **them the wrath** of the law of Rome. **But God makes the wrath** of man to **praise Him**, and from **the** inner prison, from men whose **backs were marked** by the scourge and whose **feet were fast** in the stocks, arose songs of praise to **the** God whom they served. **Further results to the** glory and **praise** of God **were** found in **the** conversation of **the** Roman jailor and **his** household, and no doubt this **was the nucleus of the church** of God **at Philippi**.

Passing on to Thessalonica, **Paul**, acting on **the** principle 'to **the Jew first**', found a synagogue of **the** Jews, and for **three Sabbath** days (or weeks), **he** opened **the** Scriptures therein, affirming **that the** Christ must **suffer**, and rise again from **the** dead. **The** number who **were** persuaded, together **with** many devout **Greeks** and **chief** women, moved **the** Jews to jealousy, **with the result that Paul** and **his** companions **were accused** before **the** rulers of **the** city of being troublemakers in **their midst**, thus making **their departure** necessary.

From city to city **where a synagogue was** found went **the** apostles proclaiming to **the Jew first the** message of **the** kingdom of God. Then **later to the** devotees of idolatry went **the** message of **grace that was used** to turn men from darkness to **light**, and from **the** power of Satan unto God. **The Holy Spirit had revealed to Paul that** everywhere **he** went **there were** bonds and afflictions awaiting him. **But** even **his life he held** of no account so **that he might** finish **his** course, and **be** found **pure** from **the** blood of **all** men. The apostle **Paul delivered the** burden of **the** Lord, and men

and women were delivered from the bondage and penalty of sin through his message. He and his co-workers were being led in triumph in Christ, as through them was made known the savour of His knowledge in every place.

D. Mawhinney, T. W. Fullerton

From Methil: Those who proclaim the gospel usually suffer for it in one way or another. The Lord Himself was rejected, despised, hated and ultimately crucified; Paul was shamefully entreated at Philippi and he could catalogue (2 Cor. 11) some of his sufferings including beatings, shipwrecks, and being stoned. The Thessalonian saints like their counterparts in the churches in Judaea suffered at the hands of their own countrymen for the sake of the gospel. Truly to them applied the words 'after ye were enlightened ye endured a great conflict of sufferings' (Heb. 10: 32). In fact 'all they that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' (Tim. 3: 12). Through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God (Acts 14: 22).

Paul, in his letter to the saints in Thessalonica, reminds them that his visit to them had been well worthwhile, far from fruitless, and had not ended in failure—the very existence of the church in Thessalonica was proof of this.

Despite the abominable treatment Paul and his companions had received at Philippi and all the injury and outrage, they moved on some one hundred miles to proclaim the gospel of God frankly and freely whatever the opposition might be. They spoke as God's messengers, not changing the message to suit the ideas of their hearers but speaking truth, as accountable to God. So Paul preached and so they believed, receiving it as the very word of God which transformed their lives so that they 'turned unto God from idols'. It is a principle that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, but the apostle had no intention of being a burden to anyone in that city, so he laboured night and day, presumably working at his trade, tent-making (Acts 18: 3) and, at the same time preaching all the time to those round about. Paul's exhortation 'wherefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord' (1 Cor.

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15: 58) is applicable also to the Thessalonians in their day and to us today.

Neville Coomer

From Nottingham: There are several practical lessons for us to learn in the passage under consideration. These lessons may be known to us but sometimes merely acknowledged as being so rather than actually fitted into our lives for the Lord's service. Despite the incidents at Philippi, Paul's complete faith in 'our God' (1 Thes. 2: 2) made the advancement of the gospel even more vigorous. We note the all important personal relationship with 'our God'.

In v. 4 we can see how Paul valued so highly a privilege we sometimes take for granted, that is, the approval of God to be 'intrusted with the gospel'. What a lesson for us today to remember, not just for our gospel meetings but for our day-to-day lives as we work amongst men. Sometimes in our eagerness and enthusiasm in preaching the gospel we have a misguided, perhaps sub-conscious, desire to present God's message in a slightly more pleasing manner. Not so Paul! The gospel for which he suffered so much he wanted to present in all its condemnation of man's sin. Throughout the passage we can see how Paul's sufferings had made him yearn all the more for souls. In v. 8 there is another principle of gospel witnessing that often falls by the wayside. It was not enough for Paul just to impart unto them the gospel, but he wanted to share his very life with them. Are we prepared to share our lives with those who are destined for hell? Maybe it is too inconvenient. Paul did not think so [Comment 3].

Colin Edis

From Paisley: The sufferings of Paul and Silas at Philippi left a mark on their memories long after the weals on their bodies had healed, but instead of their being cowed by this experience the apostles of Christ (2: 6) waxed bold in their God. With total disregard for the fear or favour of man, they preached Christ to both Jews and Gentiles, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear. In all things they pleased God despising the 'glory of men' (2: 6) and avoiding flattery when their purpose was the conviction of sin.

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In harmony **with** this attitude, **the** apostles also repudiated personal gain, refusing even to exercise **their** right as Lord's servants to forbear working. Instead they supported themselves 'working night and day' (**2: 9**). In this they **gave** an **example** to those Thessalonians who may **have regarded** godliness **as a** way of gain or **were** reluctant to work (**4: 11** and **2 Thes. 3: 10-11**). On **the** contrary, **the** apostles **were** set on giving **rather** than on receiving anything from their beloved children. Indeed, **Paul** writes **that he** and his fellow-workers **were** pleased to impart not only **the** gospel '**but** also their own selves' (**2: 8 RSV**). **Such was the** love-bond between **the** apostles and **the** disciples **that Paul** likens it to **that** between a nurse and **her** own children. Hence **as** though dealing with nurslings **he** says: '**we were** gentle in **the** midst of you' (**2: 7**). **Thus the** whole tone of **the** epistle is one of affectionate desire.

The blameless example of **Paul**, Silvanus and Timothy **had a** glorious **effect** upon **the** Thessalonians. They **became** imitators of their teachers, not only in holiness and righteousness **but** also in **the** patient enduring of affliction, which in **due** season **became** their portion. And so those in Thessalonica **became** imitators of **the** churches of God in **Judaea** which **had** endured **the** fierce offensive of **Saul** of Tarsus. This fanatical Pharisee who **had made** havoc of **the church** of God in Jerusalem **had** even persecuted **the** disciples in foreign cities, and now **he** was currently engaged in promoting **the** gospel in cities removed from Jerusalem! For instead of quenching **the flame he had** merely spread **the** fire through scattering **the** coals, just **as the** Jews **were** now spreading **the** gospel by their pursuit of Paul.

So it **was that the** Gentile unbelievers in Thessalonica **were** no different from **the** unbelieving Jews in Judaea. Inevitably those who **were** of **the** flesh persecuted those who **were** of **the** Spirit. Thus, though **the** trouble in Thessalonica **had** been Jewish inspired, **the** pagans in Macedonia **had** willingly turned against their countrymen in Christ. **But** like **the churches** of God in Judaea, **the** Thessalonians stood strong. Similarly **as the** persecution in Judaea **had** caused **the** word to **be** spread abroad so from Thessalonica **the** word of **the** Lord **had** sounded forth 'in every **place**' (**1: 8**).

T. Summerhill

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From Barrhead: The church of God in Thessalonica was established by Paul and Silas (Acts 17). It was the custom of Paul to preach first in the Jewish synagogue; this was in keeping with his usual practice of 'the Jew first' (Rom. 1: 16). Paul's method of preaching to the Jews was to reason from the scriptures things concerning the sufferings and glories of the Christ. He reminds the Thessalonians of the way he had been treated at Philippi but this had not quenched his ardour as an ambassador of Christ. The content and the claims of the gospel were not altered to accommodate prevailing opinions which might have given respite from persecution.

As teachers of the gospel both Paul and Silas were gentle as a children's nurse and both men had a genuine love for the new converts. This concern was expressed in a practical way in that they did not exercise their right to live off the gospel (1 Cor. 9: 13-14) but earned their own living and relieved the church of financial hardship. An important part of the apostle's ministry was taken up with imparting to each saint the claims of the gospel relative to their personal walk before God; and this was done as a father would encourage his own children. As children they were receptive to the words he spoke, treating them not as the words of man but as the word of God.

Although the apostle Paul had played no part in planting churches in Judaea what he and Silas had planted in Thessalonica did not differ from them because they imitated the churches in Judaea. By doing so they ensured that there was uniformity in doctrine and custom [Comment 4].

L deVille

From Birkenhead: Paul states his conviction that what he was doing was approved of God and indicates that despite the resultant sufferings that were his, he was going to continue in the preaching of the gospel. The experiences of Paul and his fellows did not cause them to dilute the force of their message, nor did they try to appeal to the vanity of the listener using flattery, but they stated the message plainly, having been 'entrusted with the gospel'. Their experiences were to be a source of encouragement to the saints in Thessalonica.

The love and concern with which they regarded these people is evidenced by Paul's words in verses 6-12. He described his affection for them as that of a mother with her own baby and his concern as that of a father who exhorts and encourages his own child. This is contrasted with the thought in v. 6 that as apostles of Christ they could have been 'burdensome'. We considered this word to have the idea of authoritarian [Comment 5]. Having been sent by Christ they would have full authority, which might have led lesser men to act in a less gentle manner. On the contrary, Paul is able to call upon them and God also as witness to the unblameable way in which they behaved toward those that believed—the ultimate tribute to his purity of motive.

Paul turns in verse 13 to the response they received to the preaching of which he has spoken. The Thessalonians were chosen of God (1 Thes. 1: 4) and as such were able to see these three men as messengers of God who simply imparted the good news to them; they accepted it from God and consequently the content of it was valued by them and grew in their hearts.

Between that day and the writing of the epistle these believers had also suffered for Christ, and Paul commends them for their faithfulness in that they were imitators of the churches of God in Judaea. The suffering undergone by the Thessalonian saints, by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, was all undertaken for the love of Christ and the gospel and it was this that enabled them to bear such difficulties.

R. C. Halpin, R. C. M. Bolt

COMMENTS

1. (Liverpool): Perhaps this is related to the conflict of v. 2 Paul's Jewish enemies in Thessalonica (Acts 17: 13) would be very ready to slander him in any way they could, and they might well have conducted a campaign against him, suggesting that he was a religious opportunist, more interested in money than souls. Such teachers abounded then,

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as they do now. Lest some might be wavering In his absence, Paul reminds them of his honest and forbearing behaviour among them, and calls them to witness that this was so (vv. 10, **11**).

2. (Leeds): Quotations in the Leeds paper are from the J. B. Phillips translation of the New Testament. Use of a version such as this may well help the reader to see familiar texts with new eyes, but he must be careful that he is not using someone else's spectacles. Phillips says: 'I have always been careful to avoid any slant or flavour which is purely of my own making', but nonetheless admits that 'consistency and meticulous accuracy have sometimes been sacrificed in the attempt to transmit freshness and life across the centuries'. It is therefore unwise to rely too heavily on a 'one-man' translation of this sort even when it is based on sound principles.

3. (Nottingham): Paul and his fellows were willing to devote their whole personalities to the objectives of reaching the Thessalonians with the gospel and teaching them God's will. Their lives were shared because they became believers, having the new life in Christ in common.

4. (Barrhead): It was the church in Thessalonica which did the imitating, which appears to be primarily in patience in suffering, rather than in doctrinal matters.

5. (Birkenhead): The word used here, *baros*, denotes a weight, or something which makes a demand on one's resources. In this case material demands upon the Thessalonians are in view.

P. L. H.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7904

The portion under consideration this month throbs with Paul's concern for the Thessalonian saints. He longed to return to them but was hindered from doing so by Satan. He was, however, able to send Timothy to them to establish and comfort them by his ministry. The report Timothy brought back gave Paul great cause for thanksgiving to God. The strategy of the adversary, in separating Paul from his spiritual children and then attempting to undermine their faith by trials, had not been successful. They had learnt from Paul's teaching and example that afflictions were part of Christian experience.

Various explanations have been given of the movements of Timothy and Silas in the period prior to their linking up with Paul in Corinth. A contributor from Kingston has put forward certain suggestions for our consideration in the paper, Timothy's Visit'.
J. K. D. J.

TIMOTHY'S VISIT (1 Thes. 3: 1, 2)

In connection with these verses the thought was expressed that the sending of Timothy to Thessalonica really took place in Berea since according to Acts 17: 14, 15, Paul went to Athens without Silas and Timothy. In other words, while Paul travelled to Athens, Timothy was sent to Thessalonica and Silas remained either in Berea or in Macedonia generally. It is then inferred that Acts 18: 5 refers to Timothy's return as recorded in 1 Thes. 3: 6. This explanation was also put forward by C. M. Luxmoore in *Needed Truth*, vol. 1, pp. 135-136.

However, an alternative plan of events might be as follows: —

Acts 17: 14

Paul, accompanied by some brethren from Macedonia, travelled to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy either in Berea or Macedonia generally.

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17: 15

When **Paul** reached Athens **he gave a message to these** other brethren before **they** departed for Macedonia, requesting **Silas** and Timothy to join **them as soon as possible**.

17: 16

Paul waited in Athens for **them**, and during **his** stay there gained some converts (**Acts 17: 32-34**).

18: 1

After **this** stay, **which** need not **have** been very long, **Paul left** Athens and continued to Corinth.

18: 4

From **this** verse a period of **weeks** (possibly a minimum of three to justify 'every **Sabbath**') **seems to have passed** before in v. 5 **we read of Silas** and Timothy arriving from Macedonia.

18: 5

This might be both **Silas** and Timothy coming in response to **Paul's** request, **the time** interval being accounted for by **the** distance of **the** journey, and **the fact that** they may **have** been **re-directed** to Corinth from Athens by those who **believed** during **Paul's** visit.

18: 11

Since **it is** known from **this verse that Paul** stayed at Corinth for a period of one and a **half** years, **it is quite feasible that he made either** frequent or occasional **visits** to Athens. (**Acts 18: 6-10 suggests the church** of God in Corinth **was** not planted until **after the arrival of Silas** and Timothy.) **It seems probable that** on occasions **the saints in Corinth would be left to witness themselves while Paul, Silas and Timothy, as led by the Spirit, would go farther afield. It is on one such visit to Athens that the writer suggests Timothy was sent to the Thessalonians (1 Thes. 3: 1-2). The fact that no church of God was established in Athens does not suggest all witness there ceasing, but rather, as more in accord with Paul's character, repeated campaigns (or visits, if only to see those who were baptized) until told otherwise by God.**

This explanation does not require any alteration to the general belief that the first epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Corinth, since the grammar in 3: 1 would suggest that all three brethren were not in Athens on Timothy's return, and were almost certainly in Corinth. Although no mention is made of how long Timothy's stay in Thessalonica was, it is unlikely to have been long, since 2 Cor. 1: 19 mentions all three as labouring in Corinth. Despite the 'short season' in 1 Thes. 2: 17 lacking definition, it seems logical to think in terms of weeks or a few months, since concern such as Paul describes could not have gone unheeded for any longer. It may be that whatever Satan used to hinder Paul (2: 18) could have been connected with events in Athens, as inferred from the way his thoughts continue from that of bereavement to 3: 1 'Wherefore... thought it good to be left at Athens alone.'

Lastly, Acts 18: 5 reads as though both Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia at the same time. Both this and 17: 14, where it is clearly stated that Silas did not go to Athens with Paul, appear to conflict with 1 Thes. 3: 1 where 'we' would seem to indicate Paul, Silas and Timothy according to 11. Presumably this is why 1 Thes. 3: 1 is explained in terms of Berea rather than Athens.

R. D. McKendrick

COMFORTING AND ESTABLISHING (1 Thes. 2: 17—3: 13)

From Hamilton, Scotland: We have seen from previous studies the care and warmth the Apostle Paul displayed to the saints in Thessalonica during his stay in their city. In 1 Thes. 3: 1, 5, he reveals his anxiety for the saints: 'we could no longer forbear 'and' I, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith.' This word 'forbear' carries the thought of Paul unable to conceal, contain or hold back his concern for his spiritual children in Thessalonica. This term is found elsewhere only in 1 Cor. 9: 12 'we bear' and 1 Cor. 13: 7 'beareth' (R. V. margin 'covereth').

Paul gives warning in 1 Thes. 3: 3 'that no man be moved by these afflictions', and our knowledge of Paul's history of suffering as recorded in 2 Cor. 11: 23-38 reinforces his

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appeal, 'for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed'. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in John 16: 33 are most appropriate here: 'In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome **the** world.' Paul directs Timothy to show that such afflictions ought not to disturb but rather to confirm faith. Paul is so direct in his writings: 'to establish you'. He knew the quality of the saints, their strengths and their faith, but he also knew that they needed to be established, to be firmly fixed upon the firm foundation, and also to be comforted in the sense of receiving relief or help. The Greek word for 'establish' is used elsewhere thus: 'He *steadfastly* set his face to go to Jerusalem' (Luke 9: 51); 'Between us and you there is a great gulf *fixed*, that they which would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over' (Luke 16: 26); 'shall Himself perfect, *establish*, strengthen' (1 Pet. 5: 10).

We have in 1 Thes. 3 a practical demonstration of fellowship in the work of God. The burden of responsibility and care which rested on Paul's shoulders was now shared with Timothy. Two lessons are here: firstly Paul's willingness to give Timothy a share in the service of God; secondly Timothy's willingness to shoulder the burden.

Matthew Carruthers

From Kingston-upon-Thames: 1 Thes. 2: 17-3: 13 yields a strong impression of the concern and understanding of Paul, Silas and Timothy for the Thessalonian saints. The writers and recipients all knew what it was like to suffer in the name of their Lord; hence the burden of prayer in 1: 2.

The purposes of their visits and letter include: (i) to increase strength while suffering for the gospel, (ii) to withstand the tempter while weakened due to affliction, that they might not be led astray, (iii) to confirm the saints in their walk. Their affliction required comfort, but to rekindle their zeal they needed establishing, especially since the assembly was probably only two or three months old (2: 17) when Timothy was sent to them. It is important to understand the problem before help can be given; and this is best done by being with those in need of aid. 'Comfort' in 3: 2 contains the thought of calling to one's side to help. Since Paul knew this was necessary, while being unable to

visit the Thessalonians personally, it was decided to send Timothy to be alongside his 'glory and joy' (2: 20).

Why were Paul and the others so concerned? Paul says on behalf of all three, 'We were gentle in the midst of you . . . being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us' (2: 7, 8). The Thessalonians were their joy, their crown—the fruit of their labours—and they were concerned in case it was to be in vain, in which case they would lose at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Paul especially may be pictured here as a good shepherd watching over his sheep, none of which must be lost on the way. Thus all overseers should have in view a successful shepherd's life, with the flock all gathered in at the coming of the Lord (Heb. 13: 17, 1 Pet. 5: 2, 4).

Lastly 3: 6-10 emphasises the fact that by giving words of comfort to the Thessalonians, Paul, Silas and Timothy were strengthened, an important point perhaps, in that this is one example of the link that exists between saints in sorrow and trials, as well as in love and joy, helping each other in their time of need by prayer (3: 6, 7).

R. D. McKendrick

From Lagos: Jason and the multitude of converts in Thessalonica were exposed to the contrary wind because of their faith in Jesus Christ. The raging tempest of the uproar in the city brought the house of Jason under assault and 'they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers' (Acts 17). 'When they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. ' What a beginning it was to Spirit-led work! To surmount such a conflict and pledge their loyalty to the Lord in public baptism was a test of their obedience. Thereafter they were identified with the Church of God, which was no doubt a marked target of continued persecution by their own countrymen (1 Thes. 2: 14).

The teaching ministry of Timothy helped those saints to 'grow up in all things into Him. ' Their knowledge of the sufferings of Christ, confirming His love to them, would strengthen their faith. The unity of the brethren paved the way for the 'work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thes. 1: 3). The Church of God in Thessalonica was 'a burning and a shining light'

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known for her witness in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia.

The secret of their joy and comfort was obedience to the words given in the commandment to the Apostles. Acts 2: 41, 42 is the test of the royal charter. No tempest or wind of affliction moved them while standing faithful to the Lord on this foundation. Timothy saw the grace of God in the Church of God in Thessalonica and he was glad.

There is a progression in being established in the faith. The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men' (1 Thes. 3: 12), was Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian saints.

E. Bassey, S. Coker

From **Leeds**: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God' (Is. 40: 1).

When the Lord Jesus was Himself considering leaving His disciples for 'a little while' (John 16: 16-19) He gave them the promise of One, like unto Himself, who would come and abide with them and be a Comforter to them. 'I will not leave you orphans: I come unto you' (John 14: 18 RVM). Paul here, being taken away from Thessalonica 'for a short season' (1 Thes. 2: 17) sends Timothy to be the comforter (3: 2) to the orphaned disciples, both to establish (strengthen) and to comfort (come alongside to help) them. The Holy Spirit is referred to by the Lord Jesus as the Comforter (John 14: 16, 26, 16: 26, 16: 7); One who comes alongside to help.

Night and day Paul had been praying exceedingly for the saints (1 Thes. 3: 10). We remember also his prayers for the saints in Colossae, and how much he strove for them, praying that 'their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ' (Col. 2: 2). The saints in Thessalonica would greatly delight in the return visit of Timothy, finding much comfort in seeing him and also, by hearing again the ministry of God being established more securely in the Faith. Timothy is referred to as (a) 'our brother' (b) 'God's minister' (c) their 'fellow-worker'—threefold in character and one who was appointed to the work (1 Thes. 3: 2).

In direct contrast to 'affliction and distress', we have

'establishing and comforting' and although Paul was not permitted to revisit Thessalonica himself, he found much comfort from the report of the Church brought back by Timothy. 'Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and **God** our Father... comfort your hearts, and stablish them in every good work and word' (Thes. 2: 16, 17).

G. Grierson, H. R. Dodge

From Liverpool: Paul was aware of the terrible atmosphere at Thessalonica and he himself had only been able to minister to them on three Sabbaths [Comment 6]. Satan worked through wicked men, and perhaps one of the hindrances (2: 18) was an undertaking from Jason (see Acts 17: 9) not to entertain Paul and the others again [Comment 7]. We must remember that Satan is only allowed to hinder as God permits, and the reason was that God wanted the gospel spread elsewhere.

One of Paul's outstanding characteristics was love, and he had a deep and real concern for the Thessalonian church (see 2: 7, 11, 17). Too often today evangelists are just concerned with getting people saved and have no real care for their spiritual progress thereafter. Paul felt like a father being separated from his children. He was constantly thinking of them and praying for them, knowing what persecution he had had to face there. Eventually there came a time when he could stand it no longer and had to send Timothy to find out how they were faring.

We noted that they stood fast 'in the Lord' (3: 8). Many Christians stand fast in Christ, but 'in the Lord' involves the whole counsel of God (Acts 20: 27). Paul and the others prayed earnestly night and day and we felt conscious of our shortcomings in this matter. Paul, as a true overseer, wanted to set them on the right course for the Lord's coming. To 'perfect' (3: 10) would be better understood as 'supply' (R. S. V.) but there is also the thought of being knitted together, united [Comment 8].

Paul wished that the great claim that he made about his love for the Thessalonians might be true of their love to others, both inside and outside the assembly. 'Love grows soft if not hardened by truth; truth grows hard if not softened by love. ' Love and truth should characterise a church of God.

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We assumed 'the Lord' (3: 12) referred to the Spirit, and so saw Paul affirming the truth of the united working of the Godhead in verses 11 and 12, and again in 13. We felt that the coming of the Lord referred to in 13 was 'to the air', and that the judgement seat of Christ was in view here [see Comment 4].
David Webster, Tony Jones

From **Methil**: In 1 Thes. 2: 17 the apostle mentions the short season, since he had been in Thessalonica, but it was also a long time before he came back, for he was in Ephesus for three years. Was it the Lord's will for Satan to hinder Paul? We took into account the experience of some of God's servants in the past. Abraham knew a very real trial of faith when asked by God to give up Isaac. Job knew nothing of Satan's challenge, yet God allowed his faith to be tested to the limit. Peter was told by the Lord Jesus, 'Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat' (Luke 22: 31).

It is evident that God does try the faith of his saints and may even, on occasion, permit Satan to tempt or hinder [see Comment 7]. We concluded that, in the overruling of God, there was good reason for the effectiveness of Satan's hindering in this instance: it was a test of the saints in Thessalonica. They endured considerable persecution, but the purpose was to strengthen and establish them in their faith. It is also possible that this hindrance was a test for Paul—perhaps for his faithfulness in prayer (3: 10—'night and day'). While we know that God never tempts us, He will test our faith, but even if Satan is allowed to affect us in some way it is always for our ultimate spiritual benefit (1 Cor. 10: 13). If we rely on the Lord we can keep on course, despite setbacks and the work of the Adversary.

We noted also that the word 'perfect' in v. 10 means 'repair' or 'mend' and we remembered how Paul wrote to the Corinthians 'as a wise master-builder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. Let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon' (1 Cor. 3: 10). [See Comment 8].

'And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men... (3: 12). 1 Cor. 15: 58 contains very similar language to this: 'Be ye steadfast, unmoveable (established), always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour

is not vain in the Lord'. If we are established we will be working for the Lord. This links perfectly with the Lord's instruction in John 13: 35; Paul was absolutely in line with the Lord's teaching.

In **3: 13** 'the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints' is not the first phase of the coming of the Lord (referred to in 4: 16, 17) but the second phase of His coming [Comment 4]. It is 'the day of the Lord' of 1 Cor. 1: 8 [Comment 5]. It is the time when God's glory shall be displayed before men, when 'the Lord my God shall come, and all the holy ones with Thee' (Zech. 14: 5) and 'they shall look unto Him whom they have pierced' (Zech. 12: 10 RVM). Paul pointed the saints forward to that royal day when together with them we shall share in His victory [Comment 4].

Jo Johnson

From Nottingham: As we read the passage under consideration this month we are impressed by Paul's anxiety for the well-being of the Thessalonians. He had laboured among them and had been instrumental in leading many to the Lord. He longed to see them develop, and his absence from them was a further source of anxiety. In all this he was displaying the character of a true shepherd, a quality so essential among the people of God.

We are reminded of the principle contained in 1 Cor. 3: 6: 'I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase'. Whether this be applied to the sowing of the precious seed in the individual heart or to the planting of a church of God in a given place, the 'watering' is an essential factor in growth. Paul had limited time only in which to teach the newly-planted church in Thessalonica and his concern was that their growth would be stimulated by the study of the word of God. In a day of abounding superficiality we should be careful to appreciate the importance of growth, to be looked for in the spiritual sphere as well as in the natural. The study of the scriptures, the divine revelation to men, is not to be neglected.

Paul loved the saints, and longed to see them. Satan hindered him. We are not told the way by which the adversary accomplished this, but, more important, we learn that he was able to do so; which gives rise to the interesting question as to what extent Satan is allowed to interfere with progress in spiritual activities [Comment 1]. We look

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back over the ages and consider various occasions where men who have walked close to God in their lives have, from time to time, been deceived by Satan and fallen into error (see, for example, Gen. 12: 10-20). Further we have 2 Cor. 12: 7, 'a messenger of Satan' and Luke 13: 16, 'a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound'. In comparison we have 1 Cor. 5: 5, 'to deliver such a one unto Satan'. It seems clear from Scripture that our great enemy is always on the alert to hinder the work of God, but from the hindrance that he produces we can, if we will and if we pursue the right thing, reap spiritual joy and revival.

The news that Timothy brought gave Paul extreme joy. He refers to the report as 'glad tidings' (1 Thes. 3: 6) and the word used is the same as that used for the glad tidings of the gospel. The apostle's distress ('the crushing trouble'—Lightfoot) and afflictions were now replaced with comfort as he learned with joy of the saints' progress.

R. Hickling

From Paisley: The tone of Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians is one of gentle tenderness. His words are as 'the small rain upon the tender grass' (Deut. 32: 2). He is trying to encourage growth and establishment among those young in the faith, through gently watering God's tilled land (1 Cor. 3: 9 RVM). Thus it is that he is at pains to confirm his love towards the Thessalonians, and he even compares his absence from them to bereavement. He also assures them that his absence is by no means desertion, as the unsteadfast might have been tempted to suppose. Rather, the apostle has been separated from his crown and glory by the work of a determined enemy.

At this point we can see the mystery of the gospel which Satan had failed to discern. The enemy had been beguiled into thinking that it was necessary only to drive the apostles out of Thessalonica in order to scatter the disciples there. He also believed that the gospel flame could be quenched by persecuting the servants of God. We see, however, from this epistle that not only did the disciples stand fast, but that the apostles in fleeing from the wrath of the Jews spread the gospel more extensively among the Gentiles. Hence the enemy, in chasing Paul out of Macedonia, did not know that the Lord had much people in Corinth (Acts

18: 10). Nevertheless, it is not the will of God that newly-planted churches should be left to their own devices. For this reason Paul had sent back Timothy from Athens, to fill up the measure of Paul's absence. The apostle was still hopeful of returning to Thessalonica, but clearly he and Silas were not yet free of danger or affliction (3: 7).

We also see that the persecution in Thessalonica had not slackened since Paul's departure (3: 3). The apostle is therefore careful of any being moved adversely by this affliction. Since the Thessalonian disciples were not deeply taught in the Word, there was the danger of their misinterpreting their sufferings. On the face of it there was the tendency to think that Paul had abandoned them and even God had left them desolate. Therefore the apostle is quick to remind them that such suffering is by divine appointment, even as he and his fellow-workers had foretold them when yet with them. It is not therefore a token of divine rebuke, but should be regarded as a seal of approval (Mat. 5: 10-12).

The apostle is very zealous for the steadfastness of the Thessalonians. Knowing their love for the Lord's servants, he exploits it after a godly sort, telling them 'for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord' (3: 8). In this way he appeals to their love as an incentive not to waver or fall. His strong appeal to their love is characteristic of Paul's excelling wisdom. Because the Thessalonians were not yet mature in the word, he makes no scriptural appeal for unwavering faith. This is the nurse cherishing her own children and, as it were, saying to them, 'Obey my word because you love me, until you are old enough to understand me'.

T. Summerhill

From **St. Helens**: The apostle Paul is said to have written the epistles to the Thessalonians about the time when Timothy returned from his visit to these saints. Paul had made repeated efforts to visit the church in Thessalonica to 'comfort and establish' them but had been thwarted since God permitted Satan to hinder him. The enforced separation had been as a bereavement, but heart-felt prayers had minimised the emotional pain.

Whilst Paul had been intent on comforting and establishing the Thessalonians, Timothy's return had brought comfort to Paul's heart when he was assured of their continuing

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faithful service. It was necessary, however, to remind the saints that whilst they had already survived some afflictions (3: 3), it was important to be firmly established in order to weather future afflictions, reiterating that a Christian should not expect a trouble-free and easy life.

Paul's help in establishing the Church can be likened to the stake fastened to a newly-planted sapling—only a temporary measure whilst the sapling grows strong roots, until it dispenses with its support. It is sad that the churches ceased to exist a comparatively short period of time after the death of Paul and the other apostles who had been instrumental in founding them.

Finally Paul's blessing in 3: 11-13 instructs the saints to establish their faith by increasing their demonstration of love one to another, both within the church and toward all men. Good advice then and now!

From Vancouver, B. C.: Acts 17 states that Paul preached Christ for three weeks in the synagogue in Thessalonica, the result of which was some very severe persecution, likely by the Jews. But those who turned to God from idols were Greeks, of whom Acts 17 states there was a great multitude and of the chief women not a few. This would indicate that the majority in the church were Gentiles. The fact that there are no Old Testament quotations in either epistle would confirm this. It is apparent from both letters that the persecution was very intense. The Jews gave vent to their feelings of jealousy, and in 1 Thes. 2: 13 the words 'their own countrymen' may imply that their greatest affliction resulted from the Greeks. The Adversary was the cause of the persecution and he knew that Paul intended to return, so he put every obstacle in the way to hinder Paul; thus he says 'Satan hindered us'. We are not told how.

Being unable to go himself, Paul sent Timothy to comfort and establish them. The word 'establish' has the thought of making fast, or solid. The apostle desired that the word of God and the truth would be firmly fixed in their minds and hearts. Peter in 1 Pet. 5: 10 expresses this beautifully: The God of all grace, who called you . . . after ye have suffered a little while shall Himself perfect, establish, strengthen you'. All who suffer need comfort from the Lord and

from one another. Paul longed to be able to comfort them. No doubt the words of Hebrews 10: 32 would apply: 'Ye endured a great conflict of sufferings... and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions'. We in the Western world know little of this type of persecution, but we all do need the comfort of God and of one another. The adversary is very subtle in putting snares in our pathway that we may stumble and turn back from contending for the Faith.

