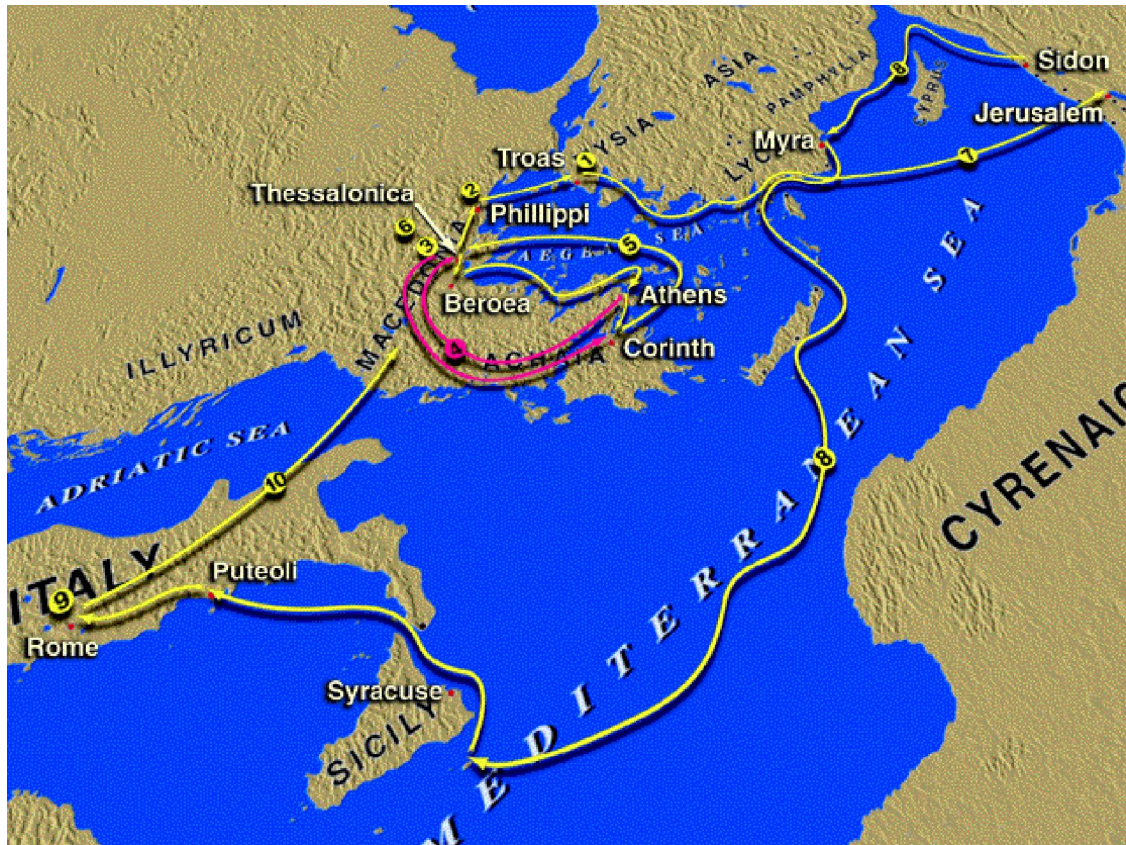


## Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians



Events Associated With the Writing of Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians, Written From Corinth During Paul's Second Missionary Tour, c. A.D. 51

### *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the* **THESSALONIANS** *INTRODUCTION*

1

**1. Title.** In the earliest Greek manuscript the title of this epistle is simply, *Pros Thessalonikeis A* ("A To [the] Thessalonians I"). The considerably lengthened title in the KJV, "The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians," is the result of later elaboration.

**2. Authorship.** The epistle purports to be from Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy (ch. 1:1). However, it is basically the work of Paul (see chs. 3:1, 2, 6, 7; 5:27). It is included among Paul's letters in the earliest list of NT books, the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170). The early church writers, Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130–c. 202), Clement of Alexandria (died c. 220), and Tertullian (c. A.D. 160–c. 240), considered Paul to be its

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<sup>1</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Th 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

author. The personality and style of the apostle Paul pervade the epistles. His love for his converts and the burden he bears for their spiritual welfare are manifest throughout. The emphasis upon the great spiritual qualities of faith, love, and hope is distinctly Pauline (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13). Scholars today are in general agreement that Paul was the author of the epistle. Concerning the date of writing see Vol. VI, pp. 102, 103.

**3. Historical Setting.** Thessalonica was an important city, and the capital of the second division of Macedonia (see on Acts 17:1). It was situated at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, now known as the Gulf of Salonika. The Egnatian Road, which connected the East with Rome, passed through it. The favorable location and excellent harbor of Thessalonica combined to make it of great commercial importance. Possibly for this reason it possessed a large Jewish settlement and a synagogue (Acts 17:1). The city, now called Salonika, is one of the most important commercial centers of northern Greece. In addition, it is of archeological interest, for the triumphal arch that crossed the former *Via Egnatia* still stands as a reminder of the glory and power of ancient Rome.

Paul's first contact with Thessalonica was on his Second Missionary Journey, immediately after his departure from Philippi (Acts 16:40; 17:1). Since it was his method of evangelism to preach in the important cities first, and thus to make them centers for the spread of the gospel to the surrounding towns and villages, he and his companions made their way from Philippi directly to Thessalonica, not stopping to preach in the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia (see on Acts 17:1). Knowing that he must reach the Jews at Thessalonica first, if at all, Paul went to the synagogue on three successive Sabbaths and presented the great truths of the gospel to his fellow countrymen. His recent disgraceful treatment at Philippi had not intimidated him, and in the power of the Holy Spirit he presented the Messianic prophecies of the OT, and showed their fulfillment in Jesus. Some of his Jewish hearers believed (Acts 17:4). Many more of the "devout Greeks" (see on Acts 17:4) accepted his message. Among the believers at Thessalonica there were also "of the chief women not a few" (Acts 17:4).

It seems probable that the missionaries continued their work for more than the three weeks here indicated, for Paul tells of having worked night and day to support himself while he preached the gospel to them (see 1 Thess. 2:9), and in his letter to the Philippians he refers to the gifts they sent while he was at Thessalonica (see on Phil. 4:16). His successful ministry soon aroused the fierce opposition of the Jews, which fomented strife and caused Paul to leave the city (Acts 17:5, 6). After the initial three Sabbaths spent in the synagogue, it seems that Paul continued his preaching in the house of Jason (Acts 17:7). He appears to have been particularly successful with the Greeks, for the church at Thessalonica seems to have been largely Gentile in composition (see on 1 Thess. 1:9; 4:5).

Mob violence, stirred up by the Jews, brought Paul's preaching to the attention of the Roman authorities, but the charge that the apostle was guilty of treason in presenting the doctrine of Christ's coming kingdom was not accepted by the magistrates. That Paul and his companions were not officially expelled from Thessalonica and debarred from returning, is evident from the fact that the apostle found it necessary to explain to the church why he had not returned (ch. 2:17, 18), and from the fact that Timothy did return (ch. 3:2). However, the Christians there seem to have thought it best for Paul and his associates to leave the city temporarily. The evangelists made their way to Berea, a city some distance to the southwest. Here again Paul preached in the synagogue, and among

these Scripture-loving Jews he had much greater success. The news of his fresh activity soon reached the Jews of Thessalonica and spurred them to immediate action. They hastened to Berea and again stirred up the rabble against the missionaries (Acts 17:10–13). Paul was sent away to Athens by friends, but his companions remained in Macedonia. The apostle was most anxious for their help in Athens, and awaited them there (Acts 17:16). Timothy seems later to have joined him at Athens, and was then sent back by Paul to Thessalonica to encourage the new believers and bring back word of their condition (see 1 Thess. 3:1, 2, 6). It appears that Silas remained in Macedonia, for when Timothy returned to Greece, Silas accompanied him, and the both joined Paul at Corinth, a short stay in Athens (Acts 18:1, 5).