When Timothy returned he brought glad tidings to Paul of their faith and love, so that Paul was comforted in his distress, since in spirit he had been suffering with them. Paul could say: 'Now we live if ye stand fast' (are established). He could refer to their faith and love. Our faith is in God. James writes that in the case of believers, faith without works is dead. These works are to be seen in our love toward one another and to all men. *James Bell*

From Barrhead: There is not the least doubt that there was a very strong bond between Paul and all his converts. This comes out very clearly in the opening verses of this month's study from which we learn that Paul felt the absence from these converts to be like a bereavement which he describes as 'in presence' but 'not in heart'. Whatever circumstances hindered Paul from visiting the Thessalonian church he had no difficulty in detecting that Satan was behind it. Possibly men of evil intent either inside or outside the church were the tangible evidence of Satan's work.

We made detailed reference to Acts 17 for the corresponding historical account and noted the harmony of the two portions of scripture. When Timothy and Silas joined Paul it appears that they were with him for a short time only, Timothy being sent to Thessalonica and Silas probably to one of the other churches. The absence of any reference to Silas in chapter 3 arises because the movement of Silas would not be of any immediate interest to the Thessalonians in the context of the present letter [see Comment 3].

Some time was spent considering the 'crown of glory' referred to in 2: 19. The presence of the Thessalonian saints at the coming of the Lord Jesus was evidence of Paul's victory through preaching the gospel; they were Paul's glory. We noted the word 'coming' or more strictly 'presence'

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carries the thought of meeting and abiding with a person and is not confined solely to meeting our Lord in the air [Comment 2].

When Paul prayed that he might perfect that which was lacking in the church we felt that this was due to the church's being young. The deficiency was not because of failure on their part but because of their spiritual youth.

An interesting point arose in 3: 11 where the word 'direct' appears to be singular. We felt that this was an interesting support of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul knew that if God had directed his way there would be little chance of Satan hindering. From verse 12 we can see that Paul wanted the saints to increase to the point of overflow in love, firstly to believers and then to all men.

Lastly, we considered Paul's great objective for the Thessalonians. They should make a start now to be unblameable in holiness for at the presence of our Lord Jesus that blamelessness would be established. The spiritual target is high for us all.

D. J. Kerr

From Birkenhead: At this point in the letter Paul turns from his consideration of the Thessalonian church and its establishment and consequent sufferings, and speaks of his own feelings towards them at that time. He experiences sadness in his enforced separation, but emphasizes that whilst absent in body he is with them in spirit. 1 Thes. 2: 18 covers in a very few words what must have been a sore trial, that Satan hindered him in their attempts to visit the Thessalonians. They discerned, in time, that it was the Lord's will for them to stay in Athens and send Timothy, charging him with the dual role of comforting the Thessalonians and establishing them [Comment 3]. The thought behind the latter conveys both teaching and making them firm and sure in their faith.

Paul again refers to the suffering of the church, and reveals that he had warned them that this was to be their lot. Part of Timothy's task in establishing them was to support and guide them in their reaction to the suffering, 'that no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed.'

Timothy's good report of the church was a great comfort to Paul and his fellows, but nonetheless they prayed night and day that the faith of these saints may be made complete.

Timothy was also able to show that Paul's love and concern was reciprocated by the Thessalonian saints, who longed to see the brethren again. 1 Thes. 3: 8 confirms that the purpose of Paul's life was fulfilled if they remained faithful.

R. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams

From Derby: Acts 17 shows Paul firstly in Thessalonica and then Berea. Then he went to Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed in Thessalonica but they were to come to him at Athens. 1 Thes. 3: 1, 2, shows that they had come and that Timothy was sent back to minister. Earlier, 1 Thes. 2: 17 shows that Paul wished to go, but that Satan had power to prevent this; but 1 Thes. 2: 19, 20, shows Paul comforted by the success in Thessalonica and by its value for future glory [see Comment 3].

1 Thes. 3 deals with the comforting and edification of the Thessalonian believers by Timothy and by the instruction conveyed in the letter. Comforting was to sustain faith. Suffering has different effects as people differ. Some are strengthened by it, but 3: 5 shows it can turn some aside. Timothy had returned with a good report of faith which is in God and love which spreads to fellow men, including remembrance and appreciation of Paul and his fellow-workers.

Now in 3: 7-9 the comfort is for Paul because of the Thessalonian saints, despite his circumstances of distress. Paul's repeated prayer was for the opportunity to see his converts and further to instruct them. This is shown in 3: 11-13 which is this prayer, beautifully expressed, for his joy in visiting, for their advancement in the Christian life, and for the ultimate consummation.

N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

COMMENTS

1. (Nottingham): As one of our contributors has observed, 'Satan is only allowed to hinder as God permits'. Paul, prevented from continuing in Thessalonica, passed on to Berea, Athens and Corinth, where disciples were also made. His enforced absence from the Thessalonians also occasioned the writing of the two inspired epistles to them, and these epistles have instructed and comforted many throughout the succeeding centuries. See also points made in the paper from Methil.

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2. (**Barrhead**): Our friends would doubtless agree that in this context the apostle has in view the Lord's coming to the air and His continuing presence with his saints thereafter.

3. (**Birkenhead**): Paul speaks of being left alone at Athens. See paper on Timothy's Visit' for other explanations of Timothy's movements.

4. (**Methil**): 2 Thes. 1: 10 without doubt relates to the Lord coming as Son of Man and His saints coming with Him, but we cannot be so definite about 1 Thes. 3: 13. The word translated 'coming' is again *parousia* as in 1 Thes. 2: 19, and could be rendered 'the presence of our Lord Jesus with all His Saints'. The context is suggestive of appraisal of our lives at the Judgement Seat; this is the view taken in the paper from Liverpool.

5. (Methil): The day referred to in 1 Cor. 1: 8 is the 'day of our Lord Jesus Christ'. See also 1 Cor. 5: 5 where the phrase 'the day of the Lord Jesus' is used. This second reference appears to relate to the present day of opportunity and service.

J. K. D. J.

My opinion is that 1 Cor. 5: 5 refers to the judgement seat of Christ.

P. L. H.

6. (Liverpool): See B. S. 7901 for comments on this suggestion. Paul must have been there for much longer than three weeks.

A. B. R.

7. (Liverpool): This goes beyond what the scripture says. Was not Jason simply bound over to be of good conduct?

8. (Liverpool): The word *katartizo* means 'to render complete' or 'to adjust'. The apostle means that he would be able by further teaching to put right any deficiencies in their knowledge of the Faith.

P. L. H.

ERRATUM

In B. S. 1903 a quotation was shown as (2: 8 RSV). This was unfortunate in this case because the contributor consistently uses the Revised Version. We tender our apologies to him, and to anyone else who may have been misrepresented.—*Eds.*

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7905

'Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am holy; ' (Lev. 11: 44). Jehovah gave Israel a law 'to make a difference between the clean and the unclean' (v. 47), and the people of the New Testament are similarly commanded: 'Approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God' (Phil. 1: 10, 11). At salvation we are set apart to share heaven and escape hell, and sanctification should bring changes in our way of life. 'Put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man' (Eph. 4: 22-24). Sanctification in its practical outworking means separation from worldliness to holy living, and must apply to saints individually and collectively. The apostle Paul was greatly exercised about holy living, or the sanctified life, as he laboured among churches in areas of gross Gentile immorality and worldliness, and his exhortations and admonitions to Thessalonica have an important message for us today. A. B. R.

WHICH VERSION?

Questions have been raised about the use of some of the newer versions of the Bible in our magazine, some for and some against them. Editors have noted the increasing number of references to different versions, notably the modern ones, and believe this is not always helpful to contributors and readers in our Bible study.

Editors are embarrassed to allow quotes and references from versions known to be defective and harmful in certain particulars lest it be thought we are giving support to their general use. We believe that the Revised Version is still the best basis for study, and we wish to encourage its

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continued use. Quotations will therefore be assumed to be from the R. V. unless the contributor specifically states otherwise (e. g. 1 Thes. 3: 1 R. S. V.).

Editors

TIMOTHY AND SILAS

Both Silas and Timothy are among that body of men who served the Lord faithfully in their lives; more is known about Timothy than about Silas.

The first time we read of Silas is in Acts 15: 22. He appears there as a man already mature, learned in the way and will of God, and of such spiritual stature as to be recognised as a leader among his brethren. Here is a delightful picture, consistent with the rest of the word of God, of men so blessed and gifted by God that they stand out among their brethren as leaders guided by the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom.

Silas, with others, and with the full fellowship of the apostles and elders, with the whole church, was entrusted to convey to the churches the Spirit-guided decision of the conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15: 22, 27). He was a prophet (Acts 15: 32), the word being *prophetes*, meaning a proclaimer of the divine message. Silas was linked in close fellowship with the apostle Paul, being chosen by him as his companion after the latter's contention with Barnabas (Acts 15: 40).

During his journeys with the apostles, Silas must have had many soul-stirring experiences, coupled inevitably, as a faithful servant, with suffering. The dramatic events in the prison at Phillipi, his nocturnal departure from Thessalonica (Acts 17: 10), and his encounter with the Jews in Corinth (Acts 18: 5, 6), must surely have remained in his memory for life. Let us remember too that such events are recorded in heaven, and so will it be with any Spirit-guided service we may render.

Just as suddenly as the name of Silas appears in scripture, so suddenly does it disappear from the sacred page. The last reference to Silas in the Acts of the Apostles is in ch. 18 v. 5, where he is recorded as having joined Paul in Corinth. From the word of God we learn nothing of his further movements. Whether he was the Silvanus who took Peter's first letter to Asia Minor is doubtful, there being insufficient scriptural evidence either way (1 Pet. 5: 12).

[The linking of the names of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy in 1 Thes. 1: 1 and 2 Thes. 1: 1 would prove conclusively that Silas was also called Silvanus. Whether or not he is the Silvanus referred to in 1 Pet. 5: 12 is open to debate, probably he is, but, as our contributor points out, it cannot be proved.—Eds.].

Closely linked with Silas on several occasions and dear to the heart of Paul was Timothy. The word of God does not indicate decisively whether Timothy was from Derbe or Lystra. Some have seen from a possible construction of Acts 20: 4 that he was the former, while Acts 16: 1, 2 could indicate Lystra as being his home town.

Timothy was the son of a mixed marriage. His father was a Greek, but his mother was a Jewess (Acts 16: 1). What became of his father we do not know, but the scriptures make it clear that Timothy owed much to the wise upbringing he received from his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. From infancy he had been taught the sacred writings (see 2 Tim. 1: 5 and 3: 15), which were to make him wise unto salvation. When the day came for Timothy to shoulder the responsibilities that fell to him, this grounding in the word of God was of inestimable value. There was nothing that could replace it then; there is nothing to replace it now.

R. Hickling

(to be continued)

LIVING SANCTIFIED LIVES

(1 Thes. 4: 1-12)

From Hayes: Paul had given guidance to the Thessalonians as to how they should walk and please God. They had followed his guidance but he wanted them to 'abound more and more'. 'Walk' in the epistles means the whole manner of life of the believer. There are parallel scriptures in Col. 1: 10 and Col. 2: 6.

We should abstain from ungodliness and sin, especially fornication, which defiles one's own body. 'Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit... glorify God therefore in your body' (1 Cor. 6: 19-20). To achieve a high standard of sanctity, as is God's will for us, we must abstain from fornication. 'Present your bodies a living

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sacrifice, holy, **acceptable to God, which is** your reasonable service' (Rom. 12: 1). **This may be likened to the sacrifices offered up by the Israelites, which sacrifices had to be pure and without blemish. Paul implies** in v. 3 that sanctification is something to strive after. **He also implies** in 1 Cor. 1: 2 and 1 Cor. 6: 11, **that we are** sanctified in Christ through salvation, something wholly **acquired** when **we put** our trust in Him.

We must conclude, therefore, that there are two stages:
1. **We are sanctified in Christ Jesus through His death on the Cross, which is a sanctification of the soul. There was some discussion as to whether this is a scriptural expression [Comment 12].** 2. **We must strive after a sanctified life. Although we shall not fully attain to this, because of sin, yet God wishes us to attempt it. In general, the world today sees no difference between love and lust, but it is most important that the Christian sees the difference and as Paul says in v. 4, 'possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour'.**

The Lord is an avenger in all these things'. There was some discussion of **this** statement. Does it refer (a) to judgement by **the church**; (b) direct judgement by God through sickness or other troubles; or (c) loss **at the Judgement Seat of Christ?** [Comment 1], **David King**

From **Lagos: 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God'** (Mat. 5: 8). **'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile** (Ps. 32: 2). **These two scriptures are chosen to show the basic dual conception of sanctification for believers in Christ. The first aspect of sanctification, to which Ps. 32: 2 applies, is altogether a mystery of divine workings in sovereign grace to initiate sin-depraved but repentant man into the new life which is distinguished by permanent sanctification in Christ (see 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; Heb. 10: 10, 14).** **The second aspect, to which Mat. 5: 8 applies, is a daily sanctification for the Christian disciple, who is subject to the 'presence of sin' experience (see Heb. 12: 14; Rom. 12: 1; 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1).** **'Living sanctified lives'** would primarily refer to **this latter aspect** of sanctification (1 Thes. 4: 1-12) [Comment 13].

Daily sanctification is viewed scripture-wide as the gateway to fellowship with God, through which also the will of God for the disciple of Christ is acceptably fulfilled (see Lev. 10: 3, 1 Pet. 1: 14-16). Monastic interpretation of daily sanctification, as it applies to disciples, is both heretical and divorced from the Biblical ideal. In all manner of living the disciple is commanded to be 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts' and to 'live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world' (Titus 2: 12). The hallowed process of being 'transformed into the same image' is made possible by the Lord the Spirit (see 1 Pet. 1: 2; 1 Thes. 4: 7-8).

A church of God, regardless of geographical location, must uphold the divine standard of holiness becoming God's habitation in the Spirit (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; 1 Thes. 4: 1-12). Paul's epistle to the Church of God in Thessalonica has references to specific areas of our lives where sanctification is a daily necessity in order to be well-pleasing to God.

E. Bassey, S. Coker

From Leeds: In the closing part of his epistle, Paul exhorts the brethren to a reconsideration of how they ought to walk and to please God even as the writers had walked; a continuing action of walking and pleasing. The walk here is indicative of their whole manner of life and, if we walk with God, day by day, we will continue to be well pleasing to Him (3 John 4). We should walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God' (Col. 1: 10). It was said of Enoch that he had been 'well-pleasing unto God' (Heb. 11: 5). This was his testimony before God and men. He achieved it by walking with God (Gen. 5: 24).

The Lord Jesus said: 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments' (John 14: 15) and if we truly love Him it will not be an onerous task to do His will. God has called us unto Himself and into sanctification. He has set us apart from the world, to fulfil and to express His will in us. Paul lays emphasis on the matter of fornication, which, in the days in which he wrote was as much in evidence in Thessalonica as it is in our day the world over. The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body' (1 Cor. 6: 13). Fornication is one of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19) and should not even be named amongst us,

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'as becometh saints' (Eph. 5: 3). Each one should 'know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour' (v. 4). We considered whether this 'vessel' referred to brethren in general or more expressly to a wife, sanctified unto the state of marriage, much thought being given to similar wording in 1 Pet. 3: 7, and to the Greek word '*time*' used for 'honour' in both instances, being associated with the wife. We noted that the RSV, and other versions, read 'That each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honour' [Comment 2].
P. J. Dodge, H. R. Dodge

From Liverpool: — (1) *By What Authority?* (vv. 1-2)

The chapter begins with the word 'Finally' which seems strange considering that the writer is only halfway through his letter; but we realised that it was a Greek colloquial way to change the subject. The A. V. 'Furthermore' might be a better translation.

Paul's instructions were fully backed up by the authority of the Lord Jesus. As there is no higher authority, let us be careful that we are always able to back up our instructions similarly.

(2) *Sanctification* (v. 3)

Sanctification means 'making holy'. This is the progressive sense of sanctification, the moral and spiritual transformation of the believer, rather than our once for all sanctification that takes place at salvation. This is a moment by moment experience which here involves both a negative (abstain from sexual immorality) and a positive (exercise self-control) aspect, which go hand in hand. We must remember that Paul was writing to those in a society where immorality was the norm, and we must be prepared to stand up against the norm of society.

(3) *The 'vessel'* (v. 4)

The Greek word '*Skeuos*' translated accurately as 'vessel' (AV, RV, NASB) is translated as 'body' (NIV, NEB) and 'wife' (RSV, TEV). According to Vine it can mean either, yet both present problems. If 'wife' Paul is advocating a low view of marriage, the wife being there merely to satisfy

her husband; but if 'body' the verb 'possess or acquire' seems unsuitable. Many felt inclined towards 'body' taking 'vessel' to mean a container, the body containing the inner man, but scholars continue to puzzle over it [Comment 3]. We noted that God's punishment of immorality is stated as a fact, though we are not told when (*cf* 1 Tim. 5: 24). In Corinth the judgement fell summarily (1 Cor. 11: 30) but this is not always so. Immorality is not only an offence against God, but also against the brother. The majority felt this was a fellow-saint. Is this so? [Comment 4].

(4) *Love of the Brethren* (vv. 9-10)

We noted that the word for love here is not the usual one, but is one which binds us to each other (*Philadelphia*—a closeness). Paul seems to be a bit harsh on them (vv. 10) but scripture always presents the ideal [Comment 5]. We must always continue to strive for this, even when we have attained high standards. We are not engaged in passive resistance and we cannot afford to stop growing as Christians, even after many years (see 2 Cor. 4: 16).

(5) *What others think* (vv. 11-12)

Paul points out that it does matter what other people think about us. The three points, however, seem to contrast with other principles: (i) study to be quiet—yet our gospel preaching may provoke controversy, e. g. Paul at Thessalonica; (ii) do your own business seems to contradict Phil. 2: 4; (iii) Is the command 'to work with your hands' to be taken literally? (see e. g. 1 Cor. 9: 1-14—Eds.) [Comment 6].

David Webster, Tony Jones

From Melbourne: Sanctification, as brought before us in the New Testament, indicates both separation to God and separation from evil things and ways (Vine). It is the responsibility of the believer in Christ to recognise that he has been called out from the world that knows not God nor His will. The believer's manner of life before men should be in keeping with that call, and should display something of the character of Him who has called us by His grace. Practical sanctification, manifest in separation from the world and the ways and practices of the ungodly

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is brought about by the indwelling Holy Spirit activating the 'new man' by means of the written Word. The 'flesh' which remains with the believer throughout this life rebels against such sanctification. The saints in Thessalonica had not only been called and placed 'in Christ' but through the teaching by the apostles of 'the Faith' they had heard the further call into the Fellowship of God's Son, and with other churches of God were in separation from a sinful and perverse generation.

The sins of adultery, fornication, and the practices of 'evil passions' to which the apostle refers (Rom. 1: 24-27) are amongst the most fearful forms of uncleanness known and practised by unregenerate man, and have brought about the fall of nations. The overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah recorded in Gen. 19, and referred to by Jude as a warning, indicates the abhorrence with which God has viewed those who have been given over to this form of defilement. Ungodly man can speak of 'liberation' from 'traditional' views regarding these things, but such practices should have no place with children of God. The result of such sin is moral defilement which unfits a believer for divine service. In contrast to this the marriage state is, in God's sight, when preserved inviolate, one of honour.

Sanctification by the indwelling Spirit has both a restraining and activating influence on the life of the Christian: restraining from evil, and activating him to do all within his power to provide things honourable in the sight of all men, not only for his own household, but if God so prospers, to reach out a helping hand to others who may be in need.

T. W. Fullerton

From Methil: It is evident that the subject before us is the practical every day living of those who in the first place, having been called of God, are saints in a very special sense. They are 'saints' by virtue of their calling having been 'set apart' by God, for God. This we understand to be at least part of the meaning of 1 Cor. 1: 2, 1 Pet. 1: 1, 2, Heb. 10: 7-10, 1 Cor. 1: 29-30. This position, into which we have been placed by God calls for a corresponding every-day walk in this world and in the eyes of men, that dishonour may not be brought upon the Name of our God. The apostle, as he says himself (v. 9), had no need to tell them to love one

another in Thessalonica, but in that hard heathen world there were things that the Gentiles indulged in which they were to eschew. There was every form of lust and passion. Fornication is specially mentioned. Phil. 1: 27, 1 Pet. 1: 14-19, Gal. 5: 16-26 are all portions of scripture which we do well to ponder over in connection with our walk in this world in the eyes of God, and as before His enemies. In the original languages in which the scriptures were written the words 'sanctified' and 'holy' are identical, we understand, in meaning. They convey the thought of persons or things such as the vessels of the sanctuary, being 'set apart', 'separated' not only negatively as 'from the world', but positively 'to God'. We see this in an outstanding manner in the case of the Nazirite (Num. 6) who had such a sense it would seem of the grace, mercy and love of God that, even though he was 'under the law' he would take a vow that henceforth he would separate himself, and daily walk 'unto the Lord'.

In v. 11 of this chapter, gossiping, tale-bearing, acting as a busybody are condemned by the apostle, as they had beforehand, in the law, been condemned by God (Lev. 19: 16). If it is reprehensible in the worldlings, many of whom would say it was not in their nature, how much more reprehensible is it if indulged in by saints, to saints, about saints?

Among the scriptures we were referred to in connection with this matter of practical holiness, of leading sanctified lives, were 1 Pet. 3: 15, Heb. 12: 14, 2 Cor. 7: 1. There are many other scriptures, showing that though in one final and complete sense our sanctification cannot be more perfect and complete than it is, in the sense before us (1 Thes. 4) it is something that is to be cultivated, and in the sense of 2 Cor. 7: 1, perfected. A *McIlree, Snr.*

From Nottingham: In this month's portion the apostle exhorted the Thessalonians, who were so dear to him and had brought him so much joy, to continue to progress and grow in spiritual life. In his writings Paul often refers to the progressive nature of a believer's life, likening it sometimes to a walk or race. In this case they were walking well and he wishes them to continue. We are reminded

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of the contrast between this and Gal. 5: 7. The use of the word 'abound' continues the thought of progression and reminds us of the Lord's words (John 10: 10).

The Thessalonians were to be sanctified for it was the will of God (1 Thes. 4: 3). We are reminded that the word 'sanctified' means separated, or having been set apart. In our study we observed that this setting apart is not being isolated from our fellow-men by being confined, for example, in some lonely remote building. We are still in the world although not of it (John 17: 15, 16, 18), and our sanctification is to be seen in our lives. Like all believers, those in Thessalonica had been sanctified by placing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but the sanctification of which the apostle now wrote (1 Thes. 4: 3) is that which must be renewed day by day.

We spent some time pondering the meaning of 'his own vessel'. Many commentators take 'vessel' to mean body. There are two objections, (a) the word is not used elsewhere in this sense, (b) the verb used is 'to possess', literally 'acquire' which is not very suitable for use with 'body'. In favour of the meaning being 'body' we have a parallel (2 Cor. 4: 7) 'earthen vessels' [Comment 7]. Some commentators suggest 'vessel' in the Thessalonian scripture means 'wife'. The use of the verb 'possess', i. e. 'acquire', would at first sight support this, but would also present a very low view of marriage. On balance we think the thought is that we should keep our bodies pure.

The apostle writes about the subject of loving our brethren. The RV renders v. 9, 'but concerning love of the brethren' and the AV has 'but as touching brotherly love'. The word used in the Greek is different from that used in other places [Comment 8], Some scholars say that the word is used in classical Greek to denote the love binding together the children of one father. The thought the Holy Spirit is expressing through the writer is clear, the bond of love between the saints should be of this peculiar character.

R. Hickling

From Paisley: One of the problems confronting the apostles in their dealings with the Gentiles was the gross immorality which pervaded the pagan world. This prompted Paul to

warn the Gentile disciples against the dangers of relapsing into old sins. Though once the Thessalonians had disdained the marriage bond 'in the passion of lust' (v. 5) they were to do so no longer. From henceforth the law of Christ demanded that each man have his own wife and each woman have her own husband (1 Cor. 7: 2) [Comment 9]. Thus from the moment of conversion all evil liaisons had to cease, with those married cleaving to their own wives and not to the wives of others. The apostle likewise cautions the Thessalonians against wronging a brother in this matter [see Comment 4]. For if immorality among those ignorant of God is sin, how much greater a sin is immorality among those who know God?

In view of this, the Thessalonians are warned that God will avenge those who are wronged in this matter (v. 6). Though secret sin may never come to the notice of the church, the God who sees all will deal with the offenders, whether in this life or in the life to come. As far as this life is concerned, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb. 10: 31). As to the life to come, 'the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is' (1 Cor. 3: 13). This does not mean, of course, that the offender will perish, for 'he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire' (1 Cor. 3: 15). This is in stark contrast to the fate of those outside of Christ who die in their sins. For Paul writing in another place of those who practise uncleanness says, 'because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience' (Eph. 5: 6).

Though the apostle emphasizes the consequences of uncleanness in various epistles, his concern for the sanctification of the Thessalonians was by no means routine. This was not because they were worse than others, but because sin could overthrow the work in Thessalonica. To be sure, Satan had failed to destroy the testimony by persecution, but very easily he could destroy the church in Thessalonica through a resurgence of old lusts. What protracted pain had failed to accomplish could be achieved by pleasure in a moment.

As to the continuing affliction of the saints, it is evident from v. 9 that instead of scattering them, it was merely drawing them closer together. This loving response was completely spontaneous, being a pure work of God. More-

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over, as a spiritual passion, it had expanded to embrace all the brethren in all Macedonia. *T. Summerhill*

From Vancouver: It was specifically noted that Paul 'asked' the believers to heed his advice and then in a stronger term 'exhorted' (*parakaleo*, to call to one's side) them with a definite concept of mutual encouragement in moving to greater spiritual realities in the strength and presence of others of like spiritual mind. The end result of this movement is a walk that is pleasing or acceptable to God which leads into more mature fellowship with Christ.

Vv. 3-5: The specific thought of physical sensuality is paralleled by the ideal of spiritual adultery and the attempt of the carnal Christian to walk with 'two Masters' [Comment 10].

Vv. 6-7: Direction is given here which adds to the injunction of Peter (1 Pet. 1: 16) as all believers are encouraged to walk a separated walk.

Vv. 9-12: The theme of brotherly love is developed with the base of sacrificial love (*agapao*) (v. 9) as the desired attitude to all members of the Body of Christ keeping in mind the words of Paul (1 Cor. 12 especially v. 26) [Comment 11].

Vv. 11-12: The peace of God develops from within the heart as manifest by the quiet attitude and attention to an honest outward walk before the world.

J. Jobbins

From Birkenhead: There is no sense of criticism of the saints in this passage. The idea is that they be warned against the dangers that face them, and this portion deals with the matter of temptations of the flesh and with the way in which the saints conduct themselves generally towards those about them. The passage opens with the statement that they have already been shown and told how to behave in this respect. However, the requirement of good conduct is underlined 'to please God' (v. 1); 'what charge we give you' (v. 2) and 'For this is the will of God' (v. 3). The need to live a sanctified life is clear, as it is this that gives God pleasure; and so the saints were warned to beware of fornication and uncleanness.

The warning in v. 4 was discussed at some length and the meaning of the word 'vessel' was debated. Whilst there was a feeling that it meant 'wife' rather than 'body' [see Comment 1], there was difficulty in applying the word 'fornication' to this, since it was proposed that in that instance 'adultery' would have been the more precise term [see Comment 4]. Nonetheless, the warning was quite clear that the Thessalonians were commanded to abstain from illicit sexual intercourse. Those that disregard this instruction reject not man but God (v. 8).

The topic changes from v. 9 onwards, in that the saints are commended for their love one for another and exhorted to greater lengths in their pursuit of this. Additionally in **vv. 11** and **12** there is a word of advice given with regard to their daily conduct which they were to apply continually. They were to conduct themselves in a quiet manner and not be busybodies. However, there is a duty entrusted to them in caring for and loving one another and sharing burdens. Thirdly, they were to work to support themselves and not to live off the efforts of others, in order that they might form a bright practical witness to those not gathered with them.

R. C. Halpin, A. E. Sands

From Derby: Sanctification is the setting apart of one's self for God. Every believer is sanctified in Christ Jesus (**1 Cor. 1: 2 & 30** and **Heb. 10: 10**) but if we are to grow in sanctification we must walk in harmony with God day by day.

The Nazirites in Israel separated themselves to God and He had to rebuke those who caused them to stumble (Amos 2: 11-12). Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5: 24) and so enjoyed close fellowship with Him. Our walk (v. 1) covers our entire conduct. Paul exhorted the saints at Colossae to walk worthily of the Lord. This meant living a sanctified life. As the believer seeks to follow the Lord his inward life will become holy and pure and his outward life will show increasing godliness. Paul longed to be sanctified wholly, that is to be conformed to the image of Christ (Phil. 1: 20). Christ is the centre of the sanctified life and we should reflect Him.

We are to seek the things that are above and die to the works of the flesh (Col. 3: 1-5). If we are watching for the

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coming of the Lord this will produce a purifying effect on our lives. We are to follow after sanctification and then we will be able to see with the spiritual eye the Lordship of Christ (Heb. 12: 14). As a result we will be effective witnesses for the Lord showing love to one another and being above reproach. Our bodies will be a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God (Rom. 12: 1).

L E. Foster, G. W. Conway

From Hamilton, Scotland: Skilfully and simply the apostle directs the attention of the saints to the importance and relevance of sanctification in their personal lives and relationships. Paul acknowledges that they had made a good beginning but exhorts them also to 'abound (*perisseuo*) more and more'. The emphasis of v. 1 is advancement; progress in sanctification in an experimental sense in our daily conduct. It is an interesting and helpful study to look at Paul's usage of *perisseuo* in his letters (in particular 1 Thes. 3: 12 and 4: 10).

Paul presses home his point (v. 2) 'ye know what *charge* (Greek *parangelia*) we gave you through the Lord Jesus'. The force that this word 'charge' carries is that of a command or order and the power of the word is strengthened further by the words 'through the Lord Jesus' (cf. Acts 5: 28, 1 Tim. 1: 5, 18).

In v. 3 we have the keynote or key verse of our subject. 'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification that ye abstain from fornication'. What clearer expression of the will of God is to be found than this 'your sanctification' and how direct are the words of v. 4, 'That each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel'. The disciple must discipline his own bodily appetites. It is here that the victory is gained or lost. With his body under complete control it becomes the earthen vessel used in the Lord's service through which the power of God is displayed (cf. 1 Cor. 6: 18-20, 2 Cor. 4: 7, 1 Cor. 9: 27). Let us endeavour to please God (v. 1), to do God's will (v. 3), to realise His call (v. 7) and not to disregard His claims. In vv. 9-10 Paul exhorts the saints 'to abound more and more' in love of the brethren. Here once again the apostle attempts to energize the saints into a deeper experience of love in an experimental sense. The teaching

of this month's subject is the deepening of spiritual experience in the daily walk; a sanctification that is powered by the Holy Spirit and whose model is the Lord Jesus Christ: the realization in our life of the once for all act of sanctification (Heb. 10: 10). *Matthew Carruthers*

COMMENTS

1. **(Hayes):** All three judgements may apply. See for (a) 1 Cor. 5: 4; (b) 1 Cor. 11: 30-32; (c) Heb. 13: 4.

2. **(Leeds):** I understand 'possess himself of his own vessel' simply means the man must control his own body, now a temple of the Holy Spirit, and not give way to 'the passion of lust'. I do not see husband and wife in the passage, and think this is an example of RSV interpretation where the RV is translation. *Time* is used for 'honour' in many scriptures and applied to many things, as reference to a concordance shows.

3. (Liverpool): Personally I think the context and the more accurate translation of the RV here indicates 'vessel' to mean 'body' (or part of it). The passage is warning against illicit sex, and not sex within marriage; which is not mentioned though fornication is.

4. (Liverpool): I think so.