Upon receiving Timothy's report the apostle wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians. Manuscripts going back to the 5th century state at the end of this epistle that it was written from Athens. This supposition is probably drawn from ch. 3:1, 2. However, from ch. 3:6 it seems clear that 1 Thessalonians was not written until after Timothy's return from Macedonia, and according to Acts 18:1, 5, Paul was then at Corinth. Consequently it seems best to conclude that 1 Thessalonians was written there. This epistle is generally considered to be the first of Paul's letters that has been preserved (see Vol. VI, p. 102), and, with the possible exception of the epistle of James, it was probably the first book of the New Testament to be written. For a discussion of the date of 1 Thessalonians see Vol. VI, p. 103.

**4. Theme.** A radiant glow of ardent love permeates this epistle (cf. chs. 1:2–4; 2:7, 8; 3:6, 7). The apostle is most thankful for Timothy's report of the faithfulness of the Thessalonians and of their tender regard for him. He hastens to commend them for their noble qualities of faith, love, and hope. He is most anxious to visit them, for he had not had sufficient time while he was with them to instruct them fully in the truths of the gospel.

Certain problems, too, must have been reported by Timothy. Some at Thessalonica were grieving over loved ones who had died since receiving the gospel message, fearing that these loved ones could have no part in the glorious resurrection at the Lord's return. Some were fanatical in regard to the second advent, holding that they should not work, but await the Lord's coming in idle expectancy. Some were slipping back into the world, and were in danger of being lost in immorality. Others were inclined to independence, not willing to recognize the duly appointed leaders of the church. The "unruly," the "feeble-minded," and the "weak" all needed help (ch. 5:14). Had it been possible, the apostle would have hastened to give personal instruction to these beloved believers. More than once he tried to return, but Satan hindered him (ch. 2:18), and on this account he had to content himself by writing the church a letter.

The theme of the resultant epistle is practical godliness in view of Christ's return. The glorious advent of the Lord is the most prominent doctrine presented (chs. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:23). Other doctrines mentioned are the death and resurrection of Christ (ch. 4:14), the resurrection of the righteous dead (vs. 13–16), future rewards and punishments (chs. 4:17; 5:3), the personal existence and active working of Satan (ch. 2:18), the doctrine of redemption, including election and sanctification (chs. 1:4; 4:3–7).

**5. Outline.**

- I. Salutation, 1:1.
- II. Review of Ministry to, and Relations With, the Thessalonians, 1:2 to 3:13.

- A. Thankfulness for the members' faithful witness, 1:2–10.
  - 1. Gratitude for their record, 1:2–4.
  - 2. Review of their fruitful acceptance of the gospel, 1:5–10.
- B. Paul's review of his ministry in Thessalonica, 2:1–16.
- C. Paul's endeavors to revisit his converts, 2:17–20.
- D. Timothy sent in Paul's stead, 3:1–13.
  - 1. Purpose of Timothy's visit, 3:1–5.
  - 2. Timothy's report and its effect on Paul, 3:6–13.
    - a. The report, 3:6.
    - b. Paul's joy over the report, 3:7–9.
    - c. Paul's continued desire to visit the church, 3:10, 11.
    - d. Paul's prayer for his converts, 3:12, 13.
- III. Instructions and Exhortations, 4:1 to 5:28.
  - A. Introduction, 4:1, 2.
  - B. True bodily sanctification, 4:3–8.
  - C. The Thessalonians' brotherly love, 4:9–10a.
  - D. Admonitions to quiet industry, 4:10b–12.
  - E. The Christian dead and the resurrection, 4:13–18.
    - 1. The glorious hope of the resurrection, 4:13, 14.
    - 2. The circumstances of the resurrection, 4:15, 16.
    - 3. The righteous, living and resurrected, translated, 4:17.
    - 4. Believers to comfort one another with these assurances, 4:18.
  - F. The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming, 5:1–11.
    - 1. The sudden coming of the day of the Lord, 5:1–3.
    - 2. Believers to be ever prepared, 5:4–11.
  - G. Closing admonitions, 5:12–22.
    - 1. Respect the Lord's servants, 5:12, 13.
    - 2. Preserve peace in the church, 5:14, 15.
    - 3. Encouragement to rejoice, pray, and give thanks, 5:16–18.
    - 4. Desire spiritual gifts, 5:19–22.
  - H. Closing prayers and requests, 5:23–28.
    - 1. Prayer for complete sanctification, 5:23, 24.
    - 2. Requests and greeting, 5:25–27.
    - 3. Benediction, 5:28.

## CHAPTER 1

- 1 *The Thessalonians are given to understand both how mindful of them Saint Paul was at all times in thanksgiving, and prayer: 5 and also how well he was persuaded of the truth and sincerity of their faith, and conversion to God.*

**1. Paul.** The epistle opens in the customary way with formal greetings (see on Rom 1:1). The apostle has no need to give a long introduction, since he is well known to his readers and it is probable that only a short time has elapsed since he was with them (see p. 224).

Although Paul associates Silas and Timothy with him, it is evident that Paul himself is the sole author of the epistle (chs. 2:18; 3:5; 4:13; 5:1, 23, 27). But he keeps Silas and Timothy in mind as he writes, and frequently uses the plural pronoun “we” throughout

the five chapters of the epistle (chs. 1:2; 2:2; 3:1; 4:1; 5:12). His two companions undoubtedly endorsed all the admonition the apostle wrote under their names.

**Silvanus.** Known in Acts by the shorter name Silas (see on Acts 15:22, 34, 40). He had been with Paul in Philippi (Acts 15:40, 41; 16:12, 19), had accompanied him to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1, 4), had been sent away with him to Berea (Acts 17:10), and had remained in that town after Paul departed for Athens (Acts 17:14). He later rejoined the apostle at Corinth (see on Acts 18:5; cf. 2 Cor. 1:19). He is named before Timothy perhaps as being the elder, and as having been associated with Paul for a longer time.

**Timotheus.** A transliteration of the Gr. *Timotheos*, frequently rendered “Timothy.” See on Acts 16:1. He was from the district of Derbe and Lystra and had accompanied Paul on the Second Missionary Journey (Acts 16:1–3), and had shared in Paul’s ministry at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (see on Acts 17:14). The young evangelist had been sent to the Thessalonian church, and his report of its condition formed the immediate background against which Paul wrote his epistle (1 Thess. 3:1, 6).

**Church.** Gr. *ekklēsia* (see on Matt. 18:17). Paul addresses his letter to the whole body of believers in Thessalonica, such as he elsewhere calls “saints” (Rom. 1:7; etc.). He makes no mention of the chief officers of the church as he does in his epistle to the Philippians (ch. 1:1).

**Thessalonians.** Paul’s usual custom (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2) is to name the city in which a particular church is meeting; but here and in 2 Thess. 1:1 he refers to the “Thessalonians.” It is difficult to see a meaningful distinction in the differing forms of address, though it has been suggested that Paul thereby intends to include not only those who reside in the city but also those who were drawn from a wider area. There is no way of knowing the size of the Thessalonian church, though Acts 17:4 suggests a large initial membership.

**In God.** This phrase should be closely connected with “the church,” as is shown by the supplied words “which is” in the KJV. The church exists only as it is grounded “in God,” only as all of its members are united in Him (cf. on Rom. 1:7; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1).

**Father.** Compare on Rom. 1:7 and the greetings in other of Paul’s epistle for the significance of the fatherhood of God in this setting.

**Lord Jesus Christ.** The word “in” needs to be supplied in front of this title, as in the KJV to indicate that the church exists not only by virtue of its union with God but also because of its union with the Son (see on Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2). The triple title reflects Paul’s Christology, his understanding of the nature of Christ. He knows his Master to be the Lord and the human-divine Saviour (see on Phil. 2:5).

**Grace.** Gr. *charis* (see on Rom. 1:7).

**Peace.** See on Rom. 1:7.

**From God.** Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the remainder of this verse, beginning with the words “from God,” which may have been introduced from 2 Thess. 1:2 by a later editor.

**We give thanks.** Whether Paul is using the editorial “we” and speaking only for himself, or whether he is also writing on behalf of Silas and Timothy, his meaning is clear. As he and his companions study Timothy’s report of conditions in Thessalonica, they are filled with thankfulness and make their gratitude known unto God (cf. on Rom. 1:8).

**To God.** The apostle recognizes the One to whom all thanks are due. The excellences of the Thessalonians resulted from the power of God that worked through them.

**Always for you all.** Paul's tact shines brightly through the pages of his epistles. He does not wish any to feel slighted; he endeavors to include all in his greetings, and carefully makes lists of names when he mentions individuals by name (see on Phil. 1:4; cf. Rom. 16:1–15; Col. 4:7–17).

**In our prayers.** Or, “in the time of our prayers.” The phrase defines the word “always.” Paul and his companions doubtless had stated times of prayer when they interceded for the Christians of Thessalonica, making individual mention of them, and discussing their welfare.

**3. Remembering without ceasing.** Paul remembers what he himself had seen in Thessalonica, and what Timothy has since reported to him (ch. 3:6). The continual remembrance of the members' Christian character and its fruits was the reason why mention of them in prayer always took the form of thanksgiving to God.

**Your work of faith.** Paul concentrates on three outstanding qualities possessed by the Thessalonians—faith, love, and hope. In Col. 1:4, 5; 1 Thess. 5:8, and especially in his celebrated treatise on love (1 Cor. 13), he sets forth these three virtues as the fundamental elements in Christian character. Here he is concerned with the outward evidences of these virtues, for he speaks of what he observed when with them, and what he now remembers. “Work of faith” refers to the activities, spiritual or temporal, that were inspired by faith. Such a phrase reveals the practical nature of true faith that demonstrates its existence by Christian works.

**Labour.** Gr. *kopos*, “trouble,” “labor,” denoting intense exertion united with toil and trouble. Here, “labour of love” means the labor to which love prompts, and which voluntarily assumes and endures trouble and pain for the salvation of others. Paul rejoices that when the church is exposed to manifold vexations its members come to one another's help with diligent effort and sacrifice. This loving solicitude for one another's welfare, no less than their ardent faith, was convincing proof that their conversion was genuine (AA 262).

**Patience.** Gr. *hupomonē*, “patience,” “perseverance” (see on Rom. 2:7).

**Hope.** Paul is here speaking of patient endurance sustained by hope, derived from the Christian faith. This hope is not a vague optimism, but is “hope in our Lord Jesus Christ,” that is, hope that is centered in Christ, the hope of salvation in Him (ch. 5:8, 9); the hope of His speedy coming to their deliverance (1 Thess. 4:13–18; cf. Titus 2:13). Their patience and steadfastness proceed from hope, because in view of future glory they can the more cheerfully bear their suffering. Hope is the anchor of their soul (Heb. 6:19).

**In the sight of.** Rather, “before,” “in the presence of.” These new believers, suffering as they were under persecution, lived in the very presence of God. Their faith, love, and hope were genuine not only in the sight of men but also in the sight of God, the Searcher of hearts. Paul may also have passed from the thought of salvation through Christ to that of the day of judgment, when the Thessalonians will appear before their Maker, with no cause for craven fear.

**God and our Father.** Or, “God even our Father,” or “our God and Father.”

**4. Knowing.** A reference to a fact that is generally conceded (cf. on Rom. 3:19).

**Brethren.** This term, used 19 times in its singular or plural form in this epistle, indicates Paul's intimate affection for the Christians in Thessalonica.

**Election.** Gr. *eklogē*, “the process of choice” (see on Rom. 9:11). God had chosen the Thessalonian believers to salvation through “sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13). That the apostle did not here speak of any absolute election of the Thessalonian church as a whole is borne out by his later expression of fear that some of them might fall under temptation and his labor be in vain (1 Thess. 3:5). For a fuller discussion of election and predestination see on John 3:17–19; Rom. 8:29; 9:11; 11:5; Eph. 1:4–14; 3:11. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there any warrant for the doctrine that God has predestined some individuals to eternal life, with its revolting corollary that He has predestined the rest of mankind to eternal destruction. The true Bible doctrine of election involves both the will of God and the will of man.

**Of God.** As shown by the Greek, this phrase should qualify the word “beloved” instead of being attached to “your elections,” so that the expression reads, “brethren beloved of God.” This description conveys both the love of the apostle and the love of God for the Thessalonian believers (cf. Rom. 1:7; 2 Thess. 2:13).

**5. Gospel.** Gr. *euaggelion* (see on Mark 1:1). Paul is speaking of the gospel with which he and his companions had been entrusted (1 Thess. 2:4) and which they faithfully proclaimed. In the synagogue at Thessalonica Paul had opened the OT Scriptures and preached of a Messiah who would suffer and die for the sins of mankind and be raised again from the dead, and that Jesus was therefore the Christ (Acts 17:2, 3; AA 225–227). The power of this gospel was demonstrated by the many lives that were changed through its acceptance (Acts 17:4).

**Word only.** The apostle employed words to convey the gospel, but the manifestation of that gospel did not end with speech. The words were accompanied by manifestations of spiritual power.

**But also.** This expression, taken with the immediately preceding “only,” emphasizes the contrast between words and Spirit-inspired deeds.

**Power.** Gr. *dunamis* (see on Luke 1:35). See on 1 Cor. 2:4; 4:20, where “word” and “power” are contrasted. The period of Paul’s Thessalonian ministry (Acts 17:1–4), though brief, allows room for many miracles and demonstrations of the gospel’s might, although few details are given in the sacred record.

**Holy Ghost.** That is, Holy Spirit (see on Matt. 1:18). The phrase “in the Holy Ghost” implies that the gospel came to the Thessalonians through the activity of the Spirit, in an atmosphere conditioned by the Spirit, so that it might be truly said that the Holy Spirit’s influence permeated the whole operation. Thus Paul disclaimed personal credit for the success of the gospel message.

**Assurance.** That is, confidence, or conviction. The gospel was confidently and convincingly preached because Paul and his companions knew that they were empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**Ye know.** Paul appeals to the Thessalonians’ personal knowledge of the missionaries’ behavior among them. A man must have a clear conscience before making such an appeal to his own conduct, but Paul never feared to quote his own behavior among his converts. His several references to the life he lived in Thessalonica (ch. 2:1, 2, 5, 9–11) may imply that some were misrepresenting his behavior and endeavoring to weaken his influence. He met such misrepresentations by claiming that not only the sermons but the lives of the

evangelists preached the gospel, and that this was done for the sake of the Thessalonians themselves.