A. B. R.

The interpretation of v. 6 depends to some extent on the meaning of *porneia*. If 'fornication' in the strict sense is the correct rendering, then in what way does this affect a brother in the assembly more than a fellow-man? L. Morris (Tyndale Commentary, I. V. P.) concludes: '*Brother* in this sense does not, of course, mean "a brother in Christ", but "a brother man". What Paul is saying properly applies to impure relations after marriage, but the same principle applies to pre-marital promiscuity. For the impure person cannot bring to the marriage that virginity which is the other's due'. If *porneia* has the more general meaning of 'adultery', then perhaps the reference may be to another brother's wife. A further suggestion made by F. F. Bruce (New Bible Commentary) is that 'Paul seems to be thinking of a trespass of this kind, even within the family circle of a fellow-Christian.'

P.

L.

H.

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5. **(Liverpool):** Would the Thessalonians think Paul's words harsh?

6. **(Liverpool):** Re these three points see (1) Eccl. 3: 7; (2) Prov. 26: 17; (3) For some, but note also Tit. 3: 8 RVM 'profess honest occupations'.
A. B. R.

Paul's exhortation was necessary because some of the Thessalonians seemed inclined to be idle and unstable (2 Thes. 3: 6-12). They needed to settle down to the every-day business of honestly earning their living. I would not think that Paul was only commending manual occupations, but that he was urging industry instead of idleness.

P. L. H.

7. **(Nottingham):** The word "vessel" is used of things and men too, as a concordance shows.

8. **(Nottingham):** The word *Philadelphia* is the word used for 'brotherly love', e. g. Rom. 12: 10, Heb. 13: 1, 1 Pet. 1: 22, 2 Pet. 1: 7.

9. (Paisley): Subject of course to the Lord's will as in Mat. 19: 12.

10. (Vancouver): These verses are directed at 'physical sensuality' without any 'paralleling', and are very practical I think.

11. **(Vancouver):** This is a very interesting point about *agapao* and *Philadelphia* in v. 9. A. B. R.

12. (Hayes): The expression 'sanctification of the soul' is not scriptural, and it conveys a misleading impression that part of the human constitution can be sanctified separately from other parts. The whole man is sanctified, whether in the completed or in the continuing sense.
P. L. H.

13. **(Lagos):** There is another aspect of sanctification set forth in the Scriptures, namely the sanctification of a people (Heb. 13: 12, 13). The Thessalonians had been sanctified in the truth (John 17: 17). 2 Cor. 6: 14-18 is related to this aspect of sanctification.
J. K. D. J.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7906

Our study this month has brought us to a consideration of the hope of the believer, and the joy we find in it is well expressed in the papers from the various contributors. The coming of the Saviour to the air for His saints will mark for Him the fulfilment of the deep longing expressed in His prayer: 'Father, that which Thou hast given Me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me' (John 17: 24). For the believer, it will mark the fulfilment of that precious promise which first came from the Lord's own lips: 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also' (John 13: 3).

In this promise we take comfort, not least because of the assurance that 'so shall we ever be with the Lord.' Fully appreciated, the prospect must have a sanctifying effect on our lives. 'Every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as He is pure' (1 John 3: 3).

' With such a blessed hope in view,
We would more holy be;
More like our risen, glorious Lord,
Whose face we soon shall see. '

R. L

TIMOTHY AND SILAS

(Continued from issue 7905)

We cannot be dogmatic about the time and circumstances of Timothy's conversion. It seems likely this took place during the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra and Derbe as recorded in Acts 14: 6, 7. The tender reference made by Paul in 1 Cor. 4: 17 may well support the view that he was instrumental in bringing young Timothy to the Saviour, as witness also 1 Tim. 1: 2 and 2 Tim. 1: 5. When Paul and

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Silas reached **these places** as recorded in **Acts 16**, Timothy **was** described **as a** disciple, and **had** reached some degree of spiritual maturity so **as to be well** reported of by **the** brethren **at** Lystra and **at** Iconium (**Acts 16: 1, 2**). **Paul, too,** **was** impressed by **the** spiritual development and potential **of the** young man. **A** great bond of affection sprang **up** between **them** which, over **the** years, increased and flourished. One is reminded of **the** incident when **the** Lord Himself **was** confronted by a young man and '**... Jesus** looking upon him loved **him...**' (**see Mark 10: 21**). There is **a** tremendous potential for **the** Lord in any young man or woman. So far **as we** know, **much** of this, in Timothy's case, **was** released for his Master's service, **but** how tragic **that** many young lives are lost for Him and wasted either in indolence or apathy or absolute rejection.

Paul desired **that** Timothy should go with him. This presents **a** happy situation where **a** young man and an older man are linked together in **the** service of God.

There was no generation **gap** between **Paul** and Timothy.

One was **the** complement of **the** other. In **Paul** Timothy **saw a** devoted man of God, one of experience and knowledge of **the** scriptures, one who **had suffered** for **the sake** of **the** Name. Timothy **had shed** tears over **Paul** (**2 Tim. 1: 4**). In Timothy **Paul saw all the** possibilities of youth, **the** vigour and vitality of **a** young man who under God would **face** hardship **as he** sought to **guard that** which would **be** committed to his **care**.

Timothy developed in spiritual things. **Paul** addressed him **as a** man of God. **Yet,** like Elijah, Timothy **'was a** man of like passions with **us'**. **He** appears to **have had a** far from robust constitution (**1 Tim. 1: 4**), and **a** gentle and sensitive nature (**2 Tim. 1: 4**). Like **all** young persons **he was** in danger from youthful lusts, which **he was** exhorted to **flee** (**2 Tim. 2: 22**). Some scriptures may **lead** us to think **that** Timothy **was** of **a** retiring disposition, and **the** apostle exhorted him not to neglect **the** gift **that was** in him. Timothy's youth, although an **asset** in many ways, could cause some to despise him, **the** word being *kataphroneo*, meaning 'to think down upon or against anyone'. So **the** apostle wrote: **'let** no man therefore despise him' (**1 Cor. 16: 11**).

Before Timothy joined Paul in the work, he deemed it wise to take Timothy and circumcise him. The narrative of Acts 16 explains why this was done (v. 3). 'Circumcision is nothing', wrote Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7: 19), but, had this action not been taken, his usefulness in testifying to the Jews would have been seriously diminished, for 'they all knew that his father was a Greek' (Acts 16: 3).

Timothy's association with Paul was long and varied. There is no space to detail their journeys together but, when through various circumstances they were parted, Paul longed to see his child in the Faith. The repeated cries: 'do thy diligence to come...' (2 Tim. 4: 9, 21) are full of pathos and longing. It must have been a source of sadness to Timothy to see his old faithful teacher forsaken and even despised (2 Tim. 1: 15).

The heart's desire of the apostle was that this beloved young man should uphold the truth in spite of the rising wave of lawlessness and departure. The scriptures are silent about Timothy's later life; only eternity will reveal the extent of his faithful service. Let us, on our part, take heed to those entreaties given to Timothy. ft. *Hickling*

THE COMING OF THE LORD (1 Thes. 4: 13-18)

From Birkenhead: Paul obviously felt that the Thessalonian saints required some guidance and teaching on the matter of death and its application to those who believed. Verse 13 shows, as so often elsewhere, that Paul was teaching those who were to be left after he had gone. He told them that they should not sorrow 'even as the rest which have no hope'. Their belief in resurrection of the dead should have been as strong as their belief in the death and resurrection of their Saviour. The Lord truly died (His death is not spoken of here as sleep) and He vanquished death for the believer.

Paul clearly outlines the order of precedence for those who are to be raised to be with Christ—'the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them... meet the Lord in the air'. It is possible that there may have been some concern or worry over these matters, as Paul ends by pointing out the comfort to

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be gained by belief and understanding of all that is involved in these events, with an inference that death is to be welcomed by the believer rather than feared.

Verse 16 highlights the manner in which, raised with our bodies, we join with the Lord to spend eternity with Him. The authority of the Lord Himself is behind the action and it is to happen without forewarning.

Our study included some of the practical aspects of this resurrection. We considered the words 'fallen asleep' and established that they referred to the body only, as the soul is with the Lord. A question arose as to those bodies which have disintegrated or been burned or those that have been consumed—how was resurrection of these to be achieved? We were able to rest on scripture, which although not revealing how this would be achieved, clearly states that it will be so and surely one of these actions is no more difficult to God than another (see 1 Cor. 15: 35, 51-54) [see Comment 2].

R. C. Halpin, A. Hyland

From Derby: The Lord Jesus spoke of His second coming on two distinct occasions. One was to His disciples of the Kingdom (Mat. 24: 29-31). This was with regard to the establishment of His kingdom on earth in accordance with the prayer 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth' (Mat. 6: 10). We believe this kingdom is in abeyance. The other occasion, still to His disciples, was in John 14. This is a coming to receive the disciples to their heavenly home. Paul did not hear either of these statements; but he did have spiritual contact with the Lord Jesus after his conversion and while in isolation. This is claimed by him in Gal. 1: 11-17 and repeated in our present reading in 1 Thes. 4: 15.

The purpose of 1 Thes. 4: 13-18 is firstly to inform (v. 13) and secondly to comfort (v. 18). The fact that some of the believers were dying was a source of sorrow and bewilderment. They did not expect to die; even Paul did not (4: 15) so 4: 14 suggests that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the earnest of their own resurrection.

The language presents some difficulty; 4: 14 has 'fallen asleep' while 4: 16 has 'dead in Christ'. However, the Lord in John 11 uses 'sleep' and 'dead' as interchangeable in

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the case of Lazarus. The Lord died and rose again, but disciples 'sleep in Jesus'. They can also be 'dead in Christ'. This is a great mystery (1 Cor. 15: 51) but, like Paul, we have confidence in the call of the Lord Jesus to an eternal life with Him (1 Thes. 4: 17).

N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

From Hamilton (Scotland): In 1 Thes. 1: 9 Paul pinpoints the activities and attitudes of the Thessalonian saints: —

- (i) 'ye turned to God from idols';
- (ii) 'to serve a living and true God';
- (iii) 'to wait for His Son from Heaven'.

The Thessalonian saints did not view the coming of the Lord as an event to be fulfilled in a remote future but as a real and imminent experience for which they were eagerly waiting. However, in 1 Thes. 4: 13-18 it is not the imminence of the Lord's return that concerns them but 'them that are fallen asleep' and their part in future events. Paul reassures the Church of God in Thessalonica: 'Even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him' (v. 14), and in v. 15 the 'living' in Christ will not 'precede them that are fallen asleep'. In this portion of the epistle Paul paints a picture of coming events which should invigorate and motivate saints: —

- (i) The resurrection of those who fall asleep in Christ.
- (ii) The transformation of the living in Christ.
- (iii) The rapture of all those in Christ.
- (iv) The reunion of the raised and transformed in Christ.

The words of 1 Cor. 15: 24-44 relating to the resurrected body are brief, but full of meaning: —

It is sown:

in corruption
in dishonour
in weakness
a natural body

It is raised:

in incorruption
in glory
in power
a spiritual body

In 1 Thes. 4: 16 the importance of the rapture is emphasised, for it is written: 'The Lord *Himself* shall descend from heaven'. There will be no delegation of power to angel or archangel; it will be 'in His own presence'.

The '*how*' of the coming of the Lord often fills our minds, e. g. 1 Thes. 4: 16-18; 1 Cor. 15: 23, 52. It will be

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- (i) with a shout;
- (ii) with the voice of the archangel;
- (iii) with the trump of God;
- (iv) every man in his own order [Comment 7];
- (v) in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.

In 1 Thes. 4: 18 we have the answer to the 'why' of the coming of the Lord, 'so shall we ever be with the Lord' (cf. Eph. 5: 27; John 14: 2, 3). *Matthew Carruthers*

From Kingston-upon-Thames: When believers in the Lord Jesus Christ die they are said to have 'fallen asleep' (e. g. John 11: 11, Acts 7: 60, 1 Cor. 11. 30, 15: 16, 18, 51). Although Thessalonica was a very young church some had left it through death, perhaps even as a result of persecution (1 Thes. 4: 13). It is a measure of the quality of life in that church that, in the short time that those fallen asleep had been in fellowship with the rest, their absence by death caused sorrow. Some of this sorrow, however, was based on ignorance; the living, apparently assuming that their departed fellows would not participate in the rapture. The apostle and his companions comforted them by giving them an account of the Lord's coming to the air for His saints, which is marked by its scarcity of adjectives and adverbs but which concentrates on the plain unfolding of events, the certainty of which is marked by the imperative mood of most of the verbs.

The Thessalonians were already quite clear that the Lord was coming for them and that they were to expect no other sign, event or happening until then (1 Thes. 1: 10). They were unclear as to the detailed order of events, and the clarification given (1 Thes. 4: 15-17) is the only one in the scriptures. The first that believers dead or alive will know of this event will be the sound of the shout and the sound of the trumpet. Their (and our) dispensation is characterised by the absence of 'the voice of words' and the 'sound of a trumpet' (Heb. 12: 19). Consequently the coming of the Lord will be the end of this dispensation and will herald a new one. In keeping with this scale of events the Lord will not speak with the voice of the Man of Galilee but with the voice of the archangel. What He will say is

not revealed but it must surely be akin to 'Lazarus come forth' (John 11: 43) and will be a voice of authority (cp. Mat. 14: 28-29). The Lord will descend *in* a shout, *in* the voice and *in* the trumpet suggesting that as He comes down these sounds reverberate to the farthest point at which there is one in Christ. Just as the Lord ascended privately from the midst of His disciples (Acts 1: 9-11) so it seems that this sound will be unheard by the unsaved although there is precedent for His voice speaking and the unsaved hearing the sound but not understanding the speech (Acts 9: 7, 22: 9).

The first to respond will be the dead but the remainder are described as 'left all around' (*perileipomai*) the force of the preposition suggesting that those that are alive are part and parcel of the same company but are momentarily awaiting the resurrection of their fellows in Christ. They will be changed as the dead are raised (1 Cor. 15: 52) but this is not stated to the Thessalonians where the point of writing is to emphasize the meeting of all those in Christ not their state. The alive in Christ will then be caught up or snatched away with them (*harpazo*) implying a degree of force by an outside agency (cf. 2 Cor. 12: 2, 4; Rev. 12: 5 and also Acts 8: 30; Mat. 13: 19) and underlining the coming to the air as a supernatural intervention in the affairs of the world.

The culmination of these events is in the first heaven, *into* the air and *in clouds* but most importantly *into* a meeting (*eis apantesin*) cf. Mat. 25: 1, 6; Acts 18: 15). Just as our day is to be characterized by the regular assembly meetings, called by the Lord who calls His called ones or saints together, so the new era will begin with a meeting in which the Lord will call all His called ones of our age together.

Ian E. Penn

From Leeds: In this paragraph of Paul's letter we have renewed hope given to the saints in Thessalonica and our discussions centred on Christ's promise and our hope. As we read through Paul's letters to the various churches we find repeated references to the things he received 'from the Lord'. The key verse in our passage, v. 15, is rendered in one version: 'What we are teaching is the *Lord's teaching*. ' This gives an authentic ring to what he is trying to

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explain to the saints, that Christ's promise is that He will return and take both dead and living saints to Himself.

If we see Paul being emphatic, we have only to turn to John 14 to read the specific promises of Christ, recorded for all Christians down through the ages. The promise was reiterated to the apostles by the angels at His return to heaven and by Paul to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 15: 51-54. The Thessalonians were concerned about those in the church who had died. This is perhaps something we take almost for granted, having the whole revelation of scripture open to us.

It is the Lord Himself, Paul tells the church, who will come and we see here one of the fulfilments of Christ's work. He came, He died and He returned to His Father. In culmination of His redeeming work He will return for His Church.

We were able to see very clearly from this paragraph the difference between believer and unbeliever. For us there is a glorious hope, for the unbeliever, no hope, no deliverance.

Philip Jefferson

From Liverpool—A Literal Promise: In trying to decide whether this passage is a literal expectation, we referred to Acts 1: 11: 'This Jesus... shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven', and the words of the Lord Himself before the crucifixion in John 14: 3, and after the resurrection in John 21: 22, show that the return will be literal and physical.

Them also that are fallen asleep' (v. 14). We wondered whether God will bring the souls of the dead in Christ with the Lord Jesus to be reunited with their resurrected bodies or whether it is the resurrected dead in Christ whom God will take back with Jesus. Today's English Version' rendering expressed what we believed: 'We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will take back with Jesus those who have died believing in Him.' We justified this by noting that the first half of the verse speaks about the resurrection of Christ and that this idea preserves the connection with the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and secondly that there is no distinction in the passage between the souls and bodies of the dead in Christ

[Comment 1], 1 Cor. 15: 52 speaks of the new changed resurrection body. Some time between their death and this great event, however, the souls must come back. We are not told how, nor, of course, do we know how a soul departs at death [Comment 8]. We know that the Lord Jesus appeared reunited in body, soul and spirit at His resurrection and we shall be like Him.

We disagreed about whether the new body would be the same as the old one, some saying that the illustration of the seed dying to produce the plant showed that it would be, whilst others contended that, scientifically, our bodies are made up of constantly changing material and can be absorbed in other bodies after corruption [Comment 2].

'Shall descend from heaven with a shout' (v.16). We were not sure that this would be a literal shout of command accompanied by the archangel's voice and trumpet. We wondered if perhaps it was an illustration from the Roman Army. We were sure that we would recognise the signal whatever it was, and so will the dead in Christ. But will anybody else hear it?
David J. Webster

From Melbourne: In Matthew, Mark and Luke, where many of the acts and words of the Lord are recorded, we find many references to His coming to earth as Son of Man in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophetic scriptures; but it was left to John to reveal in part the promise and hope laid up in store for believers in Christ as the Son of God as he records the promise made by the Lord Himself (John 14: 1-3). It was to the apostle Paul that this truth in all its comfort and hope was fully revealed in association with the great truth of 'the Church which is His Body', which in former generations had not been made known to men. It is evident that the Thessalonians had been taught the possibility of the return of the Lord at any time; but some time had passed and so some of their number died, bringing sorrow and distress. They had hoped that the Lord would return and that they would all experience that hope of which they had been told. Paul writes to reassure them that such as had 'fallen asleep' were not lost or forgotten by the Lord. Those who remained were not to sorrow as the rest who had

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no hope. Furthermore they who were alive at His coming would have no advantage over them that had 'fallen asleep'. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; the dead in incorruptible bodies, and the living in bodies immortal, both fashioned alike into the image of His own glorious body. Together they shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be forever with Him, beyond the reach of sorrow and death.

The 'shout' with which the Lord will descend will be a summons or shout of command which, we judge, will be heard only by the redeemed who are numbered in the church which is His Body. The redeemed of other ages and 'bands' (1 Cor. 15: 23, each in his own order, band, or company) will not, we understand, be in this unique company. For these, the first fruits of the great harvest yet to be gathered from the dust of the earth, shall then be brought to pass the words that are written 'death shall be swallowed up in victory'. The Thessalonians were to comfort one another with these words. Let us do likewise.

W. Sneddon, T. W. Fullerton

From Methil: The coming of the Lord to the air is of the greatest interest to believers of the present day.

What is Paul writing about? Paul is confirming and expanding the great promise given to the disciples by the Lord Jesus in John 14: 'I will come again'.

Why did Paul remind them of this promise? He did so to dispel their fears and to comfort them and to ensure that none were ignorant of the great fact that the dead in Christ will one day be raised from among the dead, while the living in Christ will be changed, and all will go together to meet the Lord in the air. What a reunion! What a comfort!

When will this take place? This question must have been asked thousands of times but the answer must always be the same—no scripture gives us any indication as to date. What is evident is that His coming will be soon. No major event in the pattern of prophecy relating to Israel remains to be fulfilled before Daniel's 70th week. The saints of this dispensation must be away before this second-last stage in Israel's national history can take place [Comment 3].

Where will this meeting take place? *Only* Paul tells us, when he says in 1 Thes. 4: 17: 'We that are alive, that are left shall together with them (the dead in Christ) be caught up *in the clouds* to meet with the Lord in the air'. We, with *them*, with *Him*, for ever.

Who will respond to 'the shout', the voice of the arch-angel and the trump of God? We do not believe in 'Partial Rapture' (i. e. only those who are earnestly looking for His coming). Paul clearly says that it is those who are in Christ Jesus, whether living or dead, who will meet the Lord in the air. That is, *all saved persons* will hear the voice of the Son of God. 'We shall not all sleep but we *shall* all be changed (1 Cor. 15: 51).

How will this change affect us? Phil. 3: 21 'Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory'. 1 John 3: 2 'We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is'. No wonder we look for His appearing!
Neville Coomer

From Nottingham: The portion of the epistle under consideration this month deals with a subject which is for both our comfort and exhortation. The use of the Greek word *parakaleo* in v. 18 has, in addition to the thought of comfort, the idea of strengthening, encouraging and exhorting. One scholar comments: The noun from the root was used of the counsel for the defence in a lawsuit, one who was called alongside to help'. Such should be the effect of the glorious truth of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. After being lost sight of for many years, the Holy Spirit, in comparatively recent time, was pleased to reveal to students of the Word the truth of this blessed hope. We judge that John 14: 1-3, 1 Cor. 15: 35-54, and Phil. 3: 20-21 are some of the scriptures which refer to this event. Although revelation of the rapture was hidden from men of faith of a past dispensation we believe that in the Old Testament writings we see types and shadows of it.

It was a little band of His own that the Lord led over against Bethany' and, we suggest, before their eyes alone ascended into heaven. In view of the angelic message 'in like manner' we suggest the coming to the air with its associated events will be known only to those in the Church

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the Body and stands in contrast to the visible return of the Lord to the earth (see Acts 1 and Mat. 24: 30-31). The sudden disappearance, however, of many from their homes and family circles will surely cause a stir at the time. It may be that some, realising what has happened, will return to God in repentance and not bow their hearts to the man of sin when he arises, but we fear that in many cases it will be but a 'nine days wonder'. Perhaps the present-day talk of 'invasion from outer space' is one way in which Satan is preparing the minds of men to disregard the significance of the Lord's return to the air.

When the coming takes place there will be a shout of command as an officer to his troops. We do not know what that word will be, but the Holy Spirit within us will respond. The shout will have the ring of authority and urgency. We hear sometimes that the events associated with the rapture will take place in 'the twinkling of an eye' but the scripture shows that it is the changing that will be enacted in that moment of time (1 Cor. 15: 52). Further, in that scripture we read of 'the last trump', which raises the question as to whether the trumpet will be a series of blasts or one. It seems possible that the start of one continuous blast will herald the descent of the Lord and the end of the blast will signal the resurrection of the dead in Christ [Comment 4].

R. Hickling

From **Paisley**: In the sorrow of the Thessalonians we can detect something of their Gentile background. The spirit of fatalism which possessed pagan philosophy would admit of no comfort to the bereaved. The idolatrous religions of the ancient world knew no resurrection but despised the body as a restrictive encumbrance. In this passage, however, the apostle establishes the glorious truths of resurrection and the reunion of the saints. Therefore they were not to sorrow as the rest which have no hope. Sorrow itself was no sin; but in the light of the promises associated with the Lord's coming, there was no reason for despair, whereas the world which dies and perishes has every cause to be desolated with grief.

The reference to sleep does not betoken unconsciousness for the soul after death. The margin is more accurate when

it reads **'them** also **that** are fallen **asleep** through **Jesus'** (v. 14). Accordingly Lazarus and **the** rich man **were** conscious after **death** (**Luke** 16). Even **Paul** himself **caught up** into **the** **third** heaven **'heard** unspeakable words' (**2** Cor. **12: 4**) [Comment 5]. **The** concept of **sleep** **applies** to **the** body (**Dan.** 12: 2).

What Paul teaches here fully accords with **what the** Lord Jesus **taught** concerning His return. Though **Paul** enlarges upon **the** **basic** principles propounded by **the** Christ yet **he** does so 'by **the** Word of **the** Lord' **as taught** by God. **He** is not indulging in speculation or supposition **but** writes by way of revelation. In this **he** **has** **the** singular distinction of delineating **the** finer points of **the** rapture. Therefore in **what Paul** writes **here** **there** is a direct comparison with **what the** Lord said in **John** **11: 25-26; 14: 1-3, 22.** **These** may **be** **summed up** under **three** general truths: —

- (i) **The** Lord's return to **the** air only affects those who believe.
- (ii) **It** involves **the** living and **the** dead in Christ,
- (iii) **It** is a private coming (hence also **the** concealment of clouds).

With **regard** to **the** last point it **must be** said however **that the** world will **be** **aware** of a stupendous miracle.

It is **the** Lord **Himself** who **shall** come. This is distinct from His coming to **the** earth accompanied by **the** angels. Thus, **He** **shall** descend from heaven 'with a shout, with **the** voice of **the** archangel' (v. 16) **but** not with **the** archangel himself any more than **the** Lord's coming with **the** trump of God means **His** coming with God [Comment 6],

Regarding **the** **latter** item, **there** is another interesting comparison between this **passage** and **the** **trumpet** blasts in Num. **10** as follows: **(1)** vv. **3, 7.** **The** gathering together of an assembly, hence **'the** coming of **our** Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him' (**2** Thes. **2: 1**).

(ii) v. **9:** Going forth to **war**, hence **The** last enemy **that** shall **be** abolished is **death'** (**1** Cor. 15: 26).

(iii) v. **10:** **Festal** gladness, hence 'Him **that** is **able...** to **set** you before **the** presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy' (**Jude** **24**).

No wonder **the** apostle concludes 'Wherefore comfort one another with **these** words'. **What** a portion is ours in Christ

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and how much sweeter are the promises nineteen centuries on, 'so much the more as ye see the day drawing nigh' (Heb. 10: 25)!
T. *Summerhill*

COMMENTS

1. (**Liverpool**). I agree with the suggestion made by our friends that 1 Thes. 4: 14 refers to the bodily resurrection of the saints. Christ is the First fruits; 'then they that are Christ's, at His coming' (1 Cor. 15: 52).

2. (Liverpool). I suggest that scripture is clear that our present bodies will certainly be raised—'It is sown... it is raised' (1 Cor. 15: 42-44). They will, however, experience change so fundamental that we cannot now hope fully to understand it. They will be incorruptible, immortal, spiritual (1 Cor. 15), and 'conformed to the body of His glory' (Phil. 3: 21).
R. L.

2a. Some points of interest in this discussion are 'And when they rise from the dead they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven' (Mark 12: 25), signifying anatomical, physiological and other changes suited to heaven. 2 Cor. 5: 1-5 suggests all defects will be made up and that changes will be made to our bodies to make them suitable for our new environment (cf. 1 Cor. 15: 48-49). 1 Cor. 15: 37 speaks of sowing a 'grain', and can it be said that this is identical with the long stalk with a head of grain which grows from the 'bare grain'? Best of all, of course, we shall be like Him! (1 John 3: 2).

A. B. R.

3. (**Methil**). The emphasis of New Testament revelation on this subject would strongly support the thought that the coming of the Lord must be soon, for example, the thrice-repeated declaration, 'I come quickly' (Rev. 22: 7, 12, 20).

4. (Nottingham). Whether several trumpet sounds will be heard or, as is here suggested, only one which is 'the last trump' in the sense that it will mark the end of this dis-

pensation of grace, is a matter on which we can only speculate. What is certain is that the trumpet sound will herald the change in the bodily condition of the saints whether living or dead.

5. **(Paisley)**. There is, of course, no suggestion of death when Paul was 'caught up into Paradise' (2 Cor. 12: 4).

6. **(Paisley)**. This is an interesting and true comment. There is, of course, the related thought which has been a source of comfort to many believers, that the word 'Himself' provides the assurance of the personal presence of the Saviour at the Rapture. See, **for** example, paper from Hamilton. R. L.

7. **(Hamilton)**. This phrase from 1 Cor. 15: 23 has in view the various resurrections, this being the first.

8. **(Liverpool)**. Would not Luke 16: 22 indicate that angels are involved in the work of transporting the souls of the departed? J. K. D. J.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Liverpool: Will the repentant criminal who was crucified with the Lord Jesus be one of those caught up to meet the Lord?

The promise to the dying thief was: 'Today, shalt thou be with Me in Paradise'. After death the Saviour went to Hades (Acts 2: 31) and there the penitent malefactor joined Him; from there he would be led, among the great company of Old Testament saints, when Christ Himself was raised. Those who will be caught up at the Rapture are the believers of this dispensation, which began at Pentecost, and thus the repentant criminal will not, I judge, be among them.

R. L.

From Nottingham: 1. 1 Thes. 4: 14 '... even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him'.

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The R. V. Margin shows **alternative** renderings: —

'fallen asleep through **Jesus**' or

'them also that are fallen asleep will God through Jesus bring with Him'.

Does 'in' or 'through Jesus' **relate** to those who **have** fallen asleep or to **the** action of God in bringing **them** with Jesus?

Prima facie it seems more likely **that** 'through Jesus' would **relate** to those 'fallen asleep' otherwise **the verse** would **read** **'them also that are fallen asleep will God through Jesus bring with Jesus'**. Comments, **please!**

This has always **appealed to me as a** most beautiful expression—'asleep in (or through—*dia*) Jesus'; **that** is, it is through or **because** of **the** work of Christ **that** saints **fall** 'asleep'. **Apart** from His all-sufficient work, **the** quiet and **calm** repose which marks **the death** of **the** believer would not **have been** possible; **the** unbeliever has no such blessed portion.

As indicated in Comment **1**, it is my understanding **that** **the** phrase 'will God bring with Him' **refers** to **the** bodily resurrection of **the dead** in Christ. 'With' indicates **association** rather than **time**.

2. Reference Bible Studies **1933, page 101**, article by **the late Dr. A. T. Doodson**. First **paragraph**, last sentence. **'If** God observed **the** days of **the** Festivals **at the** beginning of **the** dispensations, may **there** not **be** something analogous in this **at the** close, with reference to **the** Lord's coming and **the Feast** of Trumpets. **'Have** present editors and/or contributors any comments on this suggestion?

This is one of **a** number of thought-provoking suggestions **made** by **the late** Dr. Doodson in **the** article **referred** to, **but** while it raises intriguing possibilities, **I** do not think it is possible to **take the** suggestion any **further** than **he** himself did.

R. L

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7907

The subject of our study this month is one which has given rise to much confusion; indeed, the Thessalonian believers were themselves unsure about it, as Paul's second letter to them reveals. In 1 Thes. 4, he had been reassuring them that both the dead and the living would rise at Christ's coming. However, the parallel truths of the rule of the Lord on earth also needed to be taught. The expression 'times and seasons' was understood by them to refer to God's sovereign decisions as to when He would intervene in the world (Acts 1: 7). The term 'the day of the Lord' was used many times in the Old Testament revelation, always to indicate the Lord's appearance in judgement, to destroy the enemies of His people, and that is its significance here. The contrasts between the modes of appearance of the Lord for believers and in judgement as King are too marked to be ignored.

Why then should the apostle emphasize the fate of unbelievers? As has been suggested in answer to a question, he wished to exhort the Thessalonians to behaviour suited to their status and destiny. This is a recurrent theme in Scripture: this is what you are—now be it. Sons of light, watching for salvation from heaven, should be very different from sons of darkness, drifting through life in careless hedonism, who are to be overtaken by sudden destruction. The message is equally apposite to us; knowing our destiny, we need to build each other up as we watch and wait for our Saviour.

P. L. H.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAROUSIA, EPIPHANEIA AND APOKALUPSIS

Parousia. In the Revised Version text this Greek word is rendered in Mat. 24: 3 as 'coming', where the marginal note

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gives the meaning 'presence'. The same Greek word is actually rendered as 'presence' in the R. V. text at 2 Cor. 10: 10; Phil. 1: 26; 2: 12; but elsewhere, as in Mat. 24: 3 the meaning given in the text is 'coming', always accompanied by a reminder that the basic sense of the word '*parousia*' is 'presence'. In ordinary Greek it could signify 'presence' or 'arrival', and was also the technical term for a royal visit. By derivation it implies 'being near' (Strong).

Epiphaneia. In 2 Thes. 2: 8 the word '*epiphaneia*' is translated in the R. V. as 'manifestation', but elsewhere (1 Tim. 6: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 10; 4: 18; Titus 2: 13) as 'appearing'. It can mean 'coming into view' or 'manifestation' in divine power.

Apokalupsis. In Rom. 8: 19 *apokalupsis* is translated 'revealing'. Elsewhere in the R. V. it is rendered by the word 'revelation'. The word can also mean 'unveiling' (Luke 2: 32, R. V. margin).

In considering the relationship of these three words, it is important not to lose sight of the distinction between the coming of the Lord Jesus for the Church which is His Body, which is His coming to the air as Son of God (1 Thes. 4: 13-18; 1 Cor. 15: 23, 51), and on the other hand His coming to the earth as Son of Man with His saints and angels (2 Thes. 2: 8). It is clear that the Lord Jesus will first come to the air, and at this glorious event both the living and the dead in Christ will be raised and brought into His presence. The word '*parousia*' is used however in both 1 Cor. 15: 23 and 2 Thes. 2: 8.

Josephus uses the word '*parousia*' (Ant. 3: 80) with reference to the indwelling presence of God in the Temple. In the New Testament, *parousia* is used of His earthly appearing (2 Tim. 1: 10), placed in the context of the purpose of God in grace. *Apokalupsis* is not used of the earthly life of the Lord, though indeed it was a revelation to the eye of faith (1 Cor. 1: 18).

Epiphaneia expresses the brightness of the glory of the Lord's coming. It is especially relevant to His future coming to earth and His manifestation to the world. Only those who believed the truth saw the days of His flesh as the

appearing of **the** Saviour Jesus **Christ**. For **them** there was also **the** knowledge of **a day** when **His** power would **be** outwardly evident and **such** as would welcome **the** revelation and coming of Antichrist would prove to **have** been **deceived** by **a** working of error. This assurance of **the future** appearing of **the** Anointed Christ would **be** a source of particular comfort to **the** saints to whom **the** Epistles **were** first written during **the time** of **the** Roman Empire.

In **a past** dispensation men of God believed in **the** overrule of **God**, and in divine intervention in world history, and they looked forward to **the** coming of **the** Messiah. The disciples **were** warned not to **be** misled regarding **the time** of His coming (*parousia*) as Son of Man (Mat. 24: 3). Aaron **came back to the** people of Israel with blessing (Lev. 9: 22). Christ, having been offered to **bear the** sins of many, **shall appear** a second time, **apart** from sin, to **them that** wait for Him unto salvation (**Heb.** 9: 28).

At the coming (*parousia*) of **the** Son of God for believers of **this** dispensation (**1** Thes. 4: 5), faith will link **up with** sight and hope **with** realization, and **we** shall **all be** changed (**1** Cor. 15: 51).

Revelation (*apokalupsis*) is **the** disclosing of **truth** previously unknown, and in **past ages** God **revealed** Himself by signs and intimations, by **the** oracle of **the** Urim and Thummim, and by His holy prophets. **He made** Himself known **as** Creator and **the** Living God, and **revealed** His counsel **as** governing **the** course of history, requiring holiness and obedience from His people. **It was** not man by reason unveiling God, **but the** Spirit bringing conviction of **the truth** of God, privilege being **matched** by responsibility.

In Rom. 4: 23 **the** dealings of God with **Abraham** are shown to **have** a present application, **but** central to **the** revelation of God is **the** Son of God who **reveals the Father** (**Mat.** 11: 27). It is through **the** Spirit **that** God **revealed the word of the Cross** (**1** Cor. 2: 10), **the** revelation of Jesus Christ (**Gal.** 1: 12). **The** scope of this revelation is immense, having expression in **the future** as in **1** Cor. 1: 7, 'waiting for **the** revelation of Jesus Christ; who **shall** also confirm you to **the** end, **that** ye **be** unreprieveable in **the** day of our Lord Jesus Christ', and again in **2** Thes. 1: 7, 'and to you **that** are afflicted, rest with **us** at **the** revelation of **the** Lord Jesus

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from heaven with the angels of His power'. In the book of Revelation, the revelation of Jesus Christ prepares the saints for tribulation by revealing heavenly and eternal things and the destiny of the world to be bound up with Jesus Christ.

Revelations of the Lord were made known to the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12: 1). Paul desired that the Ephesians should be granted a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1: 17; comp. Phil. 3: 15).

The lesson for us in these three words is 'The Lord is at hand' (Phil. 4: 5). *E. Archibald*

SONS OF LIGHT (1 Thes. 5: 1-11)

From Derby: 1 Thes. 5: 1-11 is a paragraph of contrast and contains a subject different from that of 1 Thes. 4: 13-18. The day of the Lord is for judgement; but not of the believer.

Neither the day nor the light has sons by generation so the word 'son' here, as in many other places, denotes character and likeness. The believer is to partake of the character of light and day. This is taught by the Lord Jesus in the sermon on the mount (Mat. 5: 14-16) [see Comment 4].

The paragraph is essentially one for exhortation. The sleep of 5: 6 is different from the natural sleep of rest and from that of 4: 14. It is the sleep of lethargy, which must be avoided always.

Sobriety is called for in (5: 6) and is linked with the armour of defence. The armour comprises faith and love, which chiefly are for the present, and hope which looks forward to the fulness of salvation.

Finally Paul returns in 5: 10 to the language of 4: 15 and the believer's association with the Lord Jesus whatever his state. *N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

From Kingston-upon-Thames: Paul, writing from Corinth, sends a letter of encouragement to the young church to stand firm under persecution, and this closing section gives some definite teaching about the second coming of Christ which the Thessalonian Christians were expecting at any moment.

The 'times and seasons' referred to are in relationship to the restoration of Israel (see Dan. 2: 21), and the changes that God undertakes have the interlude called the Day of Grace included, in which we are privileged to be.

The 'day of the Lord' will begin with a day of war, terror and judgement, darkness and entire destruction (Joel 1: 15). This is the wrath to come, when He comes in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and them that obey not the Gospel of our God (2 Thes. 1: 8). The Day is certain and, having started in judgement, ends in judgement at the Great White Throne. Such judgement has nothing to do with us, because we are sons of Light and completely removed from this horrific event.

Many saw the light and apprehended it not for (John 12: 36) the Light of this World spoke to the multitude and implored them to believe on the Light that they may be sons of Light. Those that believe not are judged already (John 3: 18-21). Sons of Light will therefore show clear behavioural differences which are in opposition to and are contrary to those of the children of darkness. These should be obvious in our walk before men and more importantly before our loving God. Let us watch and wait like good soldiers on 'night duty', until He comes and also ensure a life of occupation, not allowing our hands to slack.

The helmet signifies how important it is to protect the head and mind against the wiles of the Devil, his snares and deception.

The breastplate of righteousness which elsewhere in the Scriptures speaks of love out of a true heart gives protection not only for warfare but would also suggest more of appearance which is vital when confronting men and our relationship with them in day-to-day circumstances.

In v. 9 the wrath to which we are not appointed is quite evidently the day of the Lord. We, in this dispensation, will not see it because we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and the fruition of that salvation will be when the Lord comes down to the air for His Church.

We would be in great danger if our salvation depended on our watchfulness and behaviour in this life, so it behoves us to exhort one another as we watch for His return.

J. Thompson

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From Edinburgh: In looking at these verses we were very much aware of the concluding words in 1 Thes. 4: 13-18. The comfort of the saints was the hope they would be united with Him at His glorious appearing in the air and so be for ever with the Lord. With such a glorious vision in our sight we read the opening words of ch. 5.

Times and seasons. We are brought back to things of earth since times and seasons are unknown in the heavens. This is confirmed by the words in Dan. 2: 21. It is clear that Paul must have given clear instruction and teaching since he reminds them of their perfect knowledge. They understood perfectly what he was saying.

Day of the Lord. Most of us were of the view that this referred to a day of judgement upon earth. Some were not so sure (see question) recalling such words as day of Judgement day of Christ, day of the Lord Jesus Christ day of God, day of the Lord. Most accepted it could not refer to the Great White Throne but must be a time on earth almost certainly including the time of Jacob's trouble and extending over the Millenium to the final rebellion. Peter spoke of the end of that day. It is ushered in suddenly without warning.

Peace, safety destruction. This cannot refer to the end of ch. 4 since such conditions are not envisaged at the calling away of the saints. When it comes there is no escape.

Ye are not in darkness. Ye are sons of light. Here we have a great divide: light and darkness. It will overtake the latter but we will escape so it is natural to assume that the better portion for us (or sons of Light in that day) will be to be called away from the effects. Hence another assurance that the Church which is Christ's Body will not pass through that time of trouble.

Hence we are exhorted not to sleep but to be sober for 'God appointed us not unto wrath'. As we realise this fact that we are fulfilling God's appointment for us, how our hearts should seek to honour Him and our lives to show forth His excellencies as we see the day approaching. Now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. We are to live in this spirit: watchful, sober, awake to the obtaining of our salvation which can only be fulfilled in eternity. Therefore whether in this life or dead in Christ we live

together with Him; then and only then will be realised fully what was expected of us that we should live as sons of Light. So we exhort one another in love not to live in darkness, nor in grey areas, but in His light.

J. H., L. Burgoyne

From **Leeds**: Darkness and light are so clearly defined that the one has no communion with the other (2 Cor. 6: 14). On the earth, in the beginning, darkness was (Gen. 1: 3) and God said 'let there be light', and light was.

As with the natural, so with the spiritual; the world was in darkness of sin, but, in the beginning was the Word, the Light, the Life (John 1: 1-5). God sent His own Son into the world and He came as the Light of the world (John 8: 12), not only to His own people (John 1: 11) but as 'a Light to lighten the Gentiles' (Luke 2: 32, Is. 42: 6 and 49: 6). 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1: 5). Those who are now in the world as sons of light are those who are born of God, born of the Word, and of the Spirit (John 3: 5-6). 'Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord' (Eph. 5: 8). It is God who has 'called you out of darkness into His marvellous light' (1 Pet. 2: 9) and it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4: 6). Alas, Satan, the god of this age, has blinded the minds of those who do not believe; they are in gross darkness, and the light of the glorious gospel of Christ has not come unto them. If this gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost and who are yet in the darkness.

The Lord said that 'men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil... but he that doeth the truth cometh to the light that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God' (John 3: 19-21). We who are sons of light must let our light so shine before men that they may see (Mat. 5: 16) for the 'night cometh, when no man can work' (John 9: 4).

Those who are sons of the day should remain sober (temperate) putting on the armour of light (Rom. 13: 12) including here (1 Thes. 5: 8) the breastplate of faith and love, a double breastplate, whose outer surface is burnished

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with faith and whose inner is bright with love, to doubly protect the believer's heart against all the fiery darts of the evil One. The head (mind, intellect) is protected by the helmet of hope, the hope of our salvation, the hope that is eternal in the soon coming One. 'Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him' (1 Thes. 5: 10).

I. Gardner, P. J. Dodge, H. R. Dodge

From Liverpool: *Contrasts*

Paul has been writing about the coming of the Lord Jesus for the Church, and at first glance there appears to be no break in the passage so that it would be easy to assume he was still talking about the same event. Further investigation, however, reveals instead a series of contrasts:—

The Rapture (4: 14-17)	The Day of the Lord (5: 2-4, 9)
Peace and Safety (4: 17)	Destruction (v. 3)
Sons of light (v. 5)	Darkness (v. 4)
Belonging to the day (v. 5)	Belonging to the night (v. 5)
Alertness (v. 6)	Being asleep (v. 6)
Self-control (v. 8)	Drunkenness (v. 7)
To receive salvation (v. 9)	To suffer wrath (v. 9)

We were reminded that 'the opening of Thy words giveth light' (Ps. 119: 130), and assumed that 'the rest' (v. 6) were the same people as mentioned in 4: 13 as 'the rest which have no hope'.

Times and Seasons. This period will come after the coming referred to at the end of chapter 4 [see Comment 3]. This is a time of great trouble, yet we have not been destined for wrath (v. 9) but we are 'guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' (1 Pet. 1: 5). The Lord, speaking of these times, spoke in relation to Israel about His coming as Son of Man (Mat. 24), having previously wept over Jerusalem and having spoken of Israel being set aside (Mat. 23: 37-39). He mentioned a restored nation, restored worship, sabbaths, and the ritual associated with it. Col. 2: 16-17 shows that we are not in this present age concerned with such things, today's house and priesthood being spiritual. The present spiritual expression must be removed before an earthly one can be re-established. Romans 11: 25 speaks of a hardening having come upon Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in.

Other than the fact that the coming of the Lord to the air will precede these events we are not given any dates or timetables in Scripture and we are wise to avoid speculating on actual dates!

The Day of the Lord. This is a truth revealed in the Old Testament—'Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; as destruction from the Almighty shall come' (Is. 13: 6). See also Is. 13: 9, Jer. 30: 7; 46: 10, Joel 1: 15; 2: 1-2, 11, 31; 3: 14, Amos 5: 18, Obad. 15, Zeph. 1: 14-17, Zech. 14, Mai. 4: 1, 5. It is always associated with judgement and distress. It will be (1) sudden; (2) unexpected; (3) accompanied by cosmic upheavals; (4) a time of Judgement; (5) terrible. From 2 Thes. 2: 2-4 it is clear that the rebellion and the man of lawlessness must come first.

The 'thief in the night' simile shows that those in darkness whose spiritual condition is described as 'sleep' will be off guard, and will not expect Him. By contrast the Thessalonians are Sons of Light, and not in darkness. That day will not surprise them, not because they now know about it but, because as Sons of Light they will not be there then.

Wake or Sleep. The sleep referred to in vv. 6, 7, is spiritual unawareness and in contrast we are commanded to 'watch', the key word in relation to the coming of the Lord to the air. However, in v. 10 'whether we wake or sleep' could refer either to 'we that are alive' and 'the dead in Christ' of 4: 16, 17; or alternatively could be indicative of the spiritual awareness of believers, signifying that whether we are waiting expectantly or not we will be caught up to be with the Lord for ever [Comment 1].

David J. Webster

From Melbourne: To become a 'son of light' is simply a matter of salvation, as we see in v. 9, 'Salvation from our Lord Jesus Christ' (see also John 12: 36—Eds.).

The day of the Lord' is yet to come and when it comes for this doomed earth it will be terrifying and without warning. There will be no escape and judgement will have to be faced at the Great White Throne (and elsewhere—Eds.). When does the day of the Lord commence? From 2 Thes. 1, we see that it will start when the Lord returns

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with His Church. 'But ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake you'. The believer should be thankful that he will escape 'that day'. Before it arrives he will have been caught up in the glorious rapture with the Lord in the air. Thus we should 'watch and be sober' (v. 6) otherwise we will sleep or drift as sinfulness increases. Our helmet is to be 'the hope of salvation' (v. 8). This is salvation in its third aspect: salvation from the presence of sin, when the Lord comes.

As the darkness grows deeper our light should become brighter. Our ultimate goal should be to become mature Christians in the Light, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Mawhinney

From **Methil**: In our study, we note that times and seasons are not related to the people of God (of the present day—Eds.), for elsewhere in Scripture the Lord tells us that it is not for us to know times or seasons (Acts 1: 7). They are, however, related to the calendar of events associated with, or leading up to the coming of the Son of Man to reign in judgement (Acts 2: 16-21). This coming we consider to be the beginning of the day of the Lord, a day which will last for a thousand years. Men and women, who believe that theirs is perfect peace and safety, will be taken completely unaware, as the Son of Man comes as a thief in the night, destroying all, with no escape for any (see Luke 12: 40).

The people of God, however, living in a day of grace, will not pass through this time of tribulation, for they will previously be caught up to be for ever with the Lord. Meanwhile, as sons of light, we should walk as children of light, having no fellowship with 'the unfruitful works of darkness' (Eph. 5: 8-14). In natural things, light must precede life, but so far as the spiritual life is concerned, life is followed by light [Comment 2]. 'God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1: 5). 'Men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil... but he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest' (John 3: 19-21).

Having received the light of life, let us not be found sleeping (Rom. 13: 11-14) but let us put on the armour of light, and let us be for ever watchful, for we believe that

we are in the fourth or last watch of the night. Though we are not of the night, we cannot fail to see the night gathering around us as we witness daily signs pointing to the coming of the Lord, which will be followed by the day of apostasy (2 Thes. 2: 3, 4), when men will worship the Son of Perdition.

A. R. Smith

From Nottingham: We have seen previously that the *parousia* of the Lord was very real to the Thessalonian saints. They were waiting for God's Son from heaven (1 Thes. 1: 10). The apostle had written comforting words about those who had died in Christ (1 Thes. 4: 13-18), and from v. 1 of ch. 5 it seems possible that some had been concerned about the date of the Lord's return. So Paul writes of times and seasons. The word translated 'times' is *chronoi*, indicating time in its chronological sequence, while the word *kairoi* translated 'seasons' would point rather to time in its qualitative aspect. Time passes and, as it does so, it brings with it various seasons. As we review the time that has passed from the day of Pentecost to the present day we may think of the time of the Reformation as an example of one of the seasons with its own characteristics [see Comment 3].

Just as the seasons of the year are distinguished by their own signs, so, we suggest, many of the seasons of time have their own signs. The Lord spoke of the signs of the times (Mat. 16: 3). We think of some of the signs that were given in the early days of this dispensation and those that will be seen in a future day (Mat. 24). These signs do not relate to the Lord's coming to the air, although they may, in some measure, cast their shadow before them.

'Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you', declared Paul (1 Thes. 5: 1). Why? Does he mean that having already instructed them in these things it was unnecessary to write further, or does he mean that he had no need to write about them because they would not be affected by them? Paul shows that they knew perfectly (accurately or fully) concerning the nature of the day of the Lord.

By comparison with other scriptures such as Acts 2: 16-21 we believe the day of the Lord extends from the time

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of His coming to **the** earth to the time when the heaven and the earth will flee away from the face of the One who sits on the throne. This day stands in contrast to the day of Christ and leads to the realisation of the day of God.

The Lord's coming will be unexpected, and men will be talking in terms of peace and safety, hiding behind the flimsy covering of their efforts and treaties, when sudden destruction will come upon them and the fierceness of judgement will be felt among them.

We are reminded that we are sons of the day and, as such, should be alert and awake to live as such and be aware of the need of men around us.

There was, in our studies, general agreement that the Church the body will not pass through the great tribulation. Some thought vv. 4-11 strongly supported this view. Others, while subscribing fully to it thought v. 4 could be read to imply that the day of the Lord would overtake believers. The construction of the verse in the R. V., A. V., N. I. V., and Young's Literal Translation, are similar. We suggest the thought in the verse is 'that day will not overtake you, because you are Sons of Light and, as such, you are not involved in it'.
R. Hickling

From **Paisley**: After dealing with the Rapture, the apostle moves on in the prophetic chronology to the day of the Lord. Having treated that manifestation of Christ which affects believers, he proceeds to the subsequent manifestation which affects unbelievers. A simple distinction between the two is that though no angels are involved in the Rapture, the day of the Lord is characterised by 'the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven with the angels of His power' (2 Thes. 1: 7).

This latter revelation to unbelievers will terrify and confound a wicked world deceived into a false sense of security by the man of sin. Clearly the world is not going to repent at the Rapture despite its being an unmistakeable work of God. Hence the day of the Lord which follows the Great Tribulation will overtake as a thief those who are in the darkness. It will not be so with those who are in Christ for they shall have been taken out of the world by the Lord that they should not be overtaken by the day of the Lord.

In this respect, we may liken the Rapture of the Church to the translation of Enoch. In view of the impending flood, God took away His servant as a sign to a degenerating world. Yet despite this great miracle, together with the preaching of Noah, 'they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away' (Mat. 24: 39). Therefore, despite the Rapture and the witness of the faithful in the next dispensation, those who remain in the night will stumble in their darkness.

No doubt reminding the Thessalonians of their former manner of life, the apostle refers to the careless slumber and drunken indifference of those who are in the night. Despite their many sins, they sleep without fear of evil, though their consciences should awaken them to the reality of the wrath of God. Likewise others revel in the night, carousing drunkenly, insensible to the awful danger which threatens them. Worse still, they are drunk with the wine of false teaching and face the future as men emboldened with strong drink. Thus the Gentile, ignorant of the prophetic future, has a relaxed attitude to sin and judgement.

The apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to protect their hearts and heads from attack. With their hearts protected by the breastplate of faith and love, the seat of their affections will withstand discouragement. Their faith in the coming Christ and their love for Him will insulate against doubt and coldness. Similarly, with their hope set perfectly upon the redemption of the body, their minds will be safe against the world's assaults. Having 'the assurance of things hoped for' (Heb. 11: 1), their thoughts will never be seduced into the fatalistic hedonism of the unbeliever. Rather, because they wait for God's Son from heaven, their minds are fixed upon the Saviour, who has not only forgiven sin but has also granted the believer power over it.

Even so, in v. 11, the apostle stresses the necessity of constant exhortation in these matters, which is no less applicable in our times.

T. Summerhill

From Birkenhead: The first verse opens with the word '*But*', indicating that the subject has now been changed, and as the passage progresses, it is clear that Paul is not speaking of the coming of the Lord to the air, but of a time when He

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will come again to the earth in judgement of the nations, to deliver Israel at the commencement of the Millennium.

The 'time and seasons' referred to do not concern the believers in this dispensation but refer to conditions prevailing when He comes again. It would seem that the Thessalonian saints are not told of these times since they have already received oral notification in earlier days or possibly because they are not affected by them as suggested in v. 4 [Comment 3].

The reference to 'Sons of Light' as in contrast to darkness indicates the knowledge in which they are secure, as opposed to those who are not children of God and who are therefore ignorant of their situation and of the danger in which they will stand [Comment 4]. The use of the word 'light' was referred to and the positive action of the enlightened shining in a darkened world (Phil. 2: 15) was considered.

Nevertheless, the saints in Thessalonica and ourselves in this day are encouraged to be wakeful, i. e. not to sleep. The word 'sober' is used in this connection and indicates the alertness that must characterize our watch. It was concluded that our watch should be against attack, since we are to be armoured. The attacks come during our period of waiting for the coming of the Lord for His Church. We are to be wary of the attack against our stand for Christ and our efforts towards discipleship. We are given strong armour, however, in the protection of helmet and breast-plate which give cover for the most vital and vulnerable parts of the body. Faith, love and the hope (assurance) of salvation present our strongest guard against attack.

Vv. 9 and 10 make it clear that the wrath which is to come upon the world will not concern us and also give assurance that our vigilance, or lack of it, cannot affect our eternal salvation or our salvation from the world at the time of the Coming to the Air.

Ft. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams

COMMENTS

1. (Liverpool). The context of this verse is that of the contrast between spiritual alertness and spiritual lethargy. The

apostle is saying that the Lord, in His grace, will take us to be with Himself whatever our spiritual state (v. 6) but in view of this we can encourage each other to watch so that we shall not be ashamed at His coming.

2. (Methil), it is the light of the gospel which illuminates and enables us to receive life through believing (2 Cor. 4: 4, 6). The first act is God's but He then requires us to act as children of light.

3. (Birkenhead). The words 'times and seasons' refer to the various dispensations in God's plan for mankind, in particular His dealings with Israel. The disciples asked the Lord after His resurrection about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and He replied: 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority' (Acts 1: 6, 7). The Thessalonians had been instructed about the purposes of God but neither they nor we know when they are to be carried out.

4. (Birkenhead). Men become 'sons of light' by faith in Christ (John 12: 36), and demonstrate their relationship by their behaviour. The metaphor is one of relationship, not of knowledge.

P. L. H.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Edinburgh

Some expressed difficulty in applying 1 Thes. 5: 1-11 to the coming of the Lord to the earth. The last verses of chapter 4 deal with Christ's return to the air for His Church. Chapter 5 continues to deal with prophetic matters and the apostle draws the attention of the saints in Thessalonica to the coming day of the Lord. If this is taken to be the coming of the Son of Man to the remnant of Israel, why does Paul go to such lengths to instruct the saints as to its suddenness, for they will all have been raised at the Rapture? The 'they' in v. 3 presumably refers to unbelievers and v. 4 contrasts the believer's position: 'But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Some found difficulty in accepting that the reason the day

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would not overtake **them** was that **they** would already **be with Christ**.

V. 5 **amplifies the** believer's **state** of readiness and understanding, 'For ye **are all** sons of light....' **As a** natural conclusion in v. 6 **the** apostle **exhorts the** saints 'So then **let us** not sleep....'

There would seem to **be a** natural and logical argument **as Paul** exhorts **the** saints **to watch** soberly for **the** day of **the** Lord **that that** day should not overtake **them**, not **because** they **are with the** Lord, **but** because being sons of light they **are not asleep**, unlike those **in** darkness.

ANSWER

In this passage, **Paul** is contrasting **the** destiny of believers with **that** of unbelievers, and drawing from **the** contrast instruction **as to the believers'** behaviour. **We shall be** with **the** Lord (**4: 17**) **but** sudden destruction will come upon **them** (**5: 3**). **The persecuted** Thessalonians **were assured** that they would **be** vindicated by **the** Lord in **due** time when their persecutors' complacent self-confidence would **be** suddenly **shattered** by **the** appearance of **the** Lord in power. The sons of light by **the** new birth do not belong to this present world and need to **watch** not for **the** day of **the** Lord **but** 'for **the** obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for **us that whether we wake or sleep, we** should live together with Him' (vv. 9, 10). **It is** possible for **the** sons of light to **be asleep** (v. 10) **but** even **if they are**, their salvation **out of the** world is **assured**; they **are** not appointed to judgement. **P. L. H.**

Bible Studies

A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7908

There is much to ponder in the succinctly expressed exhortations with which Paul closes this first epistle to the Thessalonians.

He firstly addresses a word to the saints (vv. 12, 13), follows on with exhortations which are apparently specifically directed to the overseers (vv. 14, 15), and then he gives further exhortations of general application in the context of Christian life and service (vv. 16-22). The validity of the foregoing analysis is debated in several of the papers submitted and varying viewpoints are expressed.

Paul was fully aware of the persecution and affliction that the Thessalonians were experiencing, yet he exhorts them to 'rejoice always' (v. 16). His own life of service was being lived out against a backcloth of suffering and affliction, yet he was 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing' (2 Cor. 6: 10). The joy of the Christian is an inward joy, related to the work of the Holy Spirit within, but independent of external circumstances.

Knowing experimentally the value of prayer the apostle counsels, 'Pray without ceasing' (v. 17) and, very conscious of his own need of divine enabling he requests, 'Brethren, pray for us' (v. 25). *J. K. D. J.*

WILL THE CHURCH PASS THROUGH THE TRIBULATION?

It should be clearly understood by the reader that the Church referred to in the question that forms the title of this article is 'the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all' (Eph. 1: 22, 23). We shall search the Old Testament scriptures in vain for direct references to this church. This unique divine purpose was a closely guarded secret, a mystery 'hid in God' but now revealed (Eph. 3: 9). The building of this Church is the great distinguishing feature of the present dispensation, which has

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been termed **the 'dispensation of the mystery'** (Eph. 3: 9). In **that** now well-known declaration of intent **at** Caesarea **Philippi**, the Lord **Jesus** intimated **that the** commencement of **this** work **was** imminent (Mat. 16: 18). The building began **at** Pentecost and continues through **the** present **age**, **the** work being completed when **the** Lord returns for **His** own **at the** end of **the age** (1 Thes. 4: 15-17). **It is** for **this** consummation **that we wait** 'for God appointed **us** not unto **wrath**, **but** unto **the** obtaining of salvation through our Lord **Jesus Christ**, who **died** for **us that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him'** (1 Thes. 5: 9, 10). **The careful** student of **the** word of God **will** note **that this** work **did** not commence until **Israel** had been **set aside** nationally, and **it will be** completed before **Israel** is taken **up** again by God **as a** nation. God **is** presently calling both Jew and Gentile through **the** Gospel, and **because He is** not dealing **with Israel** nationally, **but is** taking out of **the** Gentiles **a** people for **His** name **this present time is called 'the fulness of the Gentiles'** (Rom. 11: 25). When **this** work **is** accomplished God **will** again **deal with Israel** nationally (Acts 15: 14-18, Rom. 11: 25).

The Lord's apostles **had** not yet begun to **appreciate** in those early post-resurrection days **the** unique **character** of **the** present dispensation, for they **asked Him** if **He was** about to 'restore **the** kingdom to **Israel'** (Acts 1: 6). They **were** told **that it was** not for **them** to know 'the times or seasons' **which the Father had set** within **His** authority (Acts 1: 7). **Times** or seasons **have** to do **with Israel**, who **are** beloved for **the fathers'** sake. **The** work **the** apostles **were** being **prepared** for would begin **at** Jerusalem **but** would become world-wide in **its** extent, and **effect the** realisation of **the great** divine purpose of bringing Jew and Gentile together in **the** one Body in an invisible and inviolable unity. **It** would also **effect the** establishing of **a visible** unity through bringing **disciples** together in local testimony in **churches** of God (Mat. 28: 19, 20).

Key **scriptures** in relation to **the** outworking of God's purpose for **Israel** **are** given in Daniel 9: 24-27. **These** purposes **will** not **be** consummated until **a** period of seventy **weeks** of years **has** run **its** course. Sixty-nine of **these weeks** **have** been **fulfilled**, **the** terminal point for **them** being

the rejection and crucifixion of **the** Christ (v. 26). **There** is, therefore, a hiatus between **the** completion of **the** sixty-ninth **week** and **the** commencement of **the** seventieth **week**, **the** fulfilment of which lies in **the** future. **It** is in this time-gap, while God's purposes relative to Israel **are** in abeyance, **that** His **great** purpose concerning **the** Church is being fulfilled.

After the Church has been '**caught up**' God will return to His dealings with Israel as a nation. The signing of **the** 'firm covenant' with Israel will **mark the** commencement of **the** final **week** of years of Daniel's prophecy, and it is in this final **week that the** tribulation period is set. The specific references in **the** Scriptures to this tribulation, **as well** as its setting in time, **make it clear that** it relates to Israel and not to **the** Church. The prophecy in Jeremiah designates it as '**the time** of Jacob's trouble' (Jer. 30: 7; see also Dan. 12: 1). **The** Lord's words when speaking of '**the time of the end**' confirm **the** setting in time of **the** tribulation and **its** specific application to 'Judaea', '**the land**' and 'this people' (**Mat. 24: 15-22; Luke 21-20-28**).

In Rev. 12 Israel is seen as **the** woman who brought forth **the** Man-child who will **rule the** nations with a rod of iron (v. 5), and **she** is also seen fleeing into **the** wilderness **to a place prepared** (v. 6) to **escape** from **the** tribulation. **A time** interval of some two thousand years **separates these** two events. **Verse 13** shows **that the** period of persecution commences in **the middle** of Daniel's seventieth **week**, when Satan is cast down to **earth**. **The** tribulation **will last** for **three and a half** years, **a time**, and **times**, and half **a time**, or **1, 260** days; **this is a** relatively short period of **time**, **but the** slain of **that period will be a great** multitude. **It** is, of course, evident **that** many Gentiles **will** also **refuse** to worship **the Beast** and **his image** and will **suffer** persecution, and many **will** befriend **the persecuted elect** in **spite of the** danger inherent in **so** doing (Mat. 25: 31-40). **The** Lord **has predicted that**, 'for **the elect's sake**', those days **shall be** shortened (**Mat. 24: 22**). **The elect** referred to in **this** context **are**, of course, **the elect** of **that** day; **the elect** of the present day, **the members** of **the Church the Body**, **will be with the Lord** in heaven during **the** tribulation period. **They will come with Him** when **He** returns as Son of Man for

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Israel's deliverance, thus ending the tribulation period (1 Thes. 5: 4). Then shall the great and terrible day of the Lord overtake men, but the saints of the present dispensation, being with the Lord, will not be overtaken by that day (1 Thes. 1: 10). J. K. D. J.

THE 'MALE SIDE' OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH (Jer. 22: 30)

Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah'.

Interesting discussion has developed from a reference to this scripture in a study paper, and opportunity is now taken to show the relevance of the verse to the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The penultimate king of Judah prior to the Babylonian captivity was Jehoiachin (2 Kin. 24: 8-12), also referred to as Jeconiah (Jer. 24: 1) or Coniah (Jer. 22: 28-30; 37-1). He reigned for only three months before being deposed by Nebuchadnezzar in favour of his uncle, king Zedekiah. After thirty-seven years' imprisonment in Babylon, Evil Merodach restored Coniah to regal privileges (Jer. 52: 31-34). He is recorded as having seven sons (1 Chr. 3: 17-18).

Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled immediately in that Jeconiah's first son, Shealtiel, never reigned in Israel. Shealtiel had apparently no son. Zerubbabel appears to have been the son of Pedaiiah, Shealtiel's brother (1 Chr. 3: 17-19). From this it seems that the oft-repeated phrase 'Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel' refers not to genealogical descent but to the lineage of the heirs to the throne, i. e. the royal descent. Nevertheless Zerubbabel, though not the direct descendant of Shealtiel, was still of the seed of Jeconiah and, in keeping with the prophecy of Jeremiah, never reigned. He and the royal descendants were forever subject to the Gentile world-power of the day and, by the time of the birth of the Lord Jesus, they had eventually sunk to the obscurity of the carpenter's shop in the despised backwater of Nazareth.