**6. Followers.** Gr. *mimētai*, literally, “imitators” (cf. on 1 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 5:1). Paul gives this fact as a further reason for knowing that God had chosen them to salvation. As Paul had preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, so had the Thessalonians received the word with joy of the Holy Spirit. As a result, they were eager to do God’s will.

**Of the Lord.** Paul had not left the Thessalonians with a human example only. He had helped them also to become imitators of their Lord. Such was the apostle’s consistent policy (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1); consequently, when his personal presence was withdrawn from among his converts, they could keep their eyes fixed on Christ, the perfect example.

**Received.** Gr. *dechomai*, which implies willing reception, receiving with welcome.

**Affliction.** Gr. *thlipsis* (see on Rom. 5:3). The members at Thessalonica became Christians amid strong opposition (Acts 17:5–9; 1 Thess. 2:14). In the primitive church conversion generally called for personal courage and vigorous self-denial, for the new member was often cruelly persecuted (see on Matt. 24:21). Such persecution was in reality a blessing, for it tended to refine and purify the church and to bring its members into closer fellowship with Christ (see AA 261). Severe as the affliction was, it did not discourage the converts. On the contrary, their suffering was accompanied by joy that came from the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22).

**7. Ensamples.** Gr. *tupoi*, singular *tupos*, “type,” “example” (see on Rom. 5:14). These believers had patterned their lives after the apostles and the Lord, and now they in turn had become patterns, or examples, for other Christians to follow. They were examples with reference to the firmness with which they adhered to Christianity, and the zeal with which they spread its teachings. That the Thessalonians became examples to others so soon after their own conversion, speaks highly of the quality of their Christian witness.

**Macedonia and Achaia.** The two provinces into which all Greece was divided when it was brought under the Roman yoke in 146 B.C. (see The Journeys of Paul). Paul’s testimony shows how widespread was the influence of the faithful Thessalonians among their fellow Christians.

**8. Sounded out.** Gr. *exēcheō*, “to sound forth,” “to resound,” “to reverberate.”

**Word of the Lord.** That is, the gospel, which the Thessalonians had so willingly received and were in turn passing on to others (AA 256).

**In every place.** Thessalonica was a great commercial city from which reports of these earnest Christians would be carried, not only to other parts of Greece, but also to distant lands. Since Paul was then living in Corinth, a busy seaport, he could readily receive reports of his converts’ activities.

**Faith to God-ward.** Most of the believers had previously been heathen (v. 9). Now they showed that they had a true faith in God and in His gospel message, both by their consistent Christian lives and by their missionary zeal. Their witness was so unequivocal that it was not necessary for Paul and his associates to add anything to it. Higher commendation could scarcely be given to the Thessalonians.

**9. They themselves.** That is, those who reported to the apostle. These people, of their own accord, told Paul of the great change that had been wrought in Thessalonica by his

ministry. Such testimony was even more valuable than any given by the Thessalonians themselves.

**Turned to God.** Compare the phrase “faith to God-ward” (v. 8). The Thessalonians had turned their back on idols and come face to face with God.

**Idols.** Paul had just recently come from Athens, where his spirit was greatly stirred because the city was “wholly given to idolatry” (see on Acts 17:16). He was therefore greatly impressed by the way in which the Thessalonians had abandoned their idols in favor of the true God.

**To serve.** Gr. *douleuō*, “to be a slave,” “to yield obedience” (cf. on Rom. 1:1). The form of the Greek verb conveys the continuous sense, “to keep on serving.”

**True.** Gr. *alēthinos*, “genuine,” “real.” The living and real God is contrasted with lifeless and false idols. Both Paul and his converts were conscious of the inestimable superiority of the vital Christian religion over all other religions.

**10. To wait.** Or, “to keep on waiting.”

**His Son.** The only mention in this epistle of Christ as God’s Son, in contrast with frequent references in Romans and Galatians (Rom. 1:3, 4; Gal. 1:16; etc.).

**From heaven.** Compare on Phil. 3:20. The life aim of Paul’s converts was two-fold—to serve God and to wait for Christ’s return. In this epistle the apostle constantly emphasizes the great doctrine of the second advent of our Lord (1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:23). What a practical influence this “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) had upon the lives of the Thessalonian believers! They lived in expectancy of their Lord’s return. It was not idle waiting, however, for they combined service with expectation. So ardent were they in their hope of a speedy deliverance from their persecutors by their Lord’s glorious intervention that they feared lest death deprive any of them of the great joy of personally meeting Him (cf. AA 258).

**Whom he raised.** In his epistle to the Romans the apostle sets forth the resurrection of Jesus as proof of Christ’s sonship (see on Rom. 1:4). Here, in what is probably the first of his epistles, Paul does not hesitate to follow the same reasoning, recognizing Christ as God’s resurrected Son.

**Delivered.** Rather, “is delivering.” While the vital act of deliverance was performed on Calvary, the process of deliverance is continuous, and will be completed only at Christ’s second coming, when those who have accepted the Saviour’s ministrations will be forever saved from the clutches of sin (cf. on Matt. 1:21; Rom. 11:26).

**The wrath to come.** Literally, “the wrath which is coming.” The use of the article before “wrath” points to a particular manifestation of divine displeasure (see on Matt. 3:7; Rom. 1:18).

For a discussion of the significance of “wrath” (*orgē*) see on Rom. 2:8; cf. on Rom. 1:18. The gospel brings deliverance from the wrath to come (Rom. 5:9). Those who believe its message and accept its provisions are granted eternal life, and the wrath of God no longer remains on them (see on John 3:36; 5:24; 1 John 3:14).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2, 3 AA 256

5 MM 307

6–10 AA 256

7, 8 ML 122; MM 307

## CHAPTER 2

1 *In what manner the gospel was brought and preached to the Thessalonians, and in what sort also they received it.* 18 *A reason is rendered both why Saint Paul was so long absent from them, and also why he was so desirous to see them.*

**1. For yourselves.** Paul is here enlarging on the reasoning begun in ch. 1:5. Others had voluntarily testified to the phenomenal success of the work of Paul and his associates in Thessalonica (see on ch. 1:9), but the apostle now appeals at length to what the Thessalonians themselves recollected. Every minister of the gospel ought so to conduct himself that when slanderously attacked he is able to make a similar appeal to his people.

**Entrance.** That is, the evangelizing visit of Paul and his company (cf. Acts 17:1–4; 1 Thess. 1:9). The converts at Thessalonica knew better than any others what this missionary visit accomplished in their own lives.

**In vain.** Literally, “empty” (see on 1 Cor. 15:10). The Thessalonian believers were themselves proof of the truth of Paul’s claim.

**2. Had suffered before.** In all probability it was only a few days after Paul and Silas had been scourged at Philippi that they began their work in Thessalonica (see on Acts 17:1).

**Shamefully entreated.** Many of the believers, no doubt, had seen with their own eyes the stripes inflicted by the Roman lash (cf. Gal. 6:17). The apostle keenly felt the injustice of the outrageous proceedings of publicly scourging Roman citizens without a trial (see on Acts 16:37).

**We were bold.** Gr. *parrēsiazomai*, “to speak plainly,” “to have courage,” “to venture.” After such severe punishment as the evangelists had endured, impostors (see on v. 3) would not have had the courage immediately to continue their work in a nearby place.

**In our God.** Paul recognizes that their boldness did not stem from natural courage. Its source was in God. The apostles were preaching “the gospel of God,” and God Himself had provided the necessary courage for its fearless proclamation.

**Gospel of God.** That is, the gospel that came from God.

**With much contention.** Literally, “in much conflict” (see on Phil. 1:30), that is, in the midst of much opposition. There may also be a reference to inward struggle, as in Col. 2:1.

**3. Exhortation.** Gr. *paraklēsis*, “comfort,” “consolation” (see on Rom. 12:8; 15:4; Phil. 2:1). The reference here is to the evangelists’ preaching. The gospel presented by the apostle in the most appealing manner brought consolation to the Gentiles who had lived in hopeless heathenism, and spoke to their hearts no less than to their minds.

**Not of deceit.** Or, “not out of error.” Here Paul makes a sweeping denial of the slanderous charges put forth by his enemies that this movement was the work of deluded men, actuated by sinister motives and pursued by underhand methods. He and his companions were not misguided fanatics. Their preaching did not proceed from delusions or erroneous doctrines. On the contrary, it was based upon the unerring Word of God. They were guided in their interpretation of that Word by the Spirit of truth.

**Uncleanness.** Gr. *akatharsia*, “impurity,” commonly used in reference to unchastity (see on Rom. 1:24). It is thought by many interpreters, however, that the word is used

here in its figurative sense of impurity of mind, foulness of motives, that is, covetousness. Paul and his associates were not actuated by covetousness or greed.

**Guile.** Gr. *dolos* (see on Rom. 1:29). Here the manner of working is considered. The message was not given in a deceitful way, but in complete sincerity. The “Israelite indeed” has no guile in his mouth (see John 1:47; Rev. 14:5).

**4. Allowed.** Gr. *dokimazō* (see on Rom. 2:18; Phil. 1:10), here used in the sense of being judged worthy or approved. At the end of this verse the same word (*dokimazō*) is used in another form and is rendered, “trieth.”

**Put in trust.** The apostles’ hearts had been judged, or tried, by God, and they were approved, or deemed fit, to be entrusted with the responsibility of presenting the gospel message. Paul considered this stewardship a sacred trust, a “treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). He preached with the consciousness that he was dealing with the message of God to men, a message that he was especially chosen of God to bear (Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 3:5, 6).

**Not as pleasing men.** The apostle was so intent on pleasing God that he discharged his trust with little regard for men’s opinions about him (see 1 Cor. 4:3, 4; Gal. 1:10). It is not that he failed to consider men’s feelings or prejudices, for he was careful not to offend needlessly (see 1 Cor. 9:19–23). But his objective was not to please men, and thus win them by guile, but rather to have the approbation of God, and to draw men to their Maker.

**Trieth our hearts.** See comment above on “allowed,” and cf. on Rom. 8:27.

**5. Flattering words.** Literally, “speech of flattery.” To prove that their aim had not been to please men, Paul reminds their converts that they know that the apostles, in preaching, had never descended to flattery in order to make the gospel acceptable. A radical work of reform was needed in the lives of the Thessalonians. To flatter would have encouraged their self-complacency and would have blinded them to their need. These apostles of Christ did not preach smooth things, as did false prophets (see Isa. 30:10; Eze. 13:10).

**Cloke.** Gr. *prophasis*, “pretext” (see on Phil. 1:18). The apostles did not use their office for enriching themselves. On the contrary, they were most careful to give no occasion for such a charge. Paul could testify that he had “coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts 20:33; cf. 2 Cor. 12:14).

**God is witness.** A solemn, reverent oath (cf. on Phil. 1:8). Paul could appeal to the Thessalonians’ personal recollection for confirmation of the fact that he and his associates had not flattered them, but as to their motives he could appeal only to God. Thus he forcefully denies all charges that he and his associates had labored for personal gain.

**6. Sought we glory.** Paul is not denying that he had ever received glory or honor from men, but only that he had never consciously sought it. His life consistently witnessed to the truthfulness of his statement (cf. Acts 20:19; 2 Cor. 4:5), and neither Gentile nor Christian could justly accuse him of self-seeking.

**Burdensome.** Literally, “in weight,” that is, in a position to wield authority. As messengers and envoys of the heavenly King, the missionaries were worthy of respect and support, and might have made weighty demands upon their converts.

**Apostles.** This use of the title shows that Paul also regarded Silas and Timothy as members of the Christian apostolate (cf. on Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 4:9).

**7. Gentle.** Gr. *ēpioi*, “mild,” “kind,” “loving.” Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between the readings *ēpioi* and *nēpioi*, “infants,” “babes” (see on Matt. 11:25). “Gentle” fits the context well.

**Nurse.** The apostle compared himself, in his loving disinterestedness, to a nursing mother, who may or may not be the real mother, who is wholly bent on bestowing love on her child. Instead of making demands on the Thessalonians, acting as “lords over God’s heritage” (1 Peter 5:3), the evangelists were most solicitous of their converts’ welfare.

**8. Affectionately desirous.** Gr. *homeiromai*, “to yearn after,” “to long for,” “to desire.” The figure of the nursing mother is continued. Gentleness has been stressed (v. 7); here love is emphasized. As the mother-nurse is intent on imparting affection, even to the giving of life for her infant, so the missionaries were willing to give their all. Here the apostle lays bare his heart, and reveals his intense devotion to these early converts in Macedonia.

**We were willing.** Rather, “we were well pleased.”

**To have imparted.** Gr. *metadidōmi*, “to impart,” in the sense of sharing anything with another.

**Gospel of God.** See on v. 2.

**Souls.** Gr. *psuchai* (see on Matt. 10:28), here used in the sense of “lives.” Paul’s converts could not dispute his claim: they had witnessed the boldness of the missionaries and knew that they had not hesitated to imperil life itself.

**Were dear.** Rather, “had become beloved.” As Paul and his companions had worked for these new believers, and had watched their determined stand for Christ in the face of strong opposition; as they had striven earnestly in prayer for them, first that they might accept the message, and then that they might be steadfast, the young Christians had become increasingly dear to them.

**9. Ye remember.** An appeal to the personal knowledge of the Thessalonians of his labors among them (cf. vs. 1, 2).

**Labour.** Gr. *kopos* (see on ch. 1:3).

**Travail.** Gr. *mochthos*, “hard and difficult labor,” “hardship,” “distress.” The two words *kopos* and *mochthos* are also used together in 2 Cor. 11:27; 2 Thess. 3:8. In 2 Cor. 11:27 (RSV) the combination is rendered “toil and hardship.”

**Labouring.** Gr. *ergazomai*, “to work,” generally, for payment. Paul refers to his working at his trade of tentmaking (see on Acts 18:3).

**Night and day.** Paul purposed to earn his living, being determined that the gospel should be given freely. No one was to be given grounds for accusing the apostle of preaching for personal gain. He labored that he might not be a burden to his congregations (see on 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 11:9; 1 Thess. 2:6).

**10. Ye are witnesses.** Now that the apostle had effectively met and disproved the three leading charges of his enemies: (1) that he and his companions were deluded fanatics, (2) that they were motivated by selfish, impure thoughts, and (3) that their

kindness, their apparent solicitude, was only thinly veiled deceit (vs. 1–9), he again appeals to the Thessalonians' knowledge, reminding them that they were witnesses of their ministers' conduct. They knew much more about the missionaries than did the accusers. Therefore they should not be moved by slanderous reports.

**And God also.** Again Paul appeals to God (see on v. 5) regarding his motives, which could not be seen by man. This suggests that when occasion demands, we may appeal to God for the truthfulness of what we say, and that we should always live so that we can properly make such an appeal.