The next in succession to Joseph the carpenter, however, is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself who, unlike His predecessors who never reigned, will reign. Indeed, His

reign will **surpass** in glory and prosperity **that** of His ancestors **after the flesh**, David and Solomon (**Luke 1: 32-33**). In **His case** the prophecy of **Jeremiah** must **fail** unless **the Lord Jesus** is **NOT** of **the seed** of Joseph and hence of Jeconiah. This **we** know to **be the case** from **the** scriptures **that tell** of His being born **of the virgin** (Is. 7: 14; Mat. 1: 22, 23). Thus **we see that** Jeremiah's prophecy **deals with the 'male side'** of **the virgin birth** and complements **the** more familiar scriptures in Isaiah which **deal with the 'female side'**.

Two points arise **as** corollaries of this. **The first is that in Matthew's** gospel **the** royal line given to prove, amongst other things, **the Lord's** right to **the** throne of David, cannot because of Jeremiah's prophecy, prove Him to **be of the seed** of David. **The lineage in Luke's** gospel of **the males** of Mary's line is **thus** every bit as necessary as **that in Matthew** to prove **that the Lord** is **the** literal descendant of David (**2 Sam. 7: 12-13; Ps. 132: 11; Jer. 23: 5; John 7: 42; Acts 2: 29-30, 13: 22; Rom. 1: 3; 2 Tim. 2: 8; Rev. 22: 16**). **The second point is that the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel in the lineage of Mary (Luke 3: 27) cannot be the same as the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel in the line of Joseph (Mat. 1: 12) because Joseph's ancestors are literal descendants of Jeconiah and, were the Lord to have been the literal descendant of these men, then Jeremiah's prophecy would be broken. The occurrence of the same names in the different lineages is therefore an instance of the well known case of people in different families having the same names.**

Yet the Lord had no right through Mary's lineage to David's throne, for **she** was not in **the** chosen **kingly** line of descent. How then would **the** Lord's right to David's throne **be** brought **about?** Only by marriage. So God overruled **that** Mary should marry (**after the Lord Jesus had** been conceived of **the** Holy Spirit) **the man** who could not **be the natural father of the Messiah because of the taint in his ancestry (Jer. 22: 30). Hence the relevance of Jer. 22: 30 to the virgin birth. Through Mary the Lord was the seed of David according to the flesh; yet entitlement to the throne of David was ensured by the marriage of Mary to Joseph after the conception of Jesus, Joseph then becoming 'legally' the father of the unborn child.**

I. E. P., G. P.

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OVERSIGHT WORK, EXHORTATIONS AND SALUTATIONS (1 Thes. 5: 12-28)

From Edinburgh: Paul concludes his letter by referring to collective church behaviour. The Thessalonian church would seem to be spiritually young and experiencing problems in relationships, for Paul mentions the disorderly in both letters (5: 14, 2 Thes. 3: 6, 11) as well as the weak and faint-hearted. There were those who were disorderly in doctrine and those disorderly in behaviour (2 Thes. 3: 6, 11). To 'admonish' does not have the restricted contemporary meaning of 'rebuke' but a broader meaning of 'putting in the mind' a matter for consideration (Vine) [Comment 1].

Paul instructed all the disciples, called 'Brethren', about relationships within the church, specifically mentioning disciples' attitudes to those in authority. Those in authority acquire their authority from the Lord and from respect gained by their labour in the church. These exhortations are for the whole church to fulfil, and should be fulfilled in the life of the overseer. Here Paul emphasizes the pastoral work of oversight.

The joy of Christ among disciples is shown in rejoicing, praying and thanksgiving. Disciples are urged not to thwart the expression of joy in the church by quenching the Spirit in another disciple. The instruction to prove all things refers to all the spirits (1 John 4: 1) and to Biblical doctrines (Acts 17: 11). Finally, Paul contrasts the disciples' need to *abstain* from evil and to *hold fast* to that which is good; the latter exhortation being repeated twice for emphasis (5: 15, 21). (v. 15 refers to 'following after', which is not quite the same thing—Eds.).

Paul endorses the Lord's demands of Christian behaviour in the church, yet does not leave the Christian daunted by the standards and despondent in his own failure. The God with whom we deal is faithful, as well as being the God of peace. The power to practise sanctified living comes from the God of peace Himself, who, we are assured, 'will also do it'. The strength we have from our God for Christian living is equal to the power to be displayed at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul Merchant

From Hamilton, Scotland: How simple yet profound are the words of the Holy Spirit through Paul 'to know them that labour among you!' The Greek term which underlies the words 'to know' emphasizes the quality and scope of knowledge. It is a knowledge based on observation and the recognition of the work being done by leaders; which in turn creates respect. The connotation suggests objective reasoned judgement and not inner feelings only.

The words 'which labour' (A. V.) and 'that labour' (R. V.) are a translation of a present participle, and so direct our attention to a work still being accomplished at the time of writing. The calibre of the work can be ascertained from a study of the New Testament usage of the Greek word, which shows that shepherding demands toil.

Mat. 11: 28—

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden'.
Luke 5: 5—

'Master, we *toiled* all night'.

1 Timothy 4: 10—

'We *labour* and strive'.

1 Timothy 5: 17—

Those who *labour* in the word and teaching'.

John 4: 6—

'Jesus therefore, *being wearied*.. '

In the expression 'And are *over you* in the Lord', the Greek term for 'are over' is again a present participle, and the usage of the word by Paul in his first epistle to Timothy is most instructive.

1 Tim. 3: 4—'One *that ruleth* well his own house'.

1 Tim. 3: 5—'But if a man knoweth not how *to rule* his own house'.

1 Tim. 3: 12—'*Ruling* their children'.

1 Tim. 5: 17—'Let the elders *that rule* well...

In Eastern lands a shepherd is not a driver but a leader in front of the sheep.

Once again in 'and admonish you' we have the present nature of the work being emphasized by the present participle, and from the word's usage in the New Testament we discover that admonition conveys the thought of warning, making saints aware of present dangers. Shepherds guide and guard their flock of God.

Matthew Carruthers

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From Leeds: Before exercising the oversight of the flock of God, overseers need to take heed to themselves (Acts 20: 28). In 1 Thes. 5 they are reminded of their own position and responsibilities as under-shepherds of the Chief Shepherd. The work that overseers do should mark them out to the saints as those who are placed over them in the Lord, and so they should be acknowledged and esteemed.

In the assemblies of God, saints should be at peace among themselves. When, however, any are disorderly and misbehave, overseers need to admonish (warn), to comfort the faint-hearted and to support any who are weak (not their weakness), being patient towards all.

Overseers are those who by their own example should stand before the saints to lead and to rule (1 Tim. 3: 2-7). After listing many instructions for saints to follow (vv. 15-20) Paul says that we should test everything and to hold on to that which is good and to stay away from every *appearance* of evil. 'Pray without ceasing' (v. 17) signifies a constant and recurring intercession; 'without ceasing' occurs elsewhere in scripture and is always associated with prayer and thanksgiving (Rom. 1: 9; 1 Thes. 1: 3, 2: 13, 5: 17; 2 Tim. 1: 3).

The peace of God (Phil. 4: 7) can only come from the God of peace (v. 23) and God Himself is the Sanctifier, so that we can be wholly kept without blame, unto the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The God of peace (Rom. 15: 33, 16: 20; 1 Cor. 14: 33; 2 Cor. 13: 11; Phil. 4: 9; 2 Thes. 3: 16; Heb. 13: 20) is the God who 'brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep... our Lord Jesus' (Heb. 13: 20) and who will 'bruise Satan under your feet shortly' (Rom. 16: 20).

In many scriptures and in differing versions, spirit and soul are often interchangeable so some commentators infer that they are the same. However, such distinct scriptures as v. 23 show the clear separation of 'spirit' (*pneuma*), 'soul' (*psuche*) and 'body' (*soma*). The spirit is *in* the man (1 Cor. 2: 11), the body is *on* the man (2 Cor. 5: 1) and the soul *is* the man (Gen. 2: 7) [Comment 4].

H. R. Dodge

From Liverpool: It is God's will that there should be rule and authority among His people. Overseers are responsible to find out God's will and carry it out. [So are saints—Eds.].

Their duties and qualifications are found elsewhere, but it is clear from vv. 12 and 13 that they are not to be like supervisors only, but to work and labour among the assembly. The attitude of the church to overseers is (i) to know them; (ii) to esteem them; (iii) to remember them for their lives; (iv) to obey them; (v) to submit to them (Heb. 13: 7, 17). Although Paul seems to be addressing the same people in both vv. 12 and 14, some felt that because of the instructions given here he is now addressing overseers. Admonition has to do with wrong things, whereas teaching his to do with right [Comment 2]. The disorderly ('idlers'—R. S. V.) are those who are out of step, insubordinate or not pulling their weight. There is never an unemployment problem in a church of God!

The ability to carry out the exhortations of the passage depends upon our appreciation of and our closeness to the Lord. It is an attitude of mind referred to here—always ready to rejoice, instinctively prayerful, ever thankful, even when evil befalls us as it does all men. The Lord wants consistent Christians. We wondered what is meant by 'the will of God in Christ Jesus' (v. 18). Is this the attitude shown by Christ and seen in Him as supreme example? Is there much scriptural evidence of this? [Comment 5].

'Quench' means to put out the fire. We cannot remove the presence of God's Spirit, but we can stop His effective working in our lives. Prophecies are for upbuilding and encouragement (1 Cor. 14: 3) by the word of God. It is important that we test everything so that we can reject wrong teaching and can get a real grasp of that which is right. We should not just accept teaching from any man, however great or learned. Paul concludes with a prayer for preservation, confident that God will do it (v. 24).

David J. Webster

From Methil: Oversight work is constant; there should be no slacking in the Lord's work. 'Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently' (Jer. 48: 10). Such labour is to be with diligence and unto weariness, among the people of God (1 Pet. 5: 2). They oversee the saints *in the Lord*: it is their responsibility to rule under the Chief Shepherd in the house of God (Heb. 13: 7 and 17).

Because of the work they do, they should be given due

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recognition and **esteemed** highly, especially those who labour in **the** word and in doctrine (**1 Tim. 5: 17**). Overseers should remember **that** they are required to admonish, warn or rebuke **the** disorderly or unruly, yet **give** encouragement to faint-hearted saints, **and help the weak**, taking tender care of **them** and being patient **with** everyone. Saints should respect their overseers and overseers should regulate **the** conduct of **the** flock. **As the** shepherds should know **their** flock, so **the sheep must** know their shepherds. **It is the** Holy Spirit who **makes** overseers (**Acts 20: 28**).

The apostle **Paul** introduces a solemn note into **his** exhortations: '**Be at peace** among yourselves'. **Abraham** knew **the** danger of **strife** when **he** said to Lot: '**Let there be no strife I pray thee**, between **me** and **thee**, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for **we** are brethren' (Gen. 13: 8). Joseph also **as he** sent **his** brethren **back** to Jacob **their** father **said**, '**See that ye fall not out by the way**' (Gen. 45: 24). Moses in **like** manner tried to intervene when **he** saw two Hebrews fighting, saying: 'Wherefore **smitest** thou thy fellow?' (**Ex. 2: 13**). **The** apostle **is** really saying 'No quarrelling among yourselves'.

He exhorts **the** entire church **always** be joyful, **always** keep on praying, and **always** be thankful whatever **the** circumstances **might be**. '**Never damp the fire of the Spirit**', '**Do not stifle the Spirit**', '**Do not smother or extinguish the Holy Spirit**', are all involved in '**Quench not the Spirit**'. '**Prove all things**'—**put** everything to **the test: see 1 John 4: 1-3**. **The** Bereans are a good example, for they examined **the scriptures** daily to **see whether** '**these things**' were so (**Acts 17: 11**). God's people should **steer clear** of **evil** in any form: they should shun even **the** appearance of evil.

What a lovely touch Paul has in his letters! **The** beloved apostle who **had** prayed so unceasingly for **the churches** now says: 'Brethren pray for us'. **Like them he was** totally dependent upon **his** God. *Neville Coomer*

From Nottingham: **There was a** difference of opinion **as to whether verse 14 onwards was addressed** to overseers or to **the** saints in **the** assembly generally. Some who **subscribe to the latter view** offer **the** following reasons: —

- (a) **The** expression 'you, brethren' **used** in **chapter 5 vv. 12 and 14** is also **used** in **2: 14, 4: 1 and 5: 1, with-**

out distinction.

- (b) The main focal point of v. 14 onwards is no longer those 'over you in the Lord' of v. 12, because of the command 'Be at peace among yourselves'.
- (c) If 'you' was to be emphasized to show a distinctive group, the expected word order would be either 'But you, brethren, we beseech...' or 'But you we beseech, brethren...' instead of 'But we beseech you, brethren...'
- (d) If the exhortation was solely for overseers where does it end? Verses 15, 18, 22 or 24?
- (e) Saints in general are exhorted to admonish one another, e. g. '... teaching and admonishing one another' (Col. 3: 16), and '... able also to admonish one another' (Rom. 15: 14). Therefore it is not necessary to link the words 'admonish the disorderly' of v. 14 with 'them... that... admonish you' of v. 12.
- (f) Overseers are pointed out and not appointed. They are doing the work of oversight and then are recognised in this capacity. It is not the recognising that makes them do the work.

Taking a different point of view and with reference to (a) above, it seems the apostle is addressing the saints in general in v. 12 but in v. 14 his thoughts turn to the elders of the church and he addresses his remarks to them. Then, in reference to (d) above it is suggested that the exhortation to the elders particularly ends with v. 22 but the point must be made that although some think vv. 14-22 were addressed especially to elders, vv. 16 to 22 inclusive would also have an application to saints in general.

The exhortations to joy, prayer and thanksgiving demand a high standard but, as God commands, so He enables. Psalm 24: 1-10 shows that fear and trouble can be exchanged for joy and praise by asking of the Lord. Prayer should not be confined to set times only, but we should be in touch with God constantly. Thankfulness in all circumstances is what God wants, and Phil. 4: 11-13 reveals that it is a learning process, not automatic, and that it is possible in God's strength. Do we rejoice, pray and be thankful believing that God has a purpose, or do we doubt God's goodness and murmur against Him?

David Rafferty

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From Paisley: In concluding his first epistle to the Thessalonians the apostle **Paul** beseeches his readers to acknowledge those who are over them in the Lord. In so doing, he makes no appeal for their office as the basis of recognition, but rather for their work. As an example of humility both to elders and saints, **Paul** does not flourish his apostolic mandate in the matter, **but** prefers to beseech. In this case it was enough. The Thessalonians were ready to do anything for Paul, not because they feared him, but because they loved him. He commanded them not by authority alone, but by his commanding their respect and affection.

Having besought the saints, he then proceeds to the stronger tone of exhortation. We may divide this into two general sections [Comment 6].

1. (vv.14-15)—*Corporal Ministry towards Men*

The first exhortation is to admonish the disorderly. This is probably directed against idlers who were using the expectation of the Lord's return as an excuse to forbear working. Thereafter Paul stresses the gentler side of Christ in the encouragement of the faint-hearted; for the faith is not the survival of the strong by the destruction of the weak. On the contrary, those who are strong 'ought to help the weak' (Acts 20: 35). Likewise those who are strong must be long-suffering, despite the carnal impulse to be impatient with those who are slow through infirmity.

Like the Lord Jesus, the apostle forbids vengeance. This applies not only towards the brethren, but towards all (v. 15), for the Christian is as liable to be wronged by the brethren as by unbelievers. At the same time, this exhortation does not override the provision for dealing with offences among brethren (Mat. 18: 15-17).

2. (vv. 16-22)—*Spiritual Ministry towards God*

This may be regarded as the private and public use of spiritual faculties. Thus, there is to be continual rejoicing in the things of God and open communication through prayer. These are understandable, as the Christian has so much to rejoice in as he considers his blessings in Christ and the glorious inheritance which is reserved in Heaven for him. He should cherish his access to the Father and should

maintain prayerful connection even when not in assembly. He should be grateful and thankful for every good gift and every perfect boon (James 1: 17).

Also the Holy Spirit who activates the spiritual gifts must be permitted free course among the people of God. The exhortation not to quench Him uses a very strong verb with the suggestion of a flame put out which no human hand can rekindle [Comment 3]. This does not annul the baptism in the Holy Spirit but refers to a curtailment of His activity. Paul's exhortation also confirms the truth of the universal distribution of the gifts, which were not restricted to disciples in one church of God.

T. Summerhill

From Barrhead: Paul's word to the brethren is that they should know the men that labour among them. This knowledge comes by observation of those men who are actually labouring amongst the saints. To desire the office of a bishop is to desire a good work (1 Tim. 3: 1). Such a man, however, is already doing the work and has been raised up by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20: 28). Those men who are thus raised up are to be esteemed not for the sake of the office but because of the work they do.

An important function of the elder in the church is to admonish the unruly, who by their indiscipline would undermine the order of the church. Equally important, the elders must see that no one renders evil for evil, thus ensuring that the commands of Christ are upheld, especially in the matter of revenge (see Luke 17: 3-4).

The exhortation given in vv. 17-21, whilst having a particular application to overseers, does have a general application to all saints. The public ministry of the word is not to be despised, but discernment must be exercised in what is spoken. What is spoken must be proved, as the noble ones of Berea did (Acts 17: 11), but that which is good must be held fast.

This letter written by Paul was not just for the eyes of overseers alone but contains instruction for all the brethren. He therefore commands that the letter be read to all the brethren.

L. deVille

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From Birkenhead: The passage commences with a plea to the saints in the church at Thessalonica to acknowledge the standing and responsibilities of the elders who laboured among them. Examination of the phrase 'in the Lord' (v. 12) led us to realise that their authority is over those who have followed the path of discipleship into churches of God and is not synonymous with 'in Christ'. There is no one over us 'in Christ'.

It was generally agreed that vv. 14 and 15 refer to overseers. Some thought that this is also the case from v. 16 onwards. It was pointed out that whilst many of the exhortations in these verses are applicable to the saints, and are delivered in the form of direct instruction elsewhere in Scripture, this passage seems to be specifically applied to elders. Others considered that vv. 16-24 were addressed to the saints in general.

Some of the responsibilities incumbent upon elders are listed and v. 14 is explicit about the way of dealing with various characteristics of the saints. V. 15 indicates that preventive measures are sometimes appropriate. The exhortations of vv. 16, 17 and 18 suggest that these aspects of Christian life have a continuing relevance. The saints are told that this is the will of God for them as exhibited through Christ's own life. It was suggested that the principal idea behind v. 19 was that the Spirit should not be quenched in others and the elders' authority was linked with this thought.

It was agreed that v. 23 did not imply that there was a state of sinless perfection which could be achieved in this life. Rather, that by the help of God the three components of man (spirit, soul and body), each of which is capable of grave sin, be preserved from sin in daily living [Comment 7]. Allowing the Spirit of God to work on a man and also attempting to make the three components of man work in unison under the Spirit would preserve the spirit, soul and body entire and without blame at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Failure to achieve this, and the consequent disharmony within man, will be blameworthy then. Encouragement however is given in v. 24 with the reminder of God's faithfulness, in that He will not desert in their daily lives those whom He has called, if that guidance which

is available is followed by them.

The letter ends with Paul's constant request for prayer on his behalf and the instruction that the contents of the letter and their Christian greetings should be conveyed to all the saints.

R. C. Halpin, T. M. Hyland

From Derby: Verse 12 begins with 'But' lest the preceding words should be misunderstood to imply that churches can be maintained without leaders (Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*). Overseers should be known or acknowledged by the flock. In 1 Cor. 16: 15 this word 'know' is used in connection with Stephanas and his house because it was clear that they had given themselves to serve the saints.

An overseer must be like a wise father who has to rule by admonishing his children and, just as necessary, by giving encouragement. It is interesting to note that overseers should not be esteemed for the fact that they hold this office, but 'for their work's sake'.

Quite a few of the exhortations in this passage are short and pithy and need application rather than explanation. However, note the fact that v. 20, 'Despise not prophesyings' is followed by v. 21, 'Prove all things'. Teaching must not just be accepted without question; it must be proved to be right and scriptural. After thus discerning 'the good' teaching we hold fast to it.

In closing this first epistle Paul commends them to God who is interested in the entire person (spirit, soul and body) of the Christian.

A K. Smith, G. W. Conway

COMMENTS

1. **(Edinburgh).** This word 'admonish' (*nouthetes*) is an interesting word having the literal meaning given by our friends. It is 'warning based on instruction' (Vine).

2. **(Liverpool).** This is true, but there is also an essential element of instruction in the admonition (see Comment 1).

3. **(Paisley).** As our friends point out, the Greek word *skennumi*, translated 'quench', is always used in its New

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Testament occurrences in reference to fire, literal or metaphorical (see, for example, Eph. 6: 16). In v. 19 the tense is present continuous, and could be rendered 'stop quenching'. Taken in its context this exhortation relates to the possibility of restraining or curtailing the spirit's activity in the exercise of spiritual gifts in others.

J. K. D. J.

4. **(Leeds)**. This paragraph rather over-simplifies a complex issue. The division between soul and spirit is only clear to the Word of God (Heb. 4: 12), and their functions overlap in many respects. An article by A. C. Bishop in *Needed Truth* Vol. 83 p. 116 ff. provides a helpful discussion of the issue, and concludes that 'spirit and soul are neither readily separable by man nor readily discernible by him to be correlated with any particular function'. P. L. H.

5. **(Liverpool)**. The suggestion made may well provide the key to the true meaning of this phrase. Certainly the Lord Jesus continually gave thanks to God. Examples are: Mat. 11: 25 (for the ways of God in revelation of His will), John 11: 41 (for answered prayer), Mat. 15: 36, Luke 22: 19 (for food provided). An alternative thought may be that, arising out of the giving of the Lord Jesus on our behalf, our lives should be full of thanksgiving. R. L.

6. **(Paisley)**. The distinction between these two categories seems rather artificial. Admonition of the disorderly uses spiritual faculties, while abstaining from evil is more of a 'corporal' exercise.

7. **(Birkenhead)**. To speak of 'components' of man, 'each of which is capable of grave sin', is an unduly mechanistic approach. A man's actions are those of the whole personality, and no action can be blamed on, for example, the body alone. This, indeed, was the essence of the Gnostic heresy, which regarded the body as intrinsically sinful, and the spirit as free of sin. The struggle within the believer is between the old and new natures, not between body and soul or spirit. See also Comment 4 above. P. L. H.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7909

This month we commence our study of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. It is one of his shortest letters, and is reckoned to have been written from Corinth about a year after the first letter. Paul is concerned to write to the Thessalonians about future events, and shows in his letters the differences in the two aspects of our Lord's coming. Plainly there were doubts about these matters, and from 2 Thes. 2 it appears that views other than the apostle's were current, and disturbing. His letters, though short, are very helpful, and certainly comforting.

In 1 Thes. 1: 3 he spoke of their (1) 'work of faith', (2) 'labour of love' and (3) 'patience of hope', and the same three principles of Christian life are in 2 Thes. The 'work of faith' began when they 'turned unto God from idols' and every experience of persecution and trials confirmed them in their faith and commitment to Christ. Their 'labour of love' was 'to serve a living and true God' with others, and Paul is able to commend them in 2 Thes. 1 that 'your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth'. This is progressive Christian experience—increasing separation from the world and deeper involvement with others in the new life of service for Him—and that life of renunciation on the one hand and commitment on the other is in the expectation of God's promises being sure of fulfilment. Patience and hope, and patience of hope, are characteristic of Christians in all ages, for their happy anticipation is to see our Lord in His glory and to serve in His kingdom. The certainty of this, however future, is why we may have 'all patience and long-suffering with JOY' (Col. 1: 11). We are 'called... to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand fast... ' (2 Thes. 2: 14, 15). A.B.R.

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THE DAY OF CHRIST AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

It must be evident to the most casual reader of the Scriptures that God's purposes so far as His dealings with men are concerned are seen to be related to very clearly defined eras. The references to 'the time of the promise' (Acts 7: 17) and 'the fulness of the time' (Gal. 4: 4), support this view. Both marked a very important stage in the fulfilment of God's purposes. There seems no doubt that in the understanding of the apostles the incarnation of the Lord Jesus marked the end of one such era and the commencement of another. Indeed, Heb. 1: 2 speaks of the 'end of these days', and Heb. 9: 26 of 'the end of the ages'. In 1 Cor. 10: 11 Paul addresses the believers of his day and says: 'upon whom the ends of the ages are come'.

Over against this we have the word of Peter in Acts 2: 17 on the day of Pentecost quoting from the prophecy of Joel and applying the words 'the last days' to the time at which he spoke. [Peter did apply this to the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, but the fulfilment of the prophecy is still in the future—Eds.]. The apostle John also in 1 John 2: 18 speaks of 'the last hour', and the Lord Himself in John 6: 39, 40 and John 12: 48 spoke of the 'last day'. These scriptures, together with many more, would indicate that this time referred to as the last day or days embraces not just a specific event, but actually spans a considerable length of time. The resurrection of John 6 and the judgement of John 12 belong to two different occasions. We conclude, therefore, that the last days commence with the birth of the Lord and carry us forward to the final climax of God's dealings with this present earth. [Others would take a different view—Eds.].

If this be so, we must therefore look for the other important events spoken of in the Scriptures as taking place somewhere between these two points in time. Without doubt the one of paramount importance to the believer is the rapture of the Church which is His Body, something unique and peculiar to this dispensation of grace. 'Rapture' as such is not a New Testament expression but is the event described by Paul in 1 Thes. 4: 17 as a 'catching up'. It is this same event which Paul has in view when he speaks of: —

the day of Jesus Christ—Phil. 1: 6

the day of Christ—Phil. 1: 10

the day of Christ—Phil. 2: 16

the day of our Lord Jesus Christ—1 Cor. 1: 8

the day of our Lord Jesus—2 Cor. 1: 14

the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ—1 Cor. 1: 7.

It will be noticed that in almost all these scriptures what Paul has in view is not only the appearing of the Lord Jesus, but also the believer's presenting himself before the Lord for His appraisal and scrutiny. Paul speaks even more specifically of this aspect in 2 Cor. 5: 10 as the 'Judgement Seat of Christ'. These two events would seem to be almost synchronous in the apostle's teaching. It is interesting to note that in all the above scriptures where he refers to the believer's assessment before the Lord nowhere does he speak of 'the day of the Lord'. We judge therefore that this is something quite separate and distinct from the above. However, before passing on to this, perhaps we would do well to ponder the implications the 'day of Christ' will have for each of us. It will bring to every believer what Peter describes as 'the end of our faith', 'an inheritance incorruptible' and 'the grace to be brought unto us'. What a prospect to cheer and encourage each heart, what an incentive to seek to implement the exhortation by John 'He that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself... (1 John 3: 3)! There is, however, the other solemn aspect of that day, and of course this is the moment of truth for each one of us as 'each one is made manifest' (visible) before the Lord. Paul uses some very strong language, and in 1 Cor. 3: 10-15 borrows a telling analogy from the testing of the fire. He speaks of work good and bad. Of reward and loss. Of our works surviving the fire and the possibility of their being burned. Finally, he speaks of the possibility of the believer himself being saved 'so as through fire'. As we ponder these solemn possibilities again we may recall the lines: —

In view of that devouring flame,
Be this our prayer and this our aim,
In Him may we abide.

To think only of that day as one for receiving of rewards does less than justice to the clear statements of scripture. Paul put it another way when he said: 'work out your own

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salvation with fear and trembling' (Phil. 2: 12).

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Colin Brooks

OVERSIGHT WORK, EXHORTATIONS AND SALUTATIONS (1 Thes. 5: 12-28)

From Melbourne. When considering the 'know' of v. 12, '... to know them that labour among you', we looked at Heb. 13: 7, 'Remember them that had the rule over you...', and later (v. 17) we are told to 'obey' them. Thus we are to show proper respect to those who are over us in the Lord. We must esteem the overseers 'for their work's sake' (v. 13). Our respect must be based on this and not on how well we like them.

When overseers carry out the words of 1 Pet. 5: 1-3 they win the esteem of the flock. They must be 'ensamples' to the flock and not 'lords' over God's people.

What practical exhortations are urged by the apostle Paul on all of us, as well as the leaders? We are to carry out the instructions of vv. 14-22 not only to our fellow-believers in the churches of God, but 'to all men'. There are no limits set by the writer! Yet such verses as 'Rejoice evermore' and, 'Pray without ceasing' do not always play a large part in our lives.

'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God....' We appreciate the situation of many dear children of God who have been imprisoned for their faithfulness to the Lord. Even as we write, many of them are being tortured for Christ. Yet from what we read they give thanks and accept their sufferings as the will of God. May our persecuted brethren and sisters in Christ speak loudly to us.

'Despise not prophesyings' (v. 20). To prophesy in this verse means to forthtell, not to foretell. The word 'admonish' means to repeat again and again. As some of the flock may not like to be 'admonished', overseers should act wisely and kindly, knowing that they watch on behalf of our souls and will one day give account to the chief Shepherd.

Peace in our lives and in the assembly will be the happy result of carrying out the apostle's instructions. Then we

will be 'blameless' (v. 23) until the Lord returns. May we be 'blameless' and not 'ashamed' (1 John 2: 28) at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. McFarlane, D. Mawhinney

RECOMPENSE FOR AFFLICTION (2 Thes. 1: 1-12)

From Nottingham. One striking point that stands out even in a superficial reading of the passage is the recurrence of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It appears six times. This can be a very telling lesson for all of us because it illustrates just how intimate and loving was Paul's relationship with his Lord and, consequently, with the Thessalonians. We asked ourselves whether or not our conversation was filled with consideration for the Lord.

It is interesting to see the similarity of the opening of the two epistles to the Thessalonians bearing in mind they were probably written within a year of each other. The first time Paul gives thanks and the second time he gives thanks 'exceedingly'.

There had been quite a growth rate in such a short time with love among the saints abounding. Again, how do we compare? We all know that sometimes there is no comparison. Obviously persecution had drawn the saints close together and we wondered whether or not we had to wait for this before we are 'counted worthy of our calling' [Comment 1].

Paul goes to some length to describe the horrors awaiting those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. We thought this was, maybe, because it would encourage the Thessalonians to realise how little power their persecutors had over them. Just as soon as this short life was over theirs would be a future of damnation whereas the future of the Thessalonian saints would be eternal happiness. This is another encouraging lesson for us.

It is indeed surprising to think that in spite of the happy position of the Thessalonians they were still warned about being worthy (v. 11). It was an important warning, too, because there came a day not many years afterwards when the Church of God in Thessalonica ceased.

Colin Edis

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From Paisley. In common with his first epistle, Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians commences with the commendation of his addressees. Once more the apostle is grateful to God for the progress of the saints whose faith was growing 'exceedingly' and whose love of the brethren was abounding. Here indeed were disciples who, despite great difficulties, were becoming stronger and more fruitful to God every day. Thus, though the enemy remained relentless in his persecution, this continual harrowing of the soil had only rendered it more productive.

Once more the faithfulness of the Thessalonians was having a far-reaching effect. Paul and his fellow-workers were able to speak of them with praise to the churches among whom the Lord's servants were labouring, holding up the Thessalonians as an example of patience and faith in the midst of affliction. This perseverance also shows that the saints had accepted their suffering with faith even if those who afflicted them may have wondered why the disciples continued to serve the God who did not come for their deliverance. In this respect the apostle explains something of the reason for this suffering and how it was accomplishing a two-fold purpose of God.

In the first instance, the suffering of the saints justifies God's glorification of them in the future expression of the kingdom of God when the meek shall inherit the earth and reign with Christ. Though for the sake of the Lord those who follow Christ may sacrifice the advantages of this life (and sometimes even life itself), yet in the age to come their riches and power will exceed all expectation.

The second aspect of divine justice is the punishment of the persecutors. Through their treatment of the saints they will be the more convicted in the day of wrath. God will therefore be seen in great glory and righteousness when He avenges those whom He forbade to avenge themselves. Because the persecuted turned the other cheek and prayed for their persecutors, so God has reserved a greater reward for the righteous and greater vengeance for those who spoiled His saints and shed their blood. Although the Christian seeks no vengeance, he has the right to anticipate just recompense in a day to come. As v. 7 indicates, the saints will know satisfaction when the Lord Jesus is revealed with judgement in the Day of the Lord.