**Holily.** Gr. *hosiōs*, “devoutly,” “in a manner pleasing to God.” The holy life of a true Christian, his pious, reverent attitude toward his Maker, has a profound influence upon his attitude toward his fellow men, the children of God.

**Justly.** Gr. *dikaiōs*, “justly,” “righteously,” related to the adjective *dikaio*s (see on Matt. 1:19).

**Unblameably.** Gr. *amemptōs*, “blamelessly,” related to the adjective *amemptos* (see on ch. 3:13).

**Behaved.** Literally, “became,” used here in the sense of “acted,” or, “behaved.”

**11. Ye know.** Compare “ye remember” (see on v. 9).

**Exhorted and comforted and charged.** These words describe three major aspects of every Christian minister's work.

**As a father.** In v. 7 Paul had used the figure of a nursing mother to portray the gentle, loving attitude of the evangelists toward their converts. Now he employs the part a godly father plays in the upbringing of the child as an illustration of their indefatigable work in building up the Christian experience of the young believers. They exhorted all to be faithful, encouraged the fainthearted ones, and solemnly charged and admonished any who showed signs of waywardness. And all this was done in tenderness and love.

**12. Walk.** Gr. *peripateō* (see on Eph. 2:2; cf. Col. 1:10; 1 John 1:6). The purpose of the apostles' painstaking work was to enable these young Christians to live lives befitting children of the heavenly Father. To live otherwise is to bring dishonor upon God, even causing His name to be blasphemed by unbelievers (cf. on Rom. 2:24).

**Who hath called.** Rather, “who calls,” or “who keeps on calling.” For the significance of God's call see on Rom. 8:28, 30; 1 Cor. 1:9; Gal. 1:6.

**His kingdom.** For comment on the nature of this kingdom see on Matt. 4:17; 5:3; 6:10, 13; Mark 3:14; cf. on 1 Cor. 6:9. Here Paul is referring to God's present kingdom of grace. Christians are called into God's kingdom of grace upon conversion (see on Col. 1:13).

**Glory.** See on John 1:14; Rom. 3:23. The present kingdom of grace will culminate in God's eternal kingdom of glory, into which believers will enter with joy into actual citizenship when Jesus returns to gather them into it (cf. Matt. 24:31). Paul admonishes the Thessalonians to live according to the laws of this glorious realm (cf. on Phil. 3:20).

**13. For this cause.** Or, “because of this.” Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of “for.”

**Thank we God.** Compare on ch. 1:2, 3. Paul was assured of the reality of his converts' initial faith, and he wanted to impress them with a sense of this reality lest they be tempted to doubt it and fall away from their faith.

**Received.** This word appears twice in this verse and is the rendering of two different Greek verbs. The first, *paralambanō*, means the external reception, the hearing of the message; the second, *dechomai*, refers to the internal reception, the acceptance of the message.

**Word of God.** Paul had no doubts concerning the origin of the message he preached: he knew it came from God. He had also taught the Thessalonians from the sacred Scriptures (Acts 17:2, 3). He rejoiced that they also recognized the divine authority of his message, and quotes their recognition as a major cause for his own rejoicing.

**Effectually worketh.** Gr. *energeō* (see on Phil. 2:13). When accepted into the life, the word does its divinely appointed task.

**In you that believe.** The effectual working of the word operates in the Christian through faith. The word of God profits only when it is “mixed with faith” in those who hear (Heb. 4:2). The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to *every one that believeth*” (Rom. 1:16). In one of Paul’s great benedictions, he tells how God is able to do for us far more than we can ask or think by “the power that worketh in us” (Eph. 3:20). Again, he speaks of his own experience, and tells how he strives in preaching with all the “energy” which God “mightily inspires” within him (Col. 1:29, RSV). In this case the mighty power of God’s word was working in the Thessalonian believers, giving them patience under trial and persecution.

**14. Followers.** Gr. *mimētai* (see on ch. 1:6).

**Churches of God.** The plural expression is found only here and in 1 Cor. 11:16, but the singular form is common in the NT (Acts 20:28; etc.).

**Judæa.** The reason for Paul’s comparison of the Thessalonian with the Jewish Christians is not clear. He may have set forth the Judean churches as prime exemplars of fortitude, or perhaps the Jewish persecutors in Thessalonica may have reminded him of similar conditions in Palestine. Whatever his reason, he reveals the high regard in which he holds the Judean believers, and accounts them as models for other churches to follow.

**In Christ Jesus.** These words show plainly that Paul is referring to the Christian Jewish churches, and not to the synagogues of the Jews, who thought themselves to be the church of God. The Judean Christians had passed through fiery persecution at the hands of the national leaders who had rejected the gospel message (Acts 8:1; 9:1, 2). The Thessalonians were persecuted by Gentiles at the instigation of Jews (Acts 17:5–8). The two Christian communities, one in Palestine, the other in Macedonia, could therefore sympathize with each other in their similar sufferings.

**15. Killed the Lord Jesus.** The church of the Thessalonians was a Gentile church, but many of its members had been Jewish proselytes (see on Acts 17:4). These members had been used to looking for religious instruction to the Jewish leaders in their city. They might have thought that something was wrong with Paul’s teaching, since it had called down the wrath of religious leaders upon him and his followers. But Paul shows that their animosity might have been well expected, for they “killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets” (1 Thess. 2:15; RSV; cf. Matt. 23:31; Acts 7:52). The apostle makes the Jews responsible for Christ’s death (cf. on Acts 2:23).

**Persecuted us.** This phrase may have both a general and a local application. The Jews had pursued Paul from the time of his conversion (see on Acts 9:23), and continued their evil designs against him and his companions (see on Acts 13:45). In particular, the same

Jews who caused trouble in Thessalonica, pursued Paul, Silas, and Timothy to Berea (see on Acts 17:13).

**Please not God.** The form of the verb in Greek shows that the Jews habitually displeased God. They had a zeal for God and thought that their cruel bigotry was pleasing to Him (John 16:2), but their enmity against the Christians was inspired by envy. It was envy that touched off the persecution at Thessalonica, as elsewhere (Acts 17:5; 13:45). Such conduct could not do other than incur God's strong displeasure.

**Contrary.** The Jews were contrary, or in opposition, to all races of men. If their zeal had been founded on love to God, they would also have loved their fellow creatures. Instead, they manifested a narrow-minded exclusiveness. This attitude caused many of the pagan writers to describe the Jews as feeling "only hate and enmity" toward other nations (Tacitus *Histories*, v. 5). Paul sees this hatred taking the terrible form of trying to withhold the gospel from those who desired it (see v. 16).

**16. Forbidding.** Gr. *kōluō*, "to hinder," "to prevent," "to forbid." The Jews would "compass sea and land to make one proselyte" (Matt. 23:15), and were glad to have men accept Judaism. But they did all in their power to prevent Christians from spreading the good news of salvation through Christ.

**That they might be saved.** Paul was convinced that apostolic preaching resulted in the salvation of those who accepted its message. He knew that there is no salvation except through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). He also, knew from personal experience, that any effort to propagate the gospel would incur the wrath of the Jews (cf. Acts 22:22).

**To fill up.** Gr. *anaplēroō*, "to fill up full," "to fill to the brim." The Jews' rejection of salvation through Christ, and their preventing others from benefiting from the Saviour's sacrifice, filled "to the brim" the measure of their sins (cf. on Matt. 23:32).

**Always.** By the killing of the prophets in OT times, by the rejection and crucifixion of their Lord, and now, by the determined persecution of His followers, the sins of the Jews were rising higher and higher, until the measure of their iniquity was more than filled.