This latter manifestation of the Lord is quite distinct from His manifestation to the saints in 1 Thes. 4. Some simple contrasts easily distinguish the divided chronologies of the two manifestations: —

- (i) No angels at the Rapture, but the Lord comes with His angels at the Revelation.
- (ii) The Rapture associated with the Lord's coming *for* His saints, but the Revelation associated with the Lord's coming *with* His saints, 'to be marvelled at in all them that believed' (v. 10).
- (iii) At the Rapture life from the dead for the believer, but at the Revelation 'eternal destruction from the face of the Lord' for the unbeliever (v. 9).

In observing these distinctions, we must not overlook the fact that in writing to Gentiles, Paul makes no reference to Israel's deliverance in (iii). This is curiously counter-balanced in the Book of Revelation where the Church the Body does not figure directly in the Lord's return to deliver Israel [Comment 2].

In concluding the first chapter, the apostle develops the principle of the mutual glorification of Christ and the saints. Paul and his companions pray that the Thessalonians may aspire to every good and godly ambition in their spiritual service. By this means when Christ and the Church the Body are revealed to the world, Christ will be glorified by the glory of His redeemed, and they will be glorified through their glorification by Christ, 'who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation' (Phil. 3: 21).

T. Summerhill

From Vancouver, B. C. Paul begins by expressing thanks to God for the perseverance of the saints in trials. There was an inward change (an enlarged faith) and an outward exhibition (love displayed to others and compliments from others for this courage).

The question might arise as to whom the recompense is directed in our topic. Is it a positive recompense for the saints (v. 7) or a negative one carried out against the persecutors (vv. 6 and 8)? In any case, God finds it a just thing to do both. But God sets His own time and no one moves too quickly or too slowly in meting it out ('Vengeance is

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mine, saith the Lord'). Each has his hour set aside—to the one relief, to the other eternal destruction and separation from God's glory. Vv. 7, 8, 9 and 10 speak of days set aside. It is not clear whether the same day was being referred to. V. 7 seems to be a time when the Lord Jesus will be revealed to give relief to the afflicted, and v. 10 the glorification of the saints. Vv. 8 and 9 parenthesized by the above two verses would appear to be referring to the same day and the repayment to the afflictors for their persecution [Comment 3].

There was a reason for the persecution in the development of the saints. It was a judgement (judgement here meaning a decision to do something) so that they would be counted worthy of their calling to the kingdom. This same persecution brought down a decision against the persecutors. Thus it was a matter of cause and effect. The same event effected a raising of the spiritual level of the saints and caused a degrading of the sinners. There can be a noteworthy occurrence in our life which forces us to analyze the resultant change. We must be alert.

J. C. Bell

From **Barrhead**. We found this chapter a pleasant study, replete with matters requiring close reflection in relation to our own lives. Several points impressed, apart from when and where written. The opening verse in the two letters is the same [Comment 8]. The afflicted church in Thessalonica was safe in God the Father. Their persecution helped to provide a growing faith Godward and an abounding love among themselves. We noted the unity of the churches of God with whom Paul and his companions corresponded. Three things were seen to be related to one another. They are the churches of God, the judgement of God and the kingdom of God. We concluded that the judgement of God in relation to Thessalonica was not the censuring of wrongdoing, for they were growing spiritually. Rather it was a refining process for the strengthening of their faith and the glory of His Name. In this way they would be counted worthy of the kingdom. Nevertheless God would deal with their persecutors.

We felt that vv. 7, 10 indicate the Lord Jesus being accompanied by both the angels of His power and the Church

the Body in the day of His revelation. If then He comes with His church on that day He must have earlier come for it—useful verses when confronted with those who believe in only one coming. Incidentally, we wondered whether in v. 10 a distinction should be made between 'His saints' and 'all them that believed' [Comment 4].

We came from our reading with a longing to be counted worthy of so great a calling (from darkness into the Fellowship of His Son), especially having regard to the fearful eternal destruction which might otherwise have been our future.

D. J. Kerr

From Birkenhead. The greeting used shows a variation between vv. 1 and 2 in that the expressions 'Our Father' and 'the Father' are used. The former emphasises the fact that the saints to whom the letter is written share with Paul the same family in God. The second expression refers to the Godhead.

Paul continues to express his joy in the behaviour of the saints. The fulfilment of the wish in the first epistle that they should prevail against persecution and grow in faith is seen here to have been fulfilled and he commends them because over and above this they have grown exceedingly in faith and love. Paul expresses a justifiable satisfaction in their achievements and states that this is a matter for recognition in the other churches. He does not forget, however, to give thanks to God for this, appreciating that without God's help they would have succumbed to their trials. Comment was made that in praise and admonition Paul was accurate, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, and was not expressing the biased view of man.

Paul's commendation concludes with the fact that their triumph over persecution is clear evidence of God's true assessment of their worthiness to be custodians of the kingdom of God at that time. The suggestion was also made that their action then made them worthy of their position in the kingdom at a future time.

From v. 6 the subject changes to deal with God's recompense to those who oppress His people. They are to be dealt with at the revelation (unveiling) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our discussion suggested that this was at the

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coming of the Son of Man, i. e. the second stage of His coming, which follows the tribulation [Comment 5]. Scripture (Rev. 14: 6, 7) reveals that by that time every part of the earth will have heard the gospel of the kingdom (that which is preached after the Lord has returned for His Church) and this being the case, it was suggested that 'them that know not God' and 'them that obey not the gospel' are one and the same. However, whilst this was the reasoned conclusion of the discussion, it was pointed out that in the construction of the original text, the Greek leads to the conclusion that they are separate groups, and we were therefore unable to resolve the apparent contradiction [Comment 6].

It is clear from this passage that recompense is intended to be by the hand of God, and its extent is suggested in vv. 8, 9 being not only direct punishment but also eternal separation from the Lord.

In contrast, the Lord will reward and be glorified in those saints who have been counted worthy of their calling. Paul states this as his constant prayer, together with the prayer that those righteous desires and works of the saints might also be fulfilled.

The final verse continues with the thought that God should be glorified through His saints, but adds that this will be according to the grace of both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. *R. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams*

From Derby. Recompense is commonly regarded as a desirable reward but it can also be a punishment. Both aspects are found in the epistles.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples that they would suffer affliction (John 15 and 16) and this was the experience of the Thessalonian believers.

2 Thes. 1: 3 shows that faith and love increased despite affliction. The Lord Jesus achieved His purpose through suffering and 2 Thes. 1: 5 shows that the suffering of the Thessalonian believers was on behalf of the kingdom of God, and that it was possible for them to be worthy of the kingdom of God.

In v. 6 the recompense is that of punishment of those who were causing the affliction. The punishment was not

immediate but vv. 7-9 show that ultimately the Lord Jesus will act in judgement.

The remaining vv. 10-12 show that the Christian can so live as to bring out goodness and even glory to the Lord Jesus.

Other scriptural references to recompense are in Heb. 2: 2 where past transgressions had brought the recompense of judgement and Heb. 10: 32-36 where there is promise of reward for steadfast Christian behaviour. In Heb. 11: 24-26 Moses is presented as choosing a godly life conscious (11: 26) of ultimate reward. Even in this Moses was thinking of the coming One, the Christ.

N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

From Leeds. The second letter which Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica very closely follows his first letter, both in time and also by the references made to the second aspect of the coming of the Lord Jesus, *with* His saints, as Son of Man, together with those intervening events that follow His coming to the air *for* His saints (1 Thes. 4: 13-18; 2 Thes. 1: 7-10; 2: 1, 8-10).

However, Paul in his writings and his teachings, often used the same things, which he counted not grievous for him to do (Phil. 3: 1). Often what he wrote to one church he wrote similarly to another, for so he taught in every church (1 Cor. 4: 17; 7: 17), giving diligence to the fundamental principles and teachings of the Scriptures, which things are the real foundation stones on which the churches of God are built (Acts 5: 42; 15: 35; Eph. 2: 20). We must take heed *how* we build (1 Cor. 3: 10). Saints together are those who are *in* God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1). Paul chose to speak of that which was praiseworthy *in* them, by the giving of thanks to God *for* them. It is a bounden duty to thank God for all the good that we have or that which we see in others. Paul says (v. 4) that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God. In his first letter he recalled their work of faith, their labour of love, and their patience of hope (1 Thes. 1: 3), and now he thanks God that their faith grows exceedingly and that their love abounds. These were not Christians in name only but they were growing Christians. 'Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'

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(2 Pet. 3: 18). **The path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day'** (Prov. 4: 18).

The saints scarcely needed to **be** reminded of **their** afflictions and sufferings, so patiently endured, **but thus was** their **faith** being **tried** and their patience exercised. They were counted worthy of **the** kingdom of God. **We** noted **that this was** not suffering **with a view** to getting **into** the kingdom of God, **as** they were already **believers** together in **that** kingdom, submitting **themselves** to **the** doing of God's will. Those who **are** in **the** kingdom of God may **be called** upon to **suffer much** for **the sake** of **His Name** (2 Cor. 4: 15-18). **A place** in **this** kingdom, **if it is** worth anything, **must be** worth everything.

'Faithful is the saying.... If we endure, we shall reign with Him' (2 Tim. 2: 11, 12), 'for... the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to **be** compared **with** the glory **which shall be revealed** to usward' (Rom. 8: 18). Soon, **the Lord Himself** (v. 7; 1 Thes. 4: 16) [Comment 7] **will be revealed**, in **that** day of revelation of **the** righteous judgment of God, when God **will judge** the world in righteousness by **that** Man whom **He hath** appointed, even **Jesus Christ, the righteous Judge** (Acts 17: 31).

Now, **the** heavens retain **Him**, they conceal **Him**, 'whence also **we wait** for a Saviour' (Phil. 3: 20), **but, He will** come again, **He will be revealed** (made manifest), for '**He is faithful that** promised' (Heb. 10: 23). *H. R. Dodge*

From Liverpool. **We** noted **the similarities** between **the** two letters. **There are ideas**, and even **phrases which are** echoes of 1 Thessalonians. One suggestion **was that this letter was** actually written **first**, and **its delivery is referred to in** 1 Thes. 3. **Others**, however, **saw** continuity in **the biblical order with** 1 Thes, referring to **the Rapture** and 2 Thes, referring to **the** Lord's coming **as** Son of Man—**the** order of prophetic events.

Faith Growing (vv. 3-4)

It is a Bible principle that faith can only **be** shown by **deeds** (Jas. 2: 22). **It was** their work **that was** abounding, and by **this their faith was** shown to **all**. **Faith** and love **are** very closely **related**. In Rev. 2: 4-5 **the Ephesians were**

doing the opposite. They had lost their love, and were failing to do the works.

The Righteous Judgement of God (vv. 5-9)

In trying to determine how their persecution could be evidence of God's righteous judgements we saw two possible answers: —

- (i) It was not evidence to those afflicted, but rather to those who were persecuting them. It is a righteous thing for God to judge those who afflict His people. The evidence would be the assurance that some day God will act to repay—a future concept,
- (ii) The fact that they were overcoming persecution is evidence to them that God is righteous. Not everyone is permitted to suffer for God. Of course, their experience of suffering did not put them into the kingdom of God, but rather it helped to make them worthy of that to which they already belonged.

We wondered if there were two groups of people referred to (v. 8) or just one. The grammar of RV and RSV would suggest two, whilst the NIV would suggest one. As, however, God's judgement will only fall on those who refuse to know God, rather than those who have not had God revealed to them, it is probably referring to one group—the 'goat' class of people at the great separation [see Comment 6].

The Name of the Lord Jesus Glorified (vv. 10-12)

The fact that the Lord will be glorified in his saints puts a lot of responsibility on us for our actions, that others may see Christ in us (v. 12). It may also refer to those who stand firm for Christ after the Rapture, bringing glory to Him. As affliction and persecution comes it is marvelous to know the recompense! *David J. Webster*

From Methil. The apostle addresses the saints as a church in God the Father; not that any other church or churches could not be so addressed, but the words had an application to them, being an infant church, yet with such a wonderful evidence in them of 'work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thes. 1: 3). Acts 5: 41; 1 Pet. 2: 18-25; 3: 13-18; 4: 12-19;

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and 5: 1, 8, 9, 10, are helpful with regard to this subject. Peter's first epistle is indeed an epistle in which references to suffering, trial and affliction are interspersed throughout.

On this theme there are other portions of Scripture such as James 5: 10, 11; Rom. 5: 1-5; especially vv. 3, 4 and 5; the example of our blessed Lord in Heb. 5: 7-10; 12: 2, 3.

Much of Heb. 11 is taken up with what Old Testament saints went through in the way of affliction. There is a whole list of godly men and women, not to mention 'others' (v. 36) whose faith enabled them to endure affliction. So we learn from such a portion of God's Word, that faith has so much to do with our being able to endure affliction.

In Moses' case, we are told that he definitely (Heb. 11: 26) looked unto the recompense of reward', a 'recompense' and a 'reward' which we have earlier spoken of, and to which the Hebrew saints' thoughts are directed in the context of Heb. 10: 32-39, the previous chapter.

These dear saints in Thessalonica had received the word of the Lord 'in much affliction' (1 Thes. 1: 6). The news concerning them had reached other churches (2 Thes. 1: 4).

Was it a righteous thing in God to allow them so to suffer? Was it a righteous thing in God to visit their enemies with judgement? Was it a righteous thing in God to allow Job to suffer as he did, Job of whom God Himself had said he was a righteous man; none like him in all the earth?

What shall we say of our blessed Lord, who suffered, Himself altogether righteous, for the unrighteous, to bring us to God? He suffered that the righteousness of God against sin might be fully and eternally vindicated.

The apostle Paul has said that our light affliction which is but for the moment worketh for us an exceeding weight of glory, while we look not on the things which are temporal, the things which are seen; but the things which are not seen which are eternal (2 Cor. 4: 16-18).

That affliction which those saints in Thessalonica were enduring, some idea of which is given us in Acts 17, was no 'light affliction' as we would look on it humanly, for their adversaries could use it to cause them to believe that 'the day of the Lord' had come.

When the Spirit through the apostle uses such words as '*parousia*', '*epiphaneia*', '*apokalupsis*', we learn of the

different aspects, and circumstances, as to different times and places; also of the judgement seat (the Bema) where no question of sin arises for the believer, but reward for service [Comment 9].

Andrew McIlree (Snr.)

From Melbourne. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy found much to glory in in the Church at Thessalonica. They were a closely knit assembly whose love toward one another abounded. Their faith was continually growing stronger. What joy our God must find in such an assembly where the fruits of the Spirit are evident!

Yet they were a suffering people, a people who were afflicted and yet a people who endured with great joy and patience.

Those who are afflicted and persecuted for the faith and for Jesus' sake God will avenge: 'And shall not God avenge His elect, which cry to Him day and night, and He is long-suffering over them?' (Luke 18: 7).

God will fully avenge His afflicted saints when the Lord appears as Son of Man, with His angels, in flaming fire, to render vengeance. A terrible time is here foreshadowed.

Those who 'obey not the Gospel' are those who openly and willingly rebel and reject the Gospel. Such will find eternal destruction. This, we believe, is eternal and absolute separation from the God of love and mercy.

The devil and his cohorts, with the wicked of the human race, shall suffer eternal torment (Rev. 20: 10, 14, 15).

G. Munday, D. Mawhinney

COMMENTS

1. (Nottingham). See list of scriptures in Methil paper. Mat. 10: 10 shows some can be more deserving or worthy because of labour and suffering.

2. (Paisley). While agreeing with this observation it should be remarked that the Rapture of the Church which is His Body is a separate event from the Lord's coming to deliver Israel at the end of the Tribulation.

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3. (Vancouver). That day' (v. 10) is the day of our Lord's revelation in power and glory when He comes to set up His kingdom. The Judgement Seat of Christ is past and the saints will be seen glorious in their rewards. They are coming with Him as His royal entourage and to enter their new service. Unbelievers at that time will be judged then, on 'that day' too.

4. (Barrhead). I suggest He will be glorified in the magnificence of those who accompany Him, who will be as splendidly arrayed as He can make His saints, and that the marvel will be to see the vast number who have believed. In this connection 2 Tim. 2: 11-13 might suggest that all believers will not share in the service of His kingdom, and so one number will be greater than the other.

5. (Birkenhead). If those who afflicted the Thessalonians are now dead, will they not be raised to be judged at the Great White Throne? They will not see His coming to earth.

6. (Birkenhead). At the time of His coming as Son of Man it seems that all on earth at that time will be judged. Some refuse to know God and others refuse the Gospel itself. Cf. Rom. 1: 18-22, John 5: 24.

7. (Leeds). 1 Thes. 4: 16 is the Lord coming for His saints, and 2 Thes. 1: 7 is His coming to earth to reign.

A. B. R.

8. (Barrhead). There is a variation that is worth noting. See para. 1 in the Birkenhead paper.

9. (Methil). See *Bible Studies* 7907, pp. 97-100 for a helpful treatment of the meaning and usage of these Greek words.

J. K. D. J.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7910

The day of the Lord is now present'; what a familiar ring this has today! Many who claim to be Christians have laid aside the hope of the Lord's return, and teach that He has come again, into the hearts of believers, who must now set about turning the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God. Social progress is to lead to the day when peace and love will pervade the earth, and the Lord will reign through enlightened men.

Reality is very different. The Lord does indeed indwell believers, but they serve Him in a world which is becoming worse rather than better. The word of God used to underlie the law in nominally Christian countries, and individual conduct was judged by God's moral law (although that law was not invariably obeyed). Now this is no longer regarded as a valid constraint. This month's study portion shows the result; the complete rebellion of man against God, and the exaltation of the man of sin. Happily for us, who wait for 'our gathering together unto Him, we shall not undergo the trials of that time, but will be with the Lord.

Peace on earth will only come when the rebellion is suppressed, and the elaborate system of worship and control of commerce set up by the man of sin is swept away. Then the day of the Lord will begin, when a 'King shall reign in righteousness' (Is. 32: 1). P. L. H.

THE DAY OF CHRIST AND THE DAY OF THE LORD—(continued from 7909)

Unlike the 'day of Christ' the 'day of the Lord' has its roots in the Old Testament prophecies, especially those of

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Joel (2: 1, 31; 3: 14) and Jeremiah (30: 7, 8). Peter, on the day of Pentecost, cited Joel (Acts 2: 20). Here this day is associated with the judgement of God first of all on His sinful and backsliding people but also on the nations round about (Joel 13: 12). It would be perhaps wrong to conclude that this judgement is an end in itself but rather it is seen as not only the retribution of God on sin but also as a process of chastening and purifying and refining with a view to ensuing blessing. This is supported by New Testament references to the same day. The Lord refers to this (Mat. 24: 16, 21, 29) and Paul also (2 Thes. 2: 2). We know, too, from the book of Revelation that not only Israel but the nations also are to experience those dreadful days when the judgements of God will be unleashed on a godless age. For Israel this is the 'time of Jacob's trouble' (Jer. 30: 7) and for the nations a day of 'flaming fire and a day of vengeance' (2 Thes. 1: 8). Fearful as these days will be, so fearful that 'were they not shortened, no flesh would be saved', yet nevertheless they will herald the dawning of the glorious Millennium, a time of unprecedented blessing so far as this earth is concerned. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah and others speak of these coming days of divine healing and blessing on this earth. A day when above all 'a king shall reign in righteousness'.

As we return to the Epistle to the Thessalonians we are reminded that we are not sons of the night or darkness but rather 'sons of the day'. Paul also states (1 Thes. 5: 9) that 'God appointed us not unto wrath', and again 'Even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come' (1 Thes. 1: 10), clear evidence to some that the Church the Body will not be present in those dark days which we have been considering, but will have been 'caught up' to meet the Lord in the air. With such a hope we would emulate the Thessalonians and 'wait for His Son from heaven'.

Colin Brooks

The foregoing paper provides us with a particular viewpoint on some of the days referred to in the New Testament. Contributions and correspondence on this subject are invited so that it might be explored further and various viewpoints considered.—Editors.

A STUDY OF 2 THESSALONIANS 2, 5-8

It is with no degree of finality or preference that we consider three variant interpretations of this passage. The context is that Paul has been continually referring to events that we read as future even in relation to us. More particularly the topic has been the Antichrist.

Verse 6 and verse 7 contain two participles, the first preceded by the neuter article, the second by a masculine article—to *katechon/ho katechon*. The first represents an influence, the second the person personifying or embodying that influence.

A. There was a restraining or detaining influence with which Paul's readers were familiar at time of writing. This influence (viz. the Roman Empire) would foster and bring about the Antichrist's appearing. They were familiar with it then because the same empire's decadence and muffling of the gospel were evident at that time. The person who would embody that influence (Antichrist) would come out of the midst of men and would display his true colours in the middle of the seven years (i. e. Antichrist breaking the pact halfway through the week). The preposition *ek* (translated 'out of') can have a force of time or of origin. The lawless one will appear at that precise moment and after his reign Christ will come.

B. There was a restraining influence for good (viz. the Holy Spirit) with which Paul's readers were acquainted. He would hold back the Antichrist until his time although lawlessness was present then. The Holy Spirit himself would be taken to one side during the tribulation (*ek* here having a force of place). Then the lawless one, the Antichrist would have full sway until Christ comes. There are three adverbs of time used in these verses. The word 'now' (*nun*) v. 6 must be read with the verb 'you know' either temporally (at the time of writing) or 'now for the sake of argument'.

Later Paul refers to the mystery of lawlessness working 'by this time' or 'already' (*ede*). A subjective present time is being thought of, the point of time under consideration.

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Paul says that the 'restraining one' will come 'at this precise moment' (*arti*), an effort here to pin-point a time. It would be well here to realize that all tenses up to the verb indicating the revealing or disclosure of the heretofore hidden or unknown (*apokalupto*) lawless one, are present tenses (the aorist infinitive in v. 6 does not necessarily indicate past time). It would be safe to assume then that all ideas presented in the sequence are in the same time period. In considering interpretation B, it is necessary to jump back and forth in time periods (present time of writing—future—present—future). Interpretation A seems to allow us to move from present to future and stay there.

C. There is another variant interpretation to A which is worth considering. The Roman empire and its civil power was holding back the use and supremacy of the Church (papal) at the time of writing [Comment 6]. It would operate a check on corruption in the church but would be removed at a later date to allow full sway for the man of sin. This amendment to A answers somewhat the problem of the neuter participle which can relate specifically to the empire instead of representing an influence.

Let us in conclusion examine expanded translations of the passage first leaning toward interpretation A and then to B.

A. At the time of writing you are acquainted with the influence with which is holding (you) back, to the end result that it will be/may be, disclosed in its own time. For the mystery of lawlessness will be/is working by this time. Only the one who embodies that debilitating influence will be/is present at that precise moment, until he steps in in the middle of time; and then he will really be revealed, he who is the lawless one whom the Lord Jesus will slay....

B. At the time of writing you are acquainted with the restraining influence, to the end result that it may be disclosed in its own time. For the mystery of lawlessness will be/is working by this time. Only the one who personifies that restraining influence is/will be present at this precise moment, until he comes out of the midst of/out of

the way; and then he will be disclosed, he who is the lawless one whom the Lord Jesus will slay....

J. C. Bell, Vancouver, B. C.

Further notes on 2 Thes. 2: 5-8

'temporally (at the time of writing) or now for the sake of argument'.

(a) *kai nun* even now now also (Jn. 11: 22; Phil 1: 20).

(a) *kai nun* and now (Jn. 17: 5; Acts. 7: 34; 10: 5: 20: 25; 22; 16).

(c) *kai nun* stands as a conclusion, or sequence; as things now are, as the matter now stands; under these circumstances; in the present state of affairs; since these things are so, (as it is 1 Jn. 2: 28; 2 Jn. 5).

'A subjective present time'.

'Roughly speaking, it may be said that *arti*, just now, even now, properly marks time closely connected with the present; later, strictly present time, and compare in Eng. "just now", i. e. a moment ago, and "just now" (emphat), i. e. at this precise time. *Nun* now, marks a definite point (or period) of time, the (objective) immediate present. *Ede*, now (already) with a suggested reference to some other time or to some expectation, the subjective present (i. e. so regarded by the writer).'

Thayer

Interpretation A

'Will be/is working by this time'. This puts an interpretation of Futuristic Present on the Present tense 'is working'. Apart from instances with the words 'go' and 'come' the NT. examples of Futuristic Present listed in Turner are: —

Mk. 9: 31	'is delivered up'
Mt. 26: 2	'is delivered up'
27: 63	'I rise'
Jn. 20: 23	'are forgiven'
Lk. 13: 32	'I cast out' and 'perform' 'am perfected'
1 Cor. 15: 32	'we die'
1 Cor. 15: 26	'shall be abolished'
Rev. 9: 6	'fleeth'

'will be/is present at *that* precise moment'.

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arti is normally with a past tense or a present. N. E. B. says 'only for the present until the restrainer disappears'. The usage with a futuristic present is somewhat novel; even with a future it would mean 'presently' or negated, e. g. you will sail, but not 'just at present'.

'in the middle of time' *ek mesou*: *ek* is used with a sense of time in the phrase *ek nuktos* 'at night', but when combined with *mesou* is usually accompanied by a word like 'day' or 'night'. In NT. the phrase *ek mesou* normally means 'out of the way', 'out of sight'. (Col. 2: 14; Acts 17: 33; Acts 23: 10; 1 Cor. 5: 2; 2 Cor. 6: 17).

Interpretation B

'Out of the middle of? How would 'out of the midst (of the apostasy)' (J. M. B. S. 1958 last page) be expressed in Greek?

'out of the midst (of the just)'

= *ek mesou (ton dikaion)* Mat. 13: 49.

Interpretations A and B

To the end result that *it'*

auton is masculine; the neuter form is *auto* (it).

Green's Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament contains an Analytical Exercise on this passage, p. 362.

'And now ye know that which hinders', *nun* temporal (as when with you I gave you the information, so now ye know) or logical, without reference to time (Ellicot); 'in order that he should be revealed in his own time. '

V. 7. The mystery of lawlessness is already at work, (a) 'is at work only until he who at present hinders be taken out of the way' the objection to which is the unnatural position of *heos* (until)—or (b) 'only he who hinders (is working) 'there is one who hinders (R. V.) as yet, until, etc'

In (b) the sense is 'for although the mystery is even now working, there is as yet a hinderer'. E. A.

THE DAY OF THE LORD—2 Thes. 2: 1-12

From Hayes. While the subject is the day of the Lord, this portion in 2 Thes. 2 deals mainly with events that will precede it. The first verse speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him. This obviously is the coming referred to in 1 Thes. 4. If the day of the Lord had already come, as some were saying it had, then the coming of the Lord to the air would have already taken place. Paul tells the saints that the day of the Lord cannot begin until certain things have taken place. These are things that everyone will be aware of, a falling away, and the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. There can be no doubt this is the same person Daniel spoke of, the abomination of desolation, the beast of which Revelation 13 speaks [Comment 1].

These things however cannot take place until that which restraineth is taken out of the way. The Thessalonian saints knew what this was, possibly because Paul had taught them about it orally. We cannot say with certainty what it is. Some have suggested it is the Holy Spirit, but does any Scripture suggest that He will be taken away from the earth in any age? He will be at work in the hearts of believers who are opposed to the man of sin and who refuse to bow to him and have his mark on their hands or foreheads. Is there anything that Scripture tells us will be taken out of the way? One thing which will be taken away is the Church which is the Body of Christ. Could this be that which restraineth, e. g. in terms of the statement 'Ye are the salt of the earth'?

J. A. H. Robertson

From Leeds. The saints in Thessalonica were not the first to imagine that because of wickedness around them the day of the Lord had come. They were right to look forward to it but wrong to think it had arrived and that they were taking part in it. Many Old Testament saints looked forward to Christ's coming as King (Heb. 11). Enoch in his walking with God could say that the Lord was to come (Jude 14, 15).

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The falling away is a falling from the way of truth into sinfulness and the omnipotence of the man of sin on the earth. Some would suggest that the Truth was lost soon after apostolic times [Comment 2]. Even during God's dealings with His people Israel, truth was lost, doctrine was neglected time after time. The Truth as it stands today in Churches of God was dearly bought and is held through the Holy Spirit until Christ comes. At that time, when we leave the earth to be with Him, the Holy Spirit in us leaves and that restraining influence on world affairs which is the Church the Body of Christ (believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit) will be gone [Comment 7]. Sin such as we cannot imagine will come, and many will be swayed away from good, in the world's terms, to evil. The world's standard of good is not enough, for those who follow it will have fallen short of the standard by which God measures goodness, the standard of His Son.

Philip Jefferson

From Liverpool. The day of the Lord is the period of manifestation of Christ's Lordship and authority to men, and is associated with judgement. (See Joel 2: 1-3, 10-11.) It will commence when the Lord Jesus descends to the earth again (Zech 14: 1-4), after the Rapture, and after the revelation of the evil man of lawlessness and the subsequent period of tribulation (Mat. 24: 29-30). Indications of the approach of this terrible time are given in Mat. 24 and Luke 21: 25 (Luke 21: 5-24 is now historical) [Comment 3]. As we do not have any time given for the Rapture, we cannot begin to date this event either. We do know from Daniel 9: 24-27 that there will be at least a seven-year period (1 week of years) between the two events. The man of lawlessness will make a covenant, but will break it after three and a half years (Dan. 9: 27) and there will follow three and a half years of terror (Rev. 13: 5), only ending in the return of Christ (2 Thes. 2: 8).

There is a problem of reconciling the fact that the return will be 'as a thief in the night', i. e. unexpected, with the fact that those living through this period will know exactly when to expect Him, namely three and a half years after the breaking of the covenant [Comment 4],

The day of the Lord will continue right through the

thousand-year reign of Christ and to the ushering in of the day of God.

There are four conflicting ideas as to who is the restrainer (vv. 6-7). (i) Satan, biding his time until the conditions are right to unleash this evil upon the world. It cannot be the Holy Spirit as he is in the world to convict and this does not cease, (ii) The Holy Spirit who has been in the world continuously since Pentecost, indwelling those 'in Christ'. After the Rapture this presence will be discontinued, leaving Satan free to introduce the evil man. It cannot refer to Satan—he never restrains evil. The 'he' in 'that he may be revealed' refers to Satan [Comment 8]. (iii) The Church the Body taken out of the way at the Rapture. The restraining Christian influence having gone, evil will increase and the lawless man will arise, (iv) Government, particularly the Roman Empire of Paul's day, which holds evil in check by its laws and rule.

David J. Webster

From Melbourne. Prominent among the beneficial acts of the Antichrist will be his tolerance for the people of Israel, who will be settled in their own land, with accompanying prosperity. The man of sin will make a covenant with Israel for seven years and under his protection will recommence the offering of sacrifices as prescribed by the Mosaic law; but at the end of three and a half years he will break his covenant. He will enter and sit in the temple of God. The false prophet will also cause an image of the Antichrist to be made to which he will have power from Satan to give breath and speech. The setting up of the idol is referred to by Daniel, as 'the abomination that maketh desolate' or in the words of the Lord 'the abomination of desolation' (Mat. 24: 16, Mark 13: 14).

It is at this juncture that the warning given by the Lord will be applicable. 'Let them that be in Judea flee unto the mountains'. We believe Edom, Ammon and Moab (Dan. 11: 41) correspond with the 'place prepared by God' referred to in Rev. 12: 14. In some way these lands, we suggest, will have been delivered from the rule of the man of sin, and there those who flee will be sustained for three and a half years. Out of this period we find 'a great multi-

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tude which no man could number' of all nations, peoples and tongues (Rev. 7: 9), who have been martyred because of their refusal to worship the man of sin and his image.

The climax will be the ushering in of the 'day of the Lord' by His descent from heaven. Armageddon follows with the casting alive of the Antichrist and false prophet into the lake of fire, the imprisonment of Satan in the abyss for one thousand years and the judgement of the living nations. The day of the Lord we understand will run its course throughout His millennial reign, and will be merged into the day of God as explained in 2 Pet. 3: 8-12.

7. W. Fullerton, A. E. Edwards

From Methil. Paul makes it very clear that the day of the Lord will not be until: —

- (a) 'the falling away come first' (v. 3); 'in later times some shall fall away from the faith' (1 Tim. 4, v. 1). This refers to believers and has begun to happen already among the religious systems of the world. [See Question 1.]
- (b) he (that restraineth) 'be taken out of the way' (v. 7). Opinions on this differ [See question 2]. Some say it is the Holy Spirit who restrains at present, until the Rapture, and during His absence (which will be temporary) the man of sin will be revealed.