**The wrath.** That is, the wrath of God (see on ch. 1:10).

**Is come.** The consummation of God's wrath against the chosen people was still in the future (A.D. 70), but Paul sees the way the Jews are taking and speaks with certainty concerning the end to which they are hastening. In the light of OT prophecy (see on Dan. 9:24), and of that of our Lord Himself (Matt. 23:37–39; 24:15–20), as well as by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the apostle could see the wrath of God falling upon the impenitent nation. Jerusalem was not yet destroyed, but God's protection had been withdrawn. Soon the city would be "trodden down," the Jews scattered, and the prophecy of the Lord fulfilled (see on Luke 19:43, 44; 21:24).

**To the uttermost.** Or, "at last."

**17. Being taken.** Gr. *aporphanizō*, "to bereave of a parent." After speaking of the Jews in vs. 15, 16, the apostle resumes his argument that there is no warning of his love for them. The Greek word suggests the intimate family relationship existing between Paul and his converts. When circumstances separated them, each member felt as if the family was broken up.

**For a short time.** Literally, "for a season of an hour." The extent of time between his leaving them (Acts 17:10) and his writing this epistle is not known, but several months must have intervened.

**Endeavored.** Gr. *spoudazō*, “to hasten,” “to exert oneself,” “to be diligent.”

**The more abundantly.** That is, excessively, as strongly as possible. Paul was not halfhearted in his efforts to revisit the Thessalonians.

**With great desire.** Paul assures the Thessalonians that he had left no stone unturned in his efforts to return to them. Such assurance would counteract any suggestion that Jewish opponents might be making concerning a deliberate absence from Thessalonica on the part of Paul. The facts were that the forcible expulsion of the apostles from among the new believers greatly intensified their desire to return to Thessalonica.

**18. We would have come.** Literally, “we wished to come,” or “we willed to come.”

**Even I Paul.** Here Paul distinguishes himself from his co-workers, whom he has consistently associated with himself throughout the epistle. Accuracy demanded this, for Silas and Timothy had stayed at Berea when Paul went to Athens (Acts 17:14), and Timothy had actually paid the Thessalonians a visit at Paul’s direction (1 Thess. 3:1–2). They all three wished to return, but speaking for himself, the apostle could assert that he had definitely planned to do so “once and again” (literally, “once and twice”), that is, again and again. He longed to see them.

**Satan.** Paul had been guided in his missionary tours by the Holy Spirit. Before crossing into Europe on the journey that led him to Thessalonica, the apostle had thought of working in the province of Asia, or in Bithynia, but had been turned away from those places by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6, 7). It was not the Holy Spirit, however, who had expelled Paul and his companions from Thessalonica and opposed their return. That deed was in reality the work of the great adversary, Satan.

**Hindered.** Gr. *egkoptō*, “to cut in,” “to impede one’s course by cutting off his way.”

As in a chariot race a driver would “cut in,” and thus effectively check an opponent, or as on modern highways, a selfish motorist will sometimes “cut in” and block the progress of the car he has overtaken, so Satan had placed an obstacle in Paul’s way and thus prevented him from returning to Thessalonica. The apostle gives no hint as to the manner in which Satan hindered him. Satan, however, can only hinder, he cannot prevent the final triumph of the gospel. The Lord is ruler, and He and His church will triumph.

**19. What is our hope?** Here the apostle comes to the supreme reason for his longing to return to the Thessalonian believers. He lived in the hope of presenting his converts to the Lord Jesus as trophies of faithful ministry. His hope was not groundless, for he was aware of the fine quality of the Thessalonians’ Christian life (cf. on ch. 1:3, 4).

**Joy, or crown.** See on Phil. 4:1; cf. on 2 Cor. 1:14.

**Rejoicing.** Rather, “boasting,” or, “glorying.” In the day of triumph, Paul would be able to point to his converts with permissible pride, rejoicing that the Lord had used him in their salvation. Such sentiments, expressed by the apostle at this juncture, would have a twofold effect upon his readers: (1) convince them of the sincerity of his love for them, and his desire to revisit them; (2) encourage them to remain steadfast in spite of persecutions.

**In the presence of.** Or, “before,” as in ch. 3:13.

**Coming.** Gr. *parousia* (see on Matt. 24:3).

**20. Ye are our glory.** In v. 19, Paul had describe his converts as his “hope,” “joy,” or “crown.” Here he introduces the thought of their also being his “glory” (or, “honor”). This is high praise for the Thessalonians. Not only would these believers be his joy and

crown of glorying at Christ's coming, but even now they are his pride and delight. He glories in the evidences of the working of God's Spirit among them. Their faith and love and hope (ch. 1:3), together with their strong missionary spirit (v. 8), are reasons for rejoicing and constant thanksgiving on his part (v. 2). Beyond all effective contradiction, his heart is in Thessalonica.

### ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3–8AA 256

6, 9 AA 347

10 Ev 632

10–13AA 257

12 1T 137

13 COL 59

19 AH 279; CT 284; MYP 23

19, 20 AA 257; Ed 70; EW 61; MB 90; 6T 310

### CHAPTER 3

2

1 *Saint Paul testifieth his great love to the Thessalonians, partly by sending Timothy unto them to strengthen and comfort them: partly by rejoicing in their well doing: 10 and partly by praying for them, and desiring a safe coming unto them.*

**1. Wherefore.** That is, because of the apostles' intense love and burden for their converts, and Paul's continued frustration in his attempts to return to Thessalonica.

**Forbear.** Gr. *stegō*, "to cover," "conceal," "to endure" (cf. 1 Cor. 9:12; 13:7). The use of the plural subject in this verse seems to indicate that the apostle wished to make it plain that his companions shared his solicitude for these new believers, and that they participated wholeheartedly in his efforts to solve the problems created by separation (see on 1 Thess. 2:17, 18).

**Thought it good.** That is, we resolved. The tense of the Greek verb (*eudokeō*) shows that a definite decision was made.

**At Athens alone.** The record states that when Paul had been forced to leave Macedonia, "Silas and Timotheus abode there still" (Acts 17:14). Upon reaching Athens, the apostle sensed the tremendous challenge presented by the cultured heathen metropolis, and felt his own need of faithful helpers. He therefore sent the directive for them "to come to him with all speed" (v. 15). The record in Acts does not state that either Silas or Timothy was able to come to Athens, but the present passage suggests that Timothy did go, and that he was sent back to Macedonia almost immediately, in order to minister to the Thessalonian believers. Paul was to be left alone in Athens. This decision must have been a most difficult one for him to make. The great sacrifice that the apostle was willing to make in depriving himself of Timothy's companionship and help, indicates the urgency of the needs of the Thessalonians. After his visit there, Timothy, accompanied by Silas, came to Paul at Corinth (ch. 18:5). It is clear, therefore, that the

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<sup>2</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Th 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

three workers united in the plans which were laid, and that Paul took the initiative, both in making them, and in having them carried out.

**2. *Sent Timotheus.*** See on v. 1.

***Minister.*** Gr. *diakonos* (see on Mark 9:35).

***Our fellowlabourer.*** Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between including and excluding this phrase. Whether it is included or not, Paul is highly commending Timothy. The younger man was not only Paul's brother, fellow believer, and associate, but was also a fellow worker with God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ. This noble conception of being linked with God in His great mission of love for fallen humanity occupied a prominent place in Paul's thinking, and often found expression in his writings (cf. Rom. 1:9; 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1; Phil. 4:3).