Others give an alternative reading to v. 7—'only he who restrains at present until out of the midst he come', and say that he who restrains is Satan and the one who comes out of the midst is Antichrist.

- (c) 'the man of sin be revealed' (v. 3). This is the lawless one of v. 8 and the first beast of Rev. 19. He will be 'a contemptible person' (Dan. 11: 21) and after the Rapture of the Church he will rapidly gain world domination and the nations will acclaim him as the answer to all their problems. He will make a covenant with Israel at the beginning of his reign and break it after three and a half years when he defiles the Temple in Jerusalem by setting up his image to be worshipped instead of God. He will order everyone to take his mark, engraved on their right hand or their forehead. Those who refuse to

do so will suffer great persecution. Finally, the beast will gather all the armies of the world against Jerusalem 'that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance' (Ps. 83: 4). Then when the remnant of Israel are ready to abandon all hope the King of Kings and Lord of Lords will suddenly rend the heavens, and come 'with power and great glory' with the armies of heaven.

This supernatural intervention in human affairs brings us to 'the day of the Lord'. Several events just prior to that great day will herald the coming of the Son of Man. The seven bowls of Rev. 16 will be poured out and with the seventh, the words of Mat. 24: 29, 30 will be fulfilled: '... the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven... then... they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory'.

Jo Johnston

From Nottingham. Some commentators suggest that the reference in verses 1-3, summarised in the words 'let no man beguile you in any wise', suggests that the Thessalonians had been upset in their minds by the apostle's previous reference to this subject in his earlier letter. We think, however, that false ideas had been spread about the assembly whether by spoken or written word or by false revelation. On this latter point it is worth comparing 1 John 4: 1.

The R. V. rendering of 2 Thes. 2: 3 is '... except *the* falling away come first' whereas the A. V. has 'except there come a falling away first'. If we accept the R. V. as being the better translation then we think there is some significance in the use of the definite article, *the* falling away [Comment 5]. This state of affairs described in 2 Thes. 2 is not just any falling away but it is a particular and pronounced decline the like of which has never been seen before. As we see something of the tide of lawlessness around us now and contemplate that future day, we shudder to think of the condition in which our fellow men and women will be.

The Lord told His disciples they were the salt of the earth. However little impact a spiritually alive believer may seem to have on those around him, the fact remains that

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the very presence of believers in the world has a steadying influence on ungodly people. When the Lord returns as described in 1 Thes. 4, believers will be taken and this restraining influence will be gone. Mankind will plunge more and more rapidly into sin and departure from God. Thus will the way be opened for the rise to power of the man of sin.

Verses 6 and 7 present some difficulty in identifying 'that which restraineth'. The Thessalonians knew who or what this was (verse 6), probably from the instruction given verbally by the apostle. Some have thought the reference is to the Holy Spirit but this seems untenable. Far from the Holy Spirit being taken out of the way, He will be very active at that time, as revealed in Joel 2: 28-32. In our consideration of the passage we had before us the notes on this portion by the late Mr. John Miller and observed his view, that it is Satan who is the restraining one. A comparison of the R. V. the R. V. margin and other versions would lead us to assume that the correct translation of the original text is somewhat uncertain. *Ft. Hickling.*

From Birkenhead. It was Paul's intention in this portion to remind the Thessalonian saints of teaching which he had given them in person. He wished to re-state the position with regard to the 'day of the Lord' and their apparent confusion concerning this matter. He starts by warning them against false teaching in whatever form it may be presented.

To reassure them Paul lists certain circumstances which must prevail before the day of the Lord (the day when the Lord Jesus Christ 'takes over' the world) can commence. First 'the falling away' will take place. The embodiment of this apostasy will be the man of sin, the son of perdition. The definite article used with 'falling away' indicates that this is a precise event which can be identified as such, rather than the general lack of interest and opposition which has been manifest through the ages. As events progress this opposition to God and His Christ reaches its climax with Antichrist, the one over whom sin has complete dominion, and will culminate in the setting forth by Antichrist of himself as God in the Temple of God.

Paul speaks of the apostasy being restrained for the time being and of the one who restrains until he is taken out of the way. Although the Thessalonians knew whom it was that restrained (v. 6) we discussed the matter in detail with several views being proposed. The main suggestions were that this could be either the Holy Spirit working through the Church the Body, or the Devil. Some held the view that in his cunning way Satan would delay the sharp decline until he viewed the time as being appropriate for the man of sin to arrive. Whilst this would be in his plan it could only be done within the limits of freedom which God has allowed him. There is difficulty however in reconciling this with the statement that he would be removed. By whom?

Alternatively, it was suggested that the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church the Body stands for God on this earth and when removed Satan could then have his way with Antichrist. Whichever is correct, it is clear that God will triumph over all things and then rule the world.

The last four verses refer to the obstinacy of mankind at that time in that they refuse to acknowledge or accept God. This will result in a hardening of heart to such a degree that they will believe a lie. We compared this with 'Pharaoh hardened his heart' and 'the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.'

R. C. Halpin, T. M. Hyland

From Derby. Study of the subject of the day of the Lord can be started from 1 Thes. 5: 1-3 which is a comment consequent upon the satisfaction of 1 Thes. 4: 17, 18. The word 'they' in 5: 3 shows that the day of the Lord pertains to the unbeliever though even the believers are exhorted to watchfulness (5: 6).

The sufferings of the Thessalonian believers were shaking their faith, so the exhortation of 2 Thes. 2 is to teach them that there is an essential difference between the times before and after the Lord's coming for His saints. The day of the Lord's coming for His own is the 'day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:8) and it is associated with the Lord's approval and with joy. It is associated with glorying in 2 Cor. 1: 14 and in Phil. 2: 16.

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The character of the times subsequent to the Rapture is set forth in 2 Thes. 2: 3-12. The forces of evil even before the Rapture are powerful. Indeed they are visible in present-day events. However, they are to go far beyond their present effects. Paul points this out in verses 3 and 4. For the present there is a restraint (v. 6). The nature of this restraint is not clear. Some think it is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believers which exerts the restraint, for Christians do have an influence. Others think that there is restraint in the forces of evil themselves until the right moment arrives.

Whatever may be the explanation, 2 Thes. 2: 8 shows that the Lord Jesus is to come in power to suppress all evil. This coming is the start of the day of the Lord.

N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

COMMENTS

1. (Hayes). Although the reference is correct, it is not certain that the 'abomination of desolation' refers to the person himself, rather than to something which he sets up in the holy place. Opinions differ as to the correct reading of Mark 13: 14, which uses 'he' in R. V. but the other references seem to indicate a thing rather than a person.

2. (Leeds). The term 'the Truth' may be used to mean 'the body of Christian doctrine', i. e. synonymously with 'the Faith'. It is so used in Scripture (e. g. Col. 1: 5; Eph. 1: 13), although it sometimes simply means 'that which is true'. The suggestion that 'the Truth was lost soon after apostolic times' rather overstates the case. There was certainly a widespread corruption of teaching and practice in organized religion, and some scriptural principles were lost sight of, but nevertheless there were believers through the ages whose faith enabled the Scriptures to be preserved. Because of their faithfulness the re-discovery of scriptural truth which began at the Reformation was able to take place.

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3. **(Liverpool)**. I would think that Luke 21: 10, 11 connects with v. 25 ff. and refers to the future.

4. **(Liverpool)**. Most people at this time will dismiss Biblical prophecy as the belief of a few religious fanatics, just as they do today. The coming of the Lord will therefore not be expected by them.

5. **(Nottingham)**. The definite article appears in the Greek text. **P. L. H.**

6. **(J. C. Bell)**. There was nothing 'papal' at the time of Paul's writing. Is it the future Roman Empire and Roman church that is meant?

7. **(Leeds)**. Can we say the Holy Spirit 'leaves'? Surely not.

8. **(Liverpool)**. Is it not the Antichrist who is revealed? **J. K. D. J.**

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From Methil:

1. 2 Thes. 2: 3—'except the falling away come first'. Does this refer to believers only, or could it refer to unbelievers?

The word '*apostasia*' translated 'falling away' was used in classical Greek for political revolt or defection, and in the Septuagint it signifies rebellion against God (e. g. Josh. 22: 22). There is only one other instance of its use in the New Testament in Acts 21:21, where it is translated 'for-sake'. My opinion is that it applies here to general rebellion against the law of God (cf. v. 4). The climate of public opinion which will accept the man of sin will reject both God Himself and His moral law.

2. 2 Thes. 2: 6, 7—'that which restraineth'.... 'one that restraineth'. Does this refer to the Holy Spirit, or to Satan?

Sometimes the only possible answer to a question is 'I don't know', and that is the case here. Contributors to this issue have proposed various solutions but there can be no certainty as to which is correct. The Thessalonian saints had had oral teaching from the apostle Paul on the subject, and knew some things which we do not. *P. L. H.*

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17:17)

EDITORIAL

7911

Possession of the complete canon of Scripture may perhaps make us insensitive to the problems faced by the early disciples. The Thessalonian letters were among the first parts of the New Testament to be written, so these saints were limited for their instruction to the verbal and written ministry of the apostles and other teachers. Not all they were taught came from God, and warning had frequently to be given against false doctrine (Acts 20: 30; Gal. 1: 7; 1 Tim. 1:3), but through Paul and his fellow apostles was handed down a stream of God-given teaching. This teaching formed the traditions to which our study refers. The response demanded of the disciples was uncompromising—they must 'stand fast, and hold the traditions'. One detects in this passage an echo of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, in which he identified as one purpose of the gifts given to the Church, 'that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error... ' (Eph. 4: 14). Failure to walk 'after the tradition which they received from us' carried its own penalty (2 Thes. 3: 6), but Paul took pains to reassure the Thessalonians that the Lord was well able to stablish them and guard them from the evil one. R. L.

DISCIPLINE IN CHURCHES OF GOD

Although the word 'discipline' does not occur in the English translation of the Scriptures, the meaning is present under the term 'chastening'. The principal force of this word is correction, with a wider use signifying training by instruction. The house of God is the place where judgement begins (1 Pet. 4: 17). The discipline of 'sons' (Heb. 12: 5-11) must be distinguished from discipline collectively administered by 'the church' (2 Cor. 2: 6). The former is the prerogative and direct action of the Lord. The latter is His

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indirect action through those in **churches** of God. One **has** to do **with** obedience **and** holiness in **the life** of **the saint**; **the other with** order in God's house.

Discipline, corporately administered, **is** enjoined in **the** word of God, **while** being largely ignored in **the** organisations and systems of men. **It is** necessary **because** of **the lawless** spirit of **the age**, through worldliness and carnality, **which** can so easily penetrate and **permeate** units of divine testimony. **Failure** to **exercise** discipline (and thus **guard the** holiness of **the House**) may **be the result** of **pride** or **fear of man**, not humility; **the result** of sentimentality, not **the exercise** of God-given grace. In **the human realm**, tolerance of **evil** and **failure** to maintain discipline **will** not only **react** upon **the head** of **the family** **but** also on **the family** itself.

Discipline, then, **must** not **be shirked** by those who **seek** to do **the will** of God. **The church** of God in Corinth **was** sharply reprov'd for **lack** of prompt disciplinary action in a flagrant **case** of immorality. Being **puffed up** by **the** possession of many **spiritual gifts**, **the saints** in Corinth **had** adopted an easy tolerance of **evil**. **Neglect** of discipline dishonours God, hinders **the work** of **the divine Spirit**, and mars **the** testimony of **a church** of God. **The object** of discipline **is** **(a)** to maintain **the** integrity of **the** assembly before God, **as a temple fit** for **the Spirit's** presence (**1 Cor. 3: 16, 17**), and to remove from before men **all** appearance of connivance **with evil**; **(b)** to vindicate **the** name of God by **the** removal, **as far as** humanly possible, of **the** reproach brought upon **it** before **the** world; **(c)** to furnish **a** warning to **the** saints **lest a careless walk lead to a similar lapse**, and **(d)** to secure restoration of **the** offender or wrongdoer.

If discipline **is** not summarily **exercised**, **evil spreads like** leaven (**1 Cor. 5: 6; Gal. 5: 9**). In **the Old Testament**, **Leviticus 14** and **Joshua 7** strictly underline **this fact**. In **the latter**, **the sin** of Achan, in **its** consequences, involved **the** whole congregation of Israel. **Sad the day** when any of **the** Lord's people oppose disciplinary **measures**, **if called** for.

Cases of discipline specified in Scripture. Contrary to some prevalent **ideas**, excommunication from **a church** of God **is** not **the** only form of discipline. **At least** seven categories of offence **are** indicated, some of **a** more serious nature than others.

1. *The personal offender* (Mat. 18: 15-18; Luke 17: 3, 4). When differences arise between saints, they should be settled in private, the outcome being pardon and peace. If, however, the wrongdoer is haughty, showing no desire to put things right, additional witnesses are summoned to hear the facts and give their judgement in the matter. If the offender does not accept the findings against him, the assembly is informed and the elders must admonish, on the assembly's behalf, the delinquent person. If he heeds, the matter is resolved; failing this, he is to be treated as an 'outsider' who is not walking as yet in the light of the truth of the word of God. Three successive steps are to be observed. The approach is (a) personal—'between you and him alone'; (b) private—'take with you one or two more'; (c) public—'tell it to the church'. Every personal trespass does not call for the action described here. In many things we all offend and forbearing love will cover many faults (Eph. 4: 32). The sin here is personal offence. The viewpoint and attitude of the offended is shown in Mat. 5: 23, 24. Excommunication is envisaged when all else fails.

2. *The person overtaken* (Gal. 6: 1). This is the case of a saint suddenly stumbling and falling into momentary defeat. It is a temporary lapse, not the pursuit of wrongdoing; being tripped up by the adversary in an unguarded moment and becoming overwhelmed by the temptation (not looking at the way of escape) to fleshly desires and propensities. The procedure in dealing with this matter does not necessarily involve excommunication. The person may be required to be rebuked privately if the offence is private; publicly if the offence is public. Principally the work is that of restoring or assisting one who is overcome by his own grief in the knowledge of sin committed. The restoration is the work of those who are spiritual (Spirit-filled) seeking lovingly, tenderly and graciously to recover him from defeat in a spirit of meekness; 'looking to thyself, for it is possible that the spiritual one today may be the overtaken one of tomorrow. The word 'restore' has the meaning of readjusting or mending as in Mark 1: 19.

3. *The disorderly person* (2 Thes. 3: 6, 11, 14-15). The literal meaning of 'walking disorderly' is to be out of step,

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indicating inco-ordination and insubordination. One form of disorderliness amongst some in **the** church of God in Thessalonica **was a** certain negative **attitude** towards daily work, **the** result being **that** they **became** busybodies (literally working round about, instead of **at** one's own business). In **this** instance, admonition **is** to **be** given by overseers (**1** Thes. **5: 14**) **which, if** unavailing, **will result** in **withdrawal** by saints. There **is** no putting away **but a clear** curtailing of fellowship together in ceasing from social contact. **Such a** person **is** characterised by disobedience to **the** word of God and **thus** not **subject** to **the** rule of God in **His** Kingdom.

4. The unruly person (Titus 1: 9-14). The offence **stated** **is** vain talking and deceit. **The** deceiving person who engages in profitless ministry may **himself be deceived**, convinced **his** words **are** edifying to hearers. To counteract, warning and **sharp** reproof **is** to **be** given by **elders** in order to silence **the** offender (v. 13). They (i. e. **elders**) **are** responsible to prevent **further** abuse. **Neglect** to do so **will lead** to factions. To 'stop **the** mouth' **is** to **muzzle** or **gag** (**put** something in **the** mouth). **This is** the procedure in dealing **with** one who **is** 'on **his** feet' **at** every opportunity.

5. The division maker (Rom. 16: 17; Titus 3: 10; Acts 20: 30). The warning against **the** danger **which was** threatening **the** testimony of God in Rome **is** timely for our day. Harmony in **a** church of God **is** to **be** treasured. Self-interest introduces **the** serious danger of **schism** in **the** assembly. **This is** the dogmatic person who **has a** pushing **spirit** and opposes any or **all** who stand in **his** way. **The** prescription **is** admonition; excommunication **is** possible, too. **If** the former **is rejected**, the person **is** to **be** shunned and should not **be permitted** to minister to **the** saints. Obedience to **the** word of **the** Lord in **this** matter by **the** assembly **will check** division among **the** Lord's people. According to **Titus** 3: 10 **such a** man may **be a** heretic. Scripturally, **this** word means one who in **self-will** **presses** **his** opinion. **Public** reproof, **as** shown in **1** Tim. **5: 20**, **is** to **be** given **where a** man commits **a** sin **which** manifestly dishonours God and **mars** **the** church's testimony. **The** double warning and

responsibility to elders in Acts 20—'take heed' and 'watch ye' should be noted.

R. B. Fullerton

[To be continued J

HOLDING FAST THE TRADITIONS (2 Thes. 2: 13-3: 5)

From Birkenhead. The form of address 'beloved of the Lord' which is used in 2 Thes. 2: 13 says much of God's love for His people. Despite many shortcomings and failures, and their inexperience, God loves them. This love stems from His having 'chosen you from the beginning unto salvation'. The verse clearly states the action of the triune God involved in the plan of salvation—they were chosen by God, beloved of the Lord, and sanctified of the Spirit, and it outlines the basis of their security in their faith. Through the agency of man they have accepted the gospel, and will be participants in the glory of the Lord when He returns for His people.

Having referred to times past and times to come, Paul deals with the present, encouraging the saints to stand fast and hold the traditions which they were taught. These traditions were formed by apostolic teaching, first by word and then by letters. Divine teaching was delivered 'once for all unto the saints' (Jude 3) and is complete as codified in the New Testament. The continuing exposition of 'new traditions' ceased with the death of the apostles and there have been no further revelations from God since then, although there has decidedly been re-discovery of lost truths. It is important to note that Paul simply passed on unchanged that which he had received from the Lord (1 Cor. 15: 3) and this teaching therefore carries the authority of God.

Paul, realising the difficulties in the work of the Lord, sought their prayers that the gospel might progress unimpeded. He contrasts the faithfulness of the Lord with the unreasonableness of evil men, pointing out that the Lord can strengthen and guard against all the attacks of the Devil.

Paul had confidence in them concerning matters of teaching, and he asked the Lord to direct their hearts. This can only be done if hearts are willing to be directed. His petition

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seems at first reading to refer to the love of God for His people, but must necessarily include the reciprocal love His own should have for Him. The patience mentioned must be that as shown by Christ when He suffered for us, and while He now waits to return for us. The Greek word used here for patience includes the idea of perseverance and endurance as well as simple patient waiting.

It was observed that the order of the Trinity was reversed in the final verse, thus implying that there is no order of priority within the Godhead.

R. C. Halpin, T. M. Hyland

From Derby. God's sovereign choice was fulfilled and became effective by people being set apart by the Holy Spirit. Our salvation originated in the heart of God Himself. He initiated this work for our ultimate glorification. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit is completed by an active response on our part.

Paul says the people were called through 'our gospel'. It did not originate in Paul's mind but he had a special responsibility to preach this gospel and take it to the uncircumcision.

In verse 16 'which loved us and gave us eternal comfort' points to the past. We received eternal comfort and hope when we came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. This continues in the present. In the eternal future we shall know the fulness of eternal life. We should be enjoying the life eternal now. We are encouraged to look at our present brief trials against the eternal comfort and good hope (2 Cor. 4: 17). We may grieve the Spirit and oppose His workings in our flesh so that we may not enjoy that comfort and hope.

Since we found a place in God's design right back in the councils of eternity, we should be deeply grateful and seek to hold fast the traditions; that is, the things handed on to us by the apostles and resting on the authority of Christ.

G. W. Conway

From Leeds. It is required of those who have received the gospel, and who have professed a subjection to it, that they continue to 'live according to the gospel'. Paul wrote (Gal.

2: 5) '... that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.'

To the saints in Thessalonica, who had turned to God from idols (1 Thes. 1: 9) Paul had preached the same gospel not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance (1 Thes. 1:5). By the grace of God we have been chosen unto a salvation which is complete, the end already seen from the beginning by Him who is both the Author and the Perfecter of faith (Heb. 12: 2) and, who, having been made perfect, became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (Heb. 5: 9). The gospel Paul preached was a complete gospel, not only of the initial salvation through faith in Christ from the penalty of sin, but that of a 'living-on' gospel, living on in the life of the newly born again ones in their daily experience and on unto the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour when we shall **be saved** completely and entirely from the very power and presence of sin. 'Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation... whereunto He called you by our gospel... stand fast, and hold the traditions (teachings, ordinances)... which ye were taught' (2 Thes. 2: 13-15). These traditions are 'of God' and not 'of man'. Paul taught the full doctrine of the gospel of God (Acts 14: 21, 22) and exhorted the saints to keep the ordinances, as he had delivered them (1 Cor. 11:2). The apostles handed down the precepts and principles of God both by word of mouth and by the written word. Those who received the gospel through the sanctification of the Spirit, had also a belief of the truth (2 Thes. 2: 13). Jesus said 'Sanctify them in the truth: Thy word is truth' (John 17: 17).

James says '... faith worketh patience and let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire' (James 1:3, 4). Paul says 'As ministers of God, in much patience' (2 Cor. 6: 4). How precious to have the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ (2 Thes. 3: 5). We have much need of patience as we endure the toils of this life and as we wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thes. 1: 10). *H. R. Dodge*

From Liverpool. *Salvation and Glory*

Salvation is a two-sided thing. God sanctifies us through the Spirit, we believe in the truth. That God chose us to be

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saved, calling us through the gospel is clear elsewhere (Eph. 1: 4), and we understand 'from the beginning' to refer to eternity, not to the commencement of Paul's preaching. However, a balance must be maintained in our understanding of the doctrine of election, for we were not 'in Christ' from eternity. Paul himself spoke of some being 'in Christ' before him (Rom. 16: 7). Our response in belief is an essential part of our salvation.

Glory is 'exalted' renown, honourable fame'. Jesus showed His glory by turning water into wine and by raising a dead man (John 2: 11, 11: 4). The glory which we are to obtain is future (Rom. 8: 17). In John 17: 22 the Lord was speaking in anticipation [Comment 1].

The Traditions

Traditions can, of course, be sound or false. Here Paul is referring to those things handed down to them which trace their origin back to the Lord Himself (1 Cor. 11:23). The N. I. V. translates the word as 'teachings', also in 1 Cor. 11:2. Our responsibility is to 'prove all things' (1 Thes. 5: 21) to make sure it does originate from the Lord. We must distinguish between traditions of doctrine to which we must remain faithful, and traditions of convenience which can be altered.

Prayer and Confidence

We have a record of Paul's prayer for his outreach: not just that the gospel is preached, but that it will spread rapidly and be honoured, and that they would be delivered from the inevitable evil men. We felt that he had specific men in mind here, those Jews who had hounded him from town to town. They were unbelievers who did not put faith in Christ, rather than those who did not acknowledge the doctrines of the faith.

Unlike his prophecy to the Ephesians later on, Paul had confidence in these Christians that they would carry on faithfully. The Lord (v. 5) is the Holy Spirit. He should direct our hearts in greater love for God, and the more we love God, the more we will love each other, and be steadfast (R. S. V.)—enduring, persevering as Christ was.

David J. Webster

From Melbourne. In Paul's letters to the Thessalonians he reveals the fact that he was truly an apostle of Jesus Christ with a deep longing that human beings might be conquered by the love of Christ, and that he might see unmistakable evidence of their progress in the knowledge of God. In these letters we find that this church has given much cause for thanksgiving to God from the apostle and his co-worker, Silas, who had been the instruments in the hands of the Spirit of God to proclaim the word of the Lord in this city. As a result of that proclamation people previously unknown, save in the eternal purposes of God, had been called out not only to be members of the church which is His body, and joint sharers of the glories of Christ yet to be revealed, but also in sanctification of the Spirit [Comment 2] and belief of the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. They thus were to become part of a holy nation gathered into churches of God to serve in His house and kingdom.

It had been but a year since the events recorded in Acts 17 yet it appears evident that during that interval there had been erroneous teaching brought among them [Comment 8]. The result of the visit of Timothy as recorded in the first letter had evidently produced a stabilizing effect. Now there is a further exhortation to stand fast and hold the traditions that they had been taught. The traditions which the apostles and Timothy had taught them were the doctrines or teachings of the Lord as committed to His apostles for the instruction and obedience of those who would believe on Him after He had returned to heaven, they were the foundations upon which the kingdom, churches, and house of God were built. Therefore to hold them fast and not to deviate therefrom was essential if the will of God was to be done on earth among disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the goodness and mercy of God we have in our day and generation these same traditions which have been handed down to us by His apostles and found in the Holy Scriptures. After they had been lost sight of for centuries, or corrupted by human interpretation, the day arrived when light began to dawn upon some of God's saints, and gradually truths that are vital to the existence of a divine testimony were brought to light. Such truth, doctrines, or

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traditions are the foundation upon which again as in apostolic days, the kingdom, churches, and house of God are built. The holding fast of such 'traditions' can express our valuation of the 'great salvation' referred to in Hebrews 2: 3.

It is also evident that the term 'tradition' is applicable to erroneous interpretations of the law or wresting of the Scriptures which destroy the spirit of the word of God and make it of none effect. In the days of His flesh the Lord denounced the scribes and Pharisees because of their traditions concerning the law of Moses (Mat. 12: 1-14; 15: 3-20 and elsewhere). Solemn warnings were given by the Lord regarding the substitution of the traditions of men for divine truth, yet in the eyes of Christendom and many children of God, this is lightly passed over. Some traditions date back to the early centuries A. D. and, because of antiquity there are those who tenaciously cling to them, thereby failing to enter into the liberty and divine service for which apostolic teaching makes provision. Denominational names, clerisy, infant baptism, ordination of a priesthood, and innumerable other traditions of men are the wrong material and foundation upon which to build churches of God.

The apostle and his co-workers had confidence in the church of God at Thessalonica that those saints who composed it had both done and would continue to do the things that they had been taught, notwithstanding the fact that there had been some who had sought to lead them astray. He reminded them that the Lord is able to establish them and keep them from the evil one. Finally, he expressed his desire that they may be led to appreciate the love of God in all its fulness and that in all their afflictions they may experience something of the patience of Christ manifested towards man, even when He was being despised and rejected. The recollection of that patience is a source of succour in days of trial and tribulation such as those through which the Thessalonians had been and evidently were still passing.

T. L. Fullerton, T. W. Fullerton

From **Methil**. The apostle has been explaining at length to the Thessalonian saints the coming of the Lord *for* His people, which leads on to the revealing of the Man of Sin,

while the later event, the coming of the Lord *with* His people results in the destruction of the Man of Sin.

With such a background he now says, as it were, 'But you brethren, thank God, belong to those who believe the truth'. It is a relief for Paul to turn from the awful subject of apostasy and doom to those who were real believers and safe, and who had been chosen from the beginning unto salvation and made holy by the work of the spirit of God.

His counsel to them was to stand fast, to stand firm and to keep a strong grip on the truth he had taught them by word and in his letters.

These traditions were directions and instructions. They embraced the basic Christian doctrine, not the handed down practices of men (Col. 2: 8), but the very teaching of God. The Thessalonian saints were now being offered a unique opportunity for service while waiting the Lord's coming. They could demonstrate loyalty to Christ by holding fast to the truth (2: 15). They could spread the gospel, evangelize the world (3: 1), pray for God's servants (3: 1-2), and patiently wait for the return of their Lord (3: 5).

The apostle Paul is possibly the only New Testament writer who requests the prayers of those to whom he writes, but this he does on many occasions and always with a view to the progress of the gospel—'That the word of the Lord may run and be glorified' (3: 1)). See also Rom. 15: 30, 2 Cor. 1: 11, Eph. 6: 19, Phil. 1: 19, Col. 4: 3, etc.

He knew the Lord is faithful, and that He would not only stablish them, but guard them from the evil one (John 17: 15). His confidence was *in the Lord*, that these saints would win through by their desire and willingness to be obedient to the faith.

Neville Coomer

From Nottingham. In this portion the apostle turns his attention again to the Thessalonian saints and gives God further thanks for them. It may be that as he has been writing, guided by the Holy Spirit, of those 'who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness' that he is impressed again by the grace of God demonstrated in those who had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

They were beloved of the Lord and chosen by God from

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the beginning. The Greek word **used here is**, according to Vine, '*halreo*' meaning '**to take**' in the sense of 'taking for oneself. This authority remarks **'its special significance is to select** rather by **the act** of taking than by showing preference or favour'. So God, in sovereign power and **the full majesty of grace**, took out those saints in Thessalonica, **as He has all** believers, from among those **that** are perishing. The question **which each** believer may **ask is**: 'Why **did** God choose **me?**' It is unanswerable, **save** to say: '**He loved me because He** loved me. '

In **2: 13** the two **aspects** of the gospel are mentioned. God **calls** through sovereign knowledge and man **has the** responsibility to **exercise faith** in the gospel **message**. **We have a similar two-fold aspect** presented in **that we have** a responsibility (**3: 1-2**) to so **walk that we may be delivered** from evil, **but, at the same time, the Lord will care** for us and **guard us** (v. 3).

The thought **was expressed that 3: 4**—'and we have confidence in **the** Lord touching you, **that** ye both do and **will** do **the things which we** command' indicated **that the** apostle **had received** a revelation from **the** Lord **that the** Thessalonians would remain **faithful** and obedient. **Others** thought **these** words indicated **that the** apostle looked to **the** Lord in **faith that He** would **keep them as** obedient **disciples** [Comment 3].

The word 'traditions' in **2: 15** is important and needs **careful** consideration. Vine **gives its** meaning as a 'handing down or on' and points out **that it** 'constitutes a denial **that what he preached** originated **with himself** and a **claim** for **its** divine authority' [Comment 4]. The important point is **that the** traditions **which the** Thessalonians **were** exhorted to hold **were not the** traditions of men **but the** teaching of **the** apostles **which**, in turn, they **had received** from **the** Lord. **This** passage **gives** no authority for holding traditions **which had or have their** origin in **the** minds of men. **Structures** and systems **built on such ideas have** no divine authority and often contradict **the** God-given traditions of **the** apostles.

R. Hickling

From Paisley. Though **Paul tells the** Thessalonians **that** God chose **them** for blessing, **he** does not **tell them** to **rest** upon

their election in **the** matter of obedience. **His** exhortation is to 'stand fast', for there **was always the** possibility of **the** saints falling away from **the** practice of **the** truth. History itself **bears** out this **fact**, for **the church** in Thessalonica went **the** way of **all the churches** in consequence of **the** apostasy. **After the death** of **the** early disciples their successors **became** a prey to **the** traditions of men which overwhelmed **the churches** of God. Even today **the Greek** and Latin churches practise rites on **the** basis of **a** tradition which they claim goes **back** to **the** days of **the** apostles. **But what the** apostles **taught** orally was never contradicted by **their** God-breathed writings. **Nor** is it possible to prove **that what** is claimed to **be** apostolic tradition is not **a** corruption of **the truth** over **the** centuries. Therefore, no teaching outwith **the** bounds of **the Bible** is with divine authority. **It** is surely conceivable **that the** enemy who forged an epistle in **the** name of **the** apostles (**2: 2**) is equally **capable** of forging **a** tradition of **the** apostles as **a** means of subverting **the** truth. **What** therefore **Paul** wrote with his own hand (**3: 17**) **must have** precedence over **what** some **allege** he said with his mouth.

One of **the** traditions delivered to **the** Thessalonians **was** the assembly prayers. Hence **Paul** says 'pray for us' (**3: 1**). **We** might **therefore** suppose in **the** light of this request **that** **as soon as Paul's** epistle **was read** to **the church** the brethren **were** zealous to follow it with public prayer for **the** servants of God. Also, if **the** epistle **were** obeyed, **the** first request would **be** for **the progress** of **the** gospel. This remains today **a** very necessary function among **the** churches of God.

No doubt **part** of **the** reason for **the** blessing in Thessalonica **was the** gospel witness growing out of affliction. This principle **seems** to remain **as the** gospel is today making progress among **the** Slavonic peoples, despite political atheism and religious persecution. In contrast is **the** gospel 'delinquency' of **the** Western democracies, sick with **the** affliction of affluent sophistication.

Paul's reference to 'unreasonable and evil men' (**3: 2**), **suggests that he** anticipated trouble in **the** near future. Assuming **that he was** still writing from Corinth this could **be** an allusion to **trouble** with **the Jews** (Acts 18: 12-17).

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If this is so then **the** prayers of **the** Thessalonians were answered, for **after the** trouble **Paul** 'tarried **after** this yet many days' (Acts 18: 18).

In giving **the** saints instruction **Paul** is confident of their obedience, **but he** makes it plain **that** his words **are** not recommendations **but** direct commandments (3: 4). This shows **us that the** prayers of **the** church **are** nothing **less** than **a** command **and** not an option. To neglect **the** prayers is therefore to disobey **the** word of **the** Lord.

Though confident of **the** obedience of **the** saints, **Paul's** trust was in **the** **grace** of God who **had called the** Thessalonians through **the** gospel. Thus in conformity with **the** principle of obedience through love (John 14: 15) **Paul's** desire is **that the hearts** of **the** saints will **be** directed 'into **the** love of God, and into **the** patience of Christ' (3: 5).

T. Summerhill

From Vancouver, **B. C. Of the** definitions of tradition given **in the** dictionary, **the** one most applicable to **the** word **used** **in** this passage would **be that** which is handed down, possibly with **the** emphasis on **the** oral passing to successive generations of doctrine, information, opinions and **practices**, although **Paul** definitely includes **that** which **he had** received from God and passed on in his epistles [Comment 5]. **The** tradition specified in **the** verses is **that** of election and our calling to salvation, sanctification and belief of **the** **truth**, and it is as imperative **that we** understand **the** doctrine of election today in **the** confusion **that** exists in **the** religious world, as it was then. Election directs us to **the** purpose of our calling **rather** than **the** faith itself. **Abraham was called**, and **when he** responded by faith **he was** given **the** promise **he** would **beget a great** nation which **was** itself chosen **because** of **Abraham's** faith. The choice and calling **are** God's action, **but** our responsibility is to respond. God sanctifies us in **the** Spirit—**we** work out our own salvation; God also **calls** us unto obedience and **the** blood of sprinkling (1 Pet. 1: 2) **but** belief of **the** **truth** **revealed** is our responsibility.

The **truths** **Paul** passed on from **the** Lord regarding **the** details of **the** remembrance would **be** traditions committed to **be** passed on—but they **must be** of God. **We see** from

the gospels that traditions of men were prevalent among the Pharisees in that day, and we know that they became even more widespread when apostasy set in, in the first century. Hence our responsibility to search what is the original apostles' teaching. The word appears to be synonymous with 'The Faith' and includes doctrine such as salvation, baptism, and also Christian conduct, and does not have the negative emphasis it carries today. The question was asked whether we have received anything of the apostles' teaching that the Thessalonians did not know then, but it was stated that nothing had been added [Comment 6].

It is our responsibility to hold fast and maintain what we have received with unity as our goal—a standing fast together, embracing individuals for the collective outworking [Comment 7]. It is a building up of God's precepts, not a tearing down, and both work and words are required to carry this out. There was also the thought of handing on God's comfort and hope and the love which God has given to us through prayer and thanksgiving and both words and works are required to do this. One of God's commands is to love one another, and if we give thanks for each other we will love each other. Finally, we have been commanded to pass on to others the traditions of God; we have no rights in ourselves when we give our lives to God. Only in this way can we be guarded from the evil one, and even from unreasonable and evil men who, it seemed, were in the church in Thessalonica.

Allen Ft. Stewart

COMMENTS

1. **(Liverpool).** Certainly, Scriptures such as Rom. 8: 17, 18; 1 John 3: 2, etc., speak of a future glory. But does not John 17: 22 have a *present* application?
2. **(Melbourne).** The 'sanctification of the Spirit' to which Paul here refers, is the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to our salvation. In contrast, the same phrase in 1 Pet. 1:2 has to do with our sanctification, as saints, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

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3. **(Nottingham).** Most contributors suggest that Paul was expressing confidence that the saints would be obedient to the commands of the Lord through him.
4. **(Nottingham).** This comment by Vine is, of course, interpretation, and while we fully concur that the 'traditions' given to the Thessalonian church by Paul were of God, such a statement as this by Vine does not constitute proof.
5. **(Vancouver).** Our friends are not, of course, suggesting that the traditions handed down by Paul included any 'opinions'. Also Paul did not simply 'include' that which he had received from God. The teaching he passed on to the saints was entirely divine truth, received through inspiration of the Spirit.
6. **(Vancouver).** The Faith was delivered 'once for all', but it was not delivered all at once. Other epistles followed those to the Thessalonians, and we cannot be fully certain that they did not contain some items of divinely revealed truth of which the Thessalonians, at the time of this epistle, might not have been fully aware.
7. **(Vancouver).** Unity of doctrine is, of course, the prime requirement. If we have this, unity of practice will follow as a matter of course. *R. L*
3. **(Melbourne).** Although the timing given may well be correct, it cannot be deduced from Scripture, and some caution must be exercised in making so positive a statement. *P. L. H.*

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)

EDITORIAL

7912

In concluding his second epistle Paul returns to deal with a problem referred to in his first epistle (1 Thes. 5: 4), and gives specific guidance for dealing with the disorderly person. The procedure of internal discipline that he outlines (2 Thes. 3: 6, 14, 15) is the subject of much comment and several questions on the part of our contributors. It is also dealt with in the special article on 'Discipline in Churches of God' which is concluded in this issue.

We take this opportunity of thanking all study groups and individuals who have contributed to the magazine during our study of the Thessalonian epistles. We would welcome further contributions and correspondence on points raised in the course of our study.

Our next series of studies takes us into the book of the Psalms and we look forward to benefiting from our studies together.

J. K. D. J.

DISCIPLINE IN CHURCHES OF GOD

[Continued from issue 7911]

6. *The dissolute evildoer* (1 Cor. 5). This chapter deals with the ultimate of discipline, relating to one of the gravest cases which may arise for disciplinary action. The person concerned was an open offender, an immoral man. Such sins may not be manifested as openly as in Corinth. If not, the charge has to be established by competent witnesses after careful investigation by wise men. Proven to be wicked, the offender is excommunicated from the church. A complete list of excommunicable sins is not detailed in 1 Cor. 5. Such sin as homosexuality would be included in this category. Verse eleven describes a wicked person as one who is covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. Anyone who engages in such practices may be disregarded as a brother. 'Fornicator' refers to

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all instances of **illicit sexual** relations. 'Covetous' persons **are** those who **are** motivated by **base** gain and can **be seen in such habits as** gambling, shady **business deals and black market selling** (Eph. 5: 5; 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10). 'Idolater' would cover those actively associated with any **false** system of worship, sorcery, **spiritualism**, etc. 'Reviler' **implies** defamation or vilification of **character** and **false** accusations, **i. e.** saints who **are** given habitually to this. 'Drunkard'—one guilty of **habitual** intemperance. 'Extortioner'—one who **practises** dishonesty, e. g. misappropriation of property or **funds, fraud** and profiteering (Jas. 5: 4). All **such have to be put away from church** fellowship and social relationships **with them severed**. The saints **must** not company with such persons nor **eat with them** (1 Cor. 5: 9, 11). The offender **is** therefore, by excommunication, **cast back** into the **sphere** of the world where the adversary **rules** and becomes exposed to **his** power (2 Tim. 2: 26). **Old Testament** instances **which have their spiritual** counterpart in 1 Cor. 5 **are** seen in the leprous stones of Lev. 14, where the **priest** commands that the people **put away** the infected stones and deposit **them** without the house in an unclean **place** (see vv. 36, 40). The **spear** of Phinehas **was used** to prevent the **spread** of the **plague** throughout the **camp** of Israel in Num. 25: 7. The rank of the man slain **did** not influence **him—he was** a prince among the Simeonites. Uzziah, centuries **later**, sinned grievously. **His** position **did** not **affect** the judgement of **Azariah** and the eighty **priests**. **He hastened**, a smitten, leprous monarch, from the **holy place** (2 Kings 26: 20).

Excommunication **is** not a weapon to **be used** for personal **spite** or, for **that matter**, any other unworthy motive, and always **has in view** restoration to God **first and** assembly fellowship secondly (2 Cor. 2: 7, 11).

7. The false teacher (1 Tim. 1: 20; 2 Tim. 2: 18; 1 Tim. 4: 1; 2 Pet. 2: 1; Rev. 2: 14-15). **Of all the subjects of discipline, that of evil teaching is the** most dangerous to a **church** because it **spreads with great** rapidity. Many **kept** from moral **lapses have succumbed** to this. **A** reliance upon God and faithfulness to **His** word **is** necessary to combat **false** doctrine. Without question, **the** disciplinary **measure in this**

case is excommunication. Those who err from the truth, undermining the foundations of the Faith, are to be dealt with severely. This relates to fundamental issues, not differences of interpretation. The leaven must be expurgated and social rapport is not permitted (2 John 9, 11). Scripture shows, in many cases of the past, that erroneous teaching often coincides with loose morals. Note that in the case of Hymenaeus in 2 Tim. 2 it would appear that his sphere of activity was outside the church, i. e. he had already been put away (1 Tim. 1:20) but continued his efforts to subvert the saints.

Principles of discipline. To maintain godly order and judicial equity, investigation must be made by elders into most of the cases specified above. Unsubstantiated testimony is to be rejected. The church is then briefed with essential details only and acts in 'putting away' when necessary.

Partiality and extremes are to be avoided (1 Tim. 5: 21). Natural relationships and friendships must not influence judgement. Undue severity will divide the saints while undue leniency increases the evil. The procedure of judgement must be that which will not dishonour the Lord or offend His people. At all times, balanced judgement must be exercised to uphold divine principles.

The support of all the saints in disciplinary decisions. Misplaced sympathy for a saint under discipline is subversive of godly order and government, encourages wrongdoing and hinders restoration of the offender. The sympathiser puts himself into the category of being unruly, as partaker of the wrong (1 Tim. 5: 22), and makes himself liable to discipline also.

The attitude and restoration of the wrongdoer. The absence of the person to be disciplined from assembly gatherings, does not absolve from the duty of dealing with the offence committed. Restoration to the Lord precedes restoration to assembly fellowship. Manifestation of repentance by departure from wrongdoing and, where necessary, restitution must be made. The word of God does not advocate deliberate foot-dragging in restoration (2 Cor. 5: 8, 11). The assembly in Corinth was slow in disciplining

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and equally slow in restoring. Wise discernment coupled with brotherly love, is needed. The restored saint should refrain from service of a public nature for a short time. There must not be the existence of bad feeling amongst the saints nor the treating of the disciplined person as one 'with a record'. Forgiveness is to be accompanied by forgetfulness of that which occasioned judgement in the first place. Let all things be done decently and in order!

R. B. Fullerton

CORRECTING THE DISORDERLY (2 Thes. 3: 6-18)

From Methil. The word here rendered 'withdraw' (v. 6) is in the original, a word which means 'to shrink from' or 'to avoid', and occurs here and 2 Cor. 8: 20, a similar word being used of Peter (Gal. 2: 12). It should not be confused with 'purging' out the wicked person as in 1 Cor. 5, a much stronger word having to do with excommunicating—'put away the wicked man from among yourselves' (1 Cor. 5: 13).

In the context here (2 Thes. 5: 6) the apostle still regards those spoken of as being inside the church and, continuing with their fellow saints, being subject to the correction or admonition (v. 15), which means warning given to them. Perhaps disciplining would be a not unsuitable word in this connection.

With all the authority of an apostle, Paul, linking himself with Silas and Timothy, 'commands' (a very strong word indeed), twice over in the compass of these few verses. An apostle is a 'sent one' from God—a servant in a very special sense, with a special commission from God. The word 'servant' is used in this sense of Moses (Heb. 3: 5). It is solemn indeed if attention is not given, and submission made to God's word through such men (Acts 2: 42; 2 Pet. 3: 2).

It was pointed out that there is a very helpful treatment of the verses before us in 'Spiritual Growth' by F. A. Banks (pp. 68-70). He emphasises 'internal discipline' and warns against a hasty action in putting outside, when what is called for is the internal discipline.

There are more ways than one in which disorderliness is seen, In this case it was seen by brethren making the

imminence of the Lord's coming the excuse for not engaging in lawful employment. Nature itself would teach us that work is wholesome and healthy for the mind and body. Note Paul's words (v. 10) and the words of God to the man in the garden (Gen. 3: 19).

We noted that this matter of daily work has been, in the present day, a great exercise of soul with many among God's people. It is right that it should be so, and run alongside our spiritual exercise and experience. Many of our young brethren and sisters must have had a very deep exercise about this.

1 Thes. 4: 9-12 and 1 Cor. 15: 58 were other portions of God's Word referred to and Mat. 18: 15-20 suggested as the principle with which Paul's words in 2 Thes. 3 would agree.

The question was asked: 'Would this be made a public announcement to the church?' We thought it would. It was certainly in an epistle addressed to the church. Was the withdrawing an assembly matter? [Comment 1]. It was also remarked that all discipline, correction and admonition has an end in view, and that end is the restoration of the saint.

Andrew McIlree, Sen.

From Nottingham. In the Scriptures names are used descriptively rather than as labels' in the way we use them. So the command 'in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (v. 6), is in accord with His nature. The instruction is to 'draw back', literally to 'shorten sail' from every brother (not every man) who is not keeping step with the received traditions. These traditions they knew and perceived: —

- (a) by life;
- (b) by word, cf. 1 Thes. 4: 11 'as we charged you';
- (c) written.

Paul had chosen not to exercise his claimed right as an apostle and labourer (see 1 Cor. 9: 4), in order that he might be an ensample, the perfect thing to be copied. The command was clear, 'if any will not work neither let him eat'. The verb *thelo* is very important. It means to 'exercise the will by an unimpassioned operation' (Bagster's Analytical Greek Lexicon) and refers here to someone who has chosen not to work. It does not mean someone who is too ill to work or unable to work because of mind or mental disorder.

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Notice again the words: 'some that walk among you disorderly'. Such were commanded and exhorted to work, without causing disturbance, and to be self-supporting. The rest are told to be 'well doing', i. e. living diligently and uprightly (cf. Gal. 6: 9). This would lead to doing good to others (cf. Gal. 6: 10).

The problem mentioned in vv. 14, 15 is no longer one of idleness, as in v. 6, but of disobedience. The man in v. 6 may be ignorant (though he ought not to be) but the man in v. 14 is wilfully disobedient rejecting the apostles' teaching. He should be marked. The word *semeioo* repays study. It is in the middle voice and second person plural. The middle voice has the meaning 'to mark for oneself and the plural must mean 'you must mark him for yourselves': that is, marked out within the assembly under the guidance of the overseers. Certainly half of the church cannot be found having nothing to do with the person concerned, while the other half enjoy close fellowship with him or her! Those who guide in these matters would have been careful to ensure that there was sufficient proof of the person's guilt, and more than one witness, before such drastic action was taken. Notice, too, how we need to be living close to each other in order that there will be a visible difference between 'being together' and 'having nothing to do with a brother'.

In our studies there was a lively discussion about the word used in v. 6 translated 'walking disorderly' (RV) or 'living in idleness' (RSV). Some thought 'disorderly', the literal translation, was to be preferred because of the wider implications but others considered the context demonstrated the more limited application to idleness with the breadth being conveyed by the word 'living', instead of the more literal 'walking'.

David Rafferty

From Paisley. In concluding his epistle, Paul commands the brethren to withdraw from those in the church who were refusing to earn their daily bread. His correction takes two forms. The first is in instructing the orderly how to deal with the disorderly, and the second is in exhorting the disorderly to cast off their sloth. The wisdom of this order is that if the industrious withdrew from the idle, then the latter, having no means of support, would be obliged to

work **with their** own hands. As such, **they** would also **be** convicted of **their** idleness **and** thereby **put** to shame through want.

In giving commandment **and** exhortation, **Paul** was of course **able** to point to himself and **his** fellow workers **as example**, so to speak. Though **the** Lord's **servants** had the **right** to forbear working, yet they **had** laboured day **and** night **rather than be a** burden to **the** saints. They were therefore above reproach and **were** only asking others to **fulfil as** an obligation **what the** apostles **had** done as a voluntary sacrifice. **At the** same time, no one could **accuse the** Lord's servants of self-enrichment or say **that they had neglected** their spiritual duties towards **the church**. They **had not traded with** moneys nor spent **their evenings in careless** dalliance. With their own hands they **had** supported **themselves and, after a hard** day's work, **had been** zealous for **the welfare** of **the** saints whom they loved with **tender care**.

In v. 10 there is the suggestion **that Paul** is correcting an old habit **which was** active **even when he** was with **the** Thessalonians. Probably **the** commandment **when linked** with his **presence corrected** the error. **But now that he was** away, **the old tendency had crept back**. **If this were so, then the saints were faced with** having to obey **the** Holy Spirit as **the true** Author of **the** commandment now in **written** form. **Here was the real test** of love **and** discipleship. **But as we see, there are** always some who **will not obey the** Lord **when they are left with the** option. **This is, of course, the** tragedy of a thousand malpractices; for **there are** some who would **never** do in **the presence** of their Lord **what** they now do during His absence. These also **have** failed to obey **the** Holy Spirit by their **deliberate** defiance of **the clear** commands of holy Scripture.

There is however **the** comforting **fact that in the case of the** Thessalonians, **the** irregularity **had not resulted in the** need for expulsion. **The** strong discipline **called for was** with a view to admonition. **The** offenders **were not to be** cast out of **the church and treated as** Gentiles **and publicans** (Mat. 18: 17). Rather, they **were to be** admonished **within the church, with a view** to correcting a **fault** which could only **damage their** spiritual lives **if it became** habitual.

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Therefore, there is no suggestion of their being debarred from the Lord's table, though domestic fellowship had been curtailed.

In concluding his last words to the Thessalonians, the apostle writes the salutation with his own hand. By this no one could be in doubt of the authenticity of the communication. It was no forgery, like the letter which had troubled them with the tale of the Day of the Lord, now present (2: 2). Equally so, no one could be in doubt that what Paul had commanded in his epistle was the very command of God. But, as always, Paul's love for the Thessalonians shines through every token of apostolic authority, such that his final word is 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.'

T. Summerhill

From Vancouver. The question of whether or not this was a matter for individual perception and action was resolved by the stated feeling that many other Scriptures relate specifically to church discipline and therefore it was thought to be the first step that may ultimately lead to concerted action [Comment 2].

It was noted that *tradition* (that which is handed over) could be the practice established by the Apostles' Doctrine or simply those things established by local practice to maintain order within the local church [Comment 3]. The latter seems to be more widely accepted as it is supported by an examination of the actual word *disorderly* and the positive and negative thoughts were presented by comparing 1 Cor. 14: 13 (positive) with 2 Thes. 3: 7 (negative). The feeling of individual action is strengthened by Romans 16: 17.

Paul states that 'brethren' should *withdraw*. Here we find that the men are specifically noted but the impact of this should at very least, be supported by the actions of the sisters. The word *withdraw* has the meaning of drawing together with others thus suggesting that the one acting out of step would be, to some degree, in a measure of isolation. This isolation may be overcome by acting in love to put the erring one in mind of the appropriate course but may easily lead to the sad state when church discipline is needed.

It was also seen that some of the problems that were dealt with were the result of one who was a *busybody*. This suggests direct interference in the affairs of others to such a degree that they no longer do enough work to keep themselves.

The final thought that was made was in respect to the constant use of the term *brethren*. It was felt by some that this could, and perhaps should, include all in the church [Comment 4].

J. Jobbins.

From **Birkenhead**. The final part of this chapter deals with the correcting of the disorderly in the church with instruction from Paul as to how this was to be effected.

We found it important to restate the purpose of correction or discipline, i. e. it is with the object of restoration which, if not achieved, could lead to a hardening of heart of the individual and putting away (Tit. 3: 10). This being established, the particular disorder evident in the church at Thessalonica was discussed. Some of the saints, having decided that the return of the Lord was imminent, had ceased their daily employment and turned to others in the church to support them in their temporal needs.

Paul calls upon the authority of the Lord when he commands the saints to withdraw themselves from such people. V. 14 says 'note that man', a clear indication to us in our times that it would be appropriate for the name of the individual to be mentioned before the church, after consultation among elders and private admonition of the individual had proved fruitless. It would then fall to the saints in their individual dealings to avoid companionship with him in so far as his disorderly conduct may affect their lives. It should not extend to a total shunning of him by all. They are to hold themselves away without feeling superior to the disorderly [see Question 2].

The means by which the disorderly [i. e. the idle—Eds.] can retrieve the situation are stated: 'we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread'. The result of not working by choice would simply be that they should not eat.

Several points arise in applying the epistle to modern times.

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1. **Elders** today do not **have the** power to command **in the same** sense as Paul. **He received his** instructions directly from **the** Lord and **delivered these as** apostolic commands. **Elders** today **have a** responsibility to administer **such** commands.

2. **The** cessation of employment **was** voluntary. Many today **are precluded** from working through no **fault** of their own. **In** correction, **all** dealings **with** an individual **are to be as with a** brother and not an enemy.

3. Although a **particular** disorder is **dealt with here**, the principle can **be applied** to any who **are out of line with their** fellow saints and **the** teaching of **the Scriptures**. **Care must be exercised**, however, since an isolated 'slip' may not necessarily **be regarded as** walking disorderly.

R. C. Halpin, A. Hyland

From Derby. Orderliness **is** an **ideal** in most circumstances and **this is** particularly so in a church. **The** opposite **did** occur in Thessalonica and disorderly behaviour **is referred** to (**1 Thes. 5: 14, 2 Thes. 3: 6, 11**). **It is the** disorderly behaviour of individuals **which is** considered in both **chapters**.

A measure of disorder in **the** behaviour of an **individual** need not **be such as** to **exclude him** from **the** fellowship of **the church**, but it cannot **be just** ignored and **the** instruction from **Paul to the church** (**1 Thes. 5: 14**) **is** for admonition. **This is the** process of telling a brother **his fault** and so hoping to **lead him** to self-discipline **in the matter**. However, **the** disorderly behaviour of **2 Thes. 3: 6** **seems to be** of a more serious kind. **It seems to be** behaviour contrary to **the** teaching **which Paul and his** friends **had transmitted** by word of mouth. **This was a** good tradition in contrast **with the** traditions of **the Scribes and Pharisees**. To **deal with this** second Thessalonian disorder **there was** need for more than admonition. **There was to be the** withdrawal of fellowship.

The disorderliness of **2 Thes. 3** **seems to arise** out of laziness (**3: 10**); and consequent on **that laziness** comes improper **interest** by busybodies in **the** affairs of others (**3: 11**).

Paul could **be** very kind (**1 Cor. 13**) but **he** could also **be** very severe. **This** severity comes out in **3: 14** where **he** **claims his** own authority and instructs **the church** that it should **deal in severe** separation from those who would not

respond to admonition [Comment 5]. However, the withdrawal was not to be absolute or Paul would not have written 2 Thes. 3:15. *N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

From Edinburgh. At the outset attention was drawn to the fact that the commendations of 1 Thes. 1 showed an entirely different attitude of heart in some of the disciples. No longer was it 'wait for His Son' and 'serve... God', but rather 'let us spend our time in idleness' for 'if the Lord should come tomorrow what profit is work today to us'. This seems to sum up the root cause of the trouble. Paul speaks with authority: three times he uses the word command. This carries the thought of authority, the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. It follows that this was not a matter on which saints could act individually but overseers must be involved in 'pointing out' such a one to the saints that all might act in unity.

Day by day labour to earn a living was an important part of Christian testimony. This is stressed in several places in the New Testament. The disorderly ones (those walking out of step) were thus bringing reproach. Paul is straightforward and repeats previous commands—briefly, work or want. They were a burden on fellow-believers, perhaps on the whole church by their attitude and, in their idleness, were becoming troublesome as busybodies—meddlers in other men's matters. So the responsibility also falls upon overseers and saints in our day. If any such person is seen then 'note that man', not to drive him away but so that he may be convicted and caused to reconsider his ways.

Paul not only had the right to *speak* but he also set them an example. He laboured night and day at his trade so that he could not be accused of being a financial burden to the church and even as he wrote from Corinth he was also toiling at his loom as a tentmaker.

The man is not ostracised but is made to feel his isolation within the church. Internal discipline is in view, but if his being silenced, etc., did not produce the desired effect, further admonition could become necessary. From the Psalms we get the thought found in Luke's Gospel that the people of God were the 'quiet in the land'. Let us study to be such today in all ways showing an attitude of quiet-

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ness to the glory of our God and the furtherance of the testimony.
J. M. L., T. H.

From Leeds. Modern versions of the Scriptures infer that the main consideration in this final portion of 2 Thes. 3 is that of a warning against idleness and of keeping from those who are idle and of lapsing into idleness whilst waiting for the coming again of the Lord Jesus. We considered however that 'walking disorderly' (vv. 6, 11) was the more positive meaning rather than just being idle. 'Walk' is of course used in the Scriptures in the actual physical sense but not generally so in the Pauline epistles.

In the letters of Paul, walk is used in the figurative sense and involves the whole manner (behavioural pattern) of life in those who are believers or in those who are unregenerate [Comment 6]. Within the epistles, the way we behave, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, our walk, our manner of life, is variously described, in a positive or in a negative way.

POSITIVELY

1. In honesty (Rom. 13:13, 1 Thes. 4:12).
2. By faith (2 Cor. 5:7).
3. In the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).
4. For good works (Eph. 2:10).
5. Worthily (Eph. 4:1, Col. 1:10).
6. In love (Eph. 5:2).
7. By the same rule (Phil. 3:16).
8. In wisdom (Col. 4:5).
9. Doing the commandments of God (2 John 6).
10. Even as He walked (1 John 2:6).

NEGATIVELY

1. Not in strife and jealousy (Rom. 13:13).
2. Not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).
3. Not after the flesh (Rom. 8:4).
4. Not minding earthly things (Phil. 3:18-19).
5. Not in the vanity of the mind (Eph. 4:17).
6. Putting away all bitterness, wrath and anger (Eph. 4:31).
7. Not in craftiness (subtleness) (2 Cor. 4:2).
8. Not as unwise (Eph. 5:15).
9. Not according to the course of this world (Eph. 2:2).
10. Not after the manner of men (1 Cor. 3:3).

Paul commands, and not Paul only, but the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 6) that saints withdraw themselves from one who walks disorderly, for 'there are some which walk among you' (v. 11, AV).

Paul had the confidence (boldness) to remind the saints in Thessalonica of the manner of his life whilst he was with them.
H. R. Dodge

From Liverpool*Authority*

There is to be an authority exercised in a church of God. Without this there would be anarchy; everyone doing what he or she likes! But the basis of the authority must be the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord delegated to the apostles, who in turn appointed overseers. We must respect obey and submit to them (1 Thes. 5: 12, Heb. 13: 7). They have the responsibility to ensure that authority exercised is in accordance with the traditions and teachings received from the apostles. (For a study of delegated authority in practice see *Needed Truth (1905) Supplement* entitled 'A Record of Divine Deliverance').

Commands and Discipline

There are six commands in this passage: —

- (1) 'Keep away from any brother living in idleness' (v. 6, RSV). The R. V. word 'disorderly' gives a wrong impression. The word means 'to play truant break rank, or be out of step'. The command is literally to avoid or shrink from such a person.
- (2) 'If anyone will not work let him not eat!' (v. 10, RSV). Paul is not teaching us to allow unemployed brothers to starve to death, but rather the Christian principle that we should not refuse to work, preferring to sponge on others.
- (3) Idlers and busybodies instead must work in quietness and earn a living (vv. 11-12). The word busybody means 'to be working round about, instead of at one's own business, and signifies to take more pains than enough about a thing, to waste one's labour, to be meddling with or bustling about, other people's matters'—Vine. There is all the difference in the world between being a busybody and taking a genuine prayerful interest in the affairs of our brothers and sisters (see Phil. 2: 4).
- (4) 'Do not be weary in well-doing' (v. 13 RSV). This is a restraint on points 1 and 2. Although some are idlers and busybodies we should never cease in our Christian duty towards them (cf. Gal. 6: 9).
- (5) Note and have nothing to do with anyone who refuses to obey (v.14). Literally 'to mix up with,

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keep company'—Vine.

- (6) 'Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother' (v. 15 RSV). These commands relate to internal discipline. The purpose is to make the brother ashamed of his wrong position, to bring about repentance and avoid the action required in Tit. 3: 10. We *are* not to regard such a one as an enemy, so excommunication is not intended (Mat. 18: 17). We saw the importance of repentance in the unfortunate experience of David when he accepted Absalom back without genuine repentance being shown.

Authenticity

Paul obviously had some autograph that assured the readers that this was a genuine letter from him. This reminds us that we have not been reading a dry theological treatise, but a real letter from a great Christian brother to a real church.

David J. Webster

COMMENTS

1. (Methil). Yes. The disorderly person is named to the assembly in a public announcement made by the overseers, and the assembly is instructed to withdraw from him (see answer to question 2).
2. (**Vancouver**, B. C.). It is concerted action by the church that is envisaged in vv. 6, 14, 15. See answer to question 2.
3. (**Vancouver**, B. C.). The traditions referred to were not simply local practices, but the oral teaching given to them by Paul and his co-workers. Paul gave the same teaching in every church, and this produced uniformity of doctrine and practice (1 Cor. 4: 17). The Thessalonians 'became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea' (1 Thes. 2: 14). This view is taken in the paper from Derby (see editorial for issue No. 7911).
4. (**Vancouver**, B. C.). The word 'brethren' (*adelphos*) is used of 'believers without distinction of sex' (Vine). In certain instances the prefix *aner* (male) is used to indicate that men only are being addressed as in Acts 1: 16; 15: 7-13, and the translation is given as 'men, brethren' (AV.).

5. **(Derby)**. Vv. 6, 12 show that the authority of the Lord Jesus is behind these commands as well as Paul's delegated authority as an apostle.
6. **(Leeds)**. It is, of course, also used in this figurative sense in the Old Testament (see Gen. 5: 24; 6: 9; Ex. 16: 4, etc.).
J. K. D. J.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. From Edinburgh

An interesting observation was made which could, perhaps, be looked at in a wider sense. In our day and time should evangelists go forth on a similar basis? Would their impact on the people of the area where they laboured, and also on the local church, be greater if they were known as men labouring by day and teaching by night, thus being in fact part of the local life for a time? Consider what Paul accomplished by this manner of life.

Paul had, of course, the right to be supported by the churches as he plainly asserts in Cor. 9: 7-15 and 2 Thes. 3: 9, but in Corinth and Thessalonica he voluntarily refrained from exercising that right. He did, however, take from other churches (2 Cor. 11: 8). His main purpose in working to meet his own needs and the needs of those who were with him was to avoid being burdensome to anyone (2 Cor. 11: 8; 2 Thes. 3: 8, 9). In so doing he provided an ensample for imitation to which he could draw attention to give force to his exhortation and teaching. His early association with Aquila and Priscilla was apparently on the basis of a common trade, but there is little or no evidence to suggest that he worked to make effective contact with persons as some have done. Account should also be taken of changing social conditions.
J. K. D. J.

2. From Liverpool and others

How do we practically maintain fellowship with a brother, break bread with him, pray with him, and yet ignore him?

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The following extract from *Needed Truth* Volume 56, 1949, gives a helpful outline: —

'Among other duties falling to overseers is that of admonishing the disorderly (1 Thes. 5: 14). If the brother takes heed to the admonition and mends his ways, well and good. Should he persist in his evil course, then further steps must be taken. He is to be named to the assembly by the overseers as an unruly man, and the saints are to be instructed to withdraw themselves from him (2 Thes. 3: 6). This is assembly action, and is not to be taken independently by individuals. The mentioning of the name to the assembly is essential so that all may act together. This is internal discipline for the man is still inside. He is not to be treated as an enemy, but to be admonished as a brother. Any conversation with him would be about his sin with the desire to reach his conscience. There must be no fraternising or sympathising with him, for that would encourage him to continue in his wrong course. But he should not be treated discourteously; for instance none should refuse to shake hands with him (see vv. 14, 15).

This discipline is designed to cause him to feel his position and to reach his conscience, bringing about repentance. Should he, however, remain obdurate, then Tit. 3: 10 would teach that he must be put away from the assembly after the first and second admonition. He is heretical; that is, a self-chooser, a self-willed man determined to have his own way. For such there is no room in God's house. '

Helpful comments are also to be found in the papers from Birkenhead and Nottingham on the points raised in the question. Also, in another context we have an example of withdrawing from social intercourse given in Gal. 2: 12. J. K. D. J.