***To establish.*** Gr. *stērizō* (see on Rom. 16:25). The chief objective of Timothy's visit was to strengthen and confirm the believers, that none might turn back.

***To comfort.*** Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4). The second purpose in Timothy's mission was to exhort the believers. This would include a review of what they had been taught, a widening of their doctrinal horizons, and a strengthening of their daily Christian experience. All this is found in the phrase "concerning your faith."

**3. *Be moved.*** Gr. *sainō*, "to disturb," "to agitate," used only here in the NT. In classical writings it is used literally of dogs, with the meaning "to wag the tail," hence the derived meanings, "to flatter," "to beguile." Some believe that these latter meanings should be applied to the present verse. Others hold to the meaning "to disturb," which is supported by the ancient versions. Paul knew the dangers that local persecution would present to the Thessalonians. Hence he fervently hopes that Timothy's ministry would save them from being in any way weakened in the faith.

***By these afflictions.*** Or, "in these afflictions," since Paul was visualizing the difficult circumstances in which his converts were having to practice their faith.

***We.*** The pronoun refers not only to the apostles but to their converts as well. The realization that God knows about the persecution they are suffering, and that it plays an appointed part in His plan for their lives, strengthens Christians to endure affliction. The trials that our loving Father permits are the necessary means of salvation, and are directed and tempered toward that end (1 Cor. 10:13). Characters are perfected by trials, and Christians must not rebel at the refining process (see on Mal. 3:3; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 2:21; 4:12, 13).

**4. *We told you before.*** In the short time that Paul and his companions were with the Thessalonians, they endeavored to prepare them for the inevitable trouble that lay ahead (see Acts 18:23). To begin with, these believers knew of the terrible flogging that Paul and Silas had received at Philippi (see on 1 Thess. 2:2). In their preaching, the missionaries had forewarned them of the coming persecution. Now Paul reminds them of his prediction and its painful fulfillment. The verity of the apostolic word must have confirmed the Thessalonians' confidence in it (cf. on John 13:19), and have provided an effective incentive to steadfastness.

***We should suffer tribulation.*** Or, "we are about to suffer tribulation."

**5. *For this cause.*** Although Paul knew that the Thessalonians would be persecuted, he did not callously accept such a certainty. He loved his spiritual children and was affectionately anxious for their welfare. For this reason he dispatched a personal

messenger to bring him firsthand news concerning their condition. He does not here name the person sent, since he had already given that information (v. 2). He simply states the reason for sending Timothy. He has already made a similar statement in vs. 1, 2 but here makes it more personal by speaking in the first person singular employing “I,” not “we.”

**Forbear.** See on v. 1.

**Know your faith.** The state of his converts’ spiritual health was Paul’s main concern.

**The tempter have tempted.** Paul knew the frailties of human flesh, and feared that some of the believers might have fallen from the purity of the faith. His concern could be dispelled only by having direct news from Thessalonica. The apostle reveals his understanding of the workings of temptation. God had permitted trials to assail the Thessalonian Christians, but temptation did not come from Him. Paul recognizes that incitement to evil comes from the tempter, Satan himself (cf. on Matt. 4:1; James 1:13, 14). He realizes that a personal devil, working through wicked men, is attacking God’s people with the purpose of discouraging them and causing them to abandon their faith. If the devil should succeed, then the labor expended upon the believers would have been in vain, for Paul considers his efforts fruitless unless they result in the salvation of those for whom he works.

**6. But now.** The adverb “now” clearly indicates that Timothy had just arrived from Thessalonica. This first epistle, then, was written soon after Timothy’s arrival, and consequently reflects the loving sentiments evoked by Timothy’s encouraging report. It is also clear that the epistle was written at Corinth, not Athens (see pp. 224, 225), for the record states that Timothy and Silas had joined Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5)

**Charity.** Gr. *agapē*, “love” (see on Matt. 5:43; John 11:3; 1 Cor. 13:1). It was balm to Paul’s heart to know that the believers’ faith had not been shaken, and their love had not waxed cold.

**Good remembrance of us.** Paul had feared that Jewish misrepresentations would have turned the Thessalonians against him when he was absent from them. The news that they still thought lovingly of him and were continually longing to see him, must have been very reassuring to the apostle. He declares that the longing is mutual—he desires to see them (cf. ch. 2:17, 18).

**7. We were comforted.** Paul, who was so careful to encourage others, is himself comforted by those whom he is seeking to help. Even so may God’s modern ministers be heartened by those for whom they labor. The best encouragement a convert can give to the one who has brought him to the Saviour, is to be steadfast in the Christian way.

**Affliction and distress.** Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the inversion of the words “affliction” (*thilipsis*) and “distress” (*anagkē*). For the meaning of the two Greek words see on Rom. 2:9 and 1 Cor. 7:26 respectively. Some interpreters have thought that the phrase “affliction and distress” refers to inner and outer troubles. The more likely reference is to the severe trials imposed by the Jews upon the apostle in Corinth (Acts 18:1–17). There the Jewish leaders had so vehemently and blasphemously objected to Paul’s preaching of the gospel that he separated himself from them, and turned completely to the Gentiles (v. 6). Their harassing attempts to silence him did not cease, but rather increased, until they stirred up open insurrection against him (vs. 12). At such a time of trouble the Lord in a vision mercifully encouraged Paul to be bold in presenting his message, and assured him of protection and success in his work (vs. 9, 10). It was probably at this time that he received the comforting message brought by Timothy.

**8. For now we live.** In contrast with the troubled existence, conditioned by affliction and distress, that the apostles had been enduring.

**If ye stand fast.** For the significance of “stand fast” see on Phil. 1:27. Paul states that so long as the Thessalonians remain steadfast, he and his companions will enjoy life in its fullest Christian sense. Such a heartfelt expression of love and his ardent interest in their eternal welfare must have encouraged the Thessalonians to be faithful.

**9. What thanks can we render?** Paul’s heart overflows with permissible elation at the thought of his converts’ excellences. Paul naturally desires to give thanks for their exemplary witness, and to give such thanks, not to man, but to God, who made possible their victorious lives. His joy is spiritual. It arises from contemplating the spiritual worth of the believers. Such joy contains no selfishness. It is akin to the happiness felt by the angels at the conversion of a sinner (Luke 15:10). For the third time Paul expresses thanks to God for His keeping power in behalf of his converts (see 1 Thess. 1:2; 2:13). What could be greater cause for thanksgiving? The joy that a true servant of Christ experiences as he learns of the faithfulness of those whom he has brought to the Lord is the greatest remuneration for service (see 3 John 4).

**10. Night and day praying.** See on ch. 2:9. Here we have a glimpse of the apostle’s hidden life of prayer. Paul worked “night and day” (ch. 2:9); yet, like the high priest, he bore his converts on his heart continuously (see on Ex. 28:29).

**Might see your face.** Compare chs. 2:17, 18; 3:6. Paul believed there was something he could do in person that could not otherwise be accomplished. Yet the fact that he was prevented from fulfilling his desire led to the writing of this letter, which accomplished much for his distant friends. But how much more did he accomplish for the church in all ages. This epistle, probably the earliest of his known writings (see pp. 224, 225), was penned as a direct result of his unsuccessful attempts to return to Thessalonica (see on ch. 2:18). It is possible that he did visit this church later and gave its members further instruction (see Acts 20:2). But for the present his way was obstructed. The delay forced upon the apostle was by the Lord’s grace made the occasion for the writing of the epistle. Thus the wrath of man was turned to the praise of God.

**Might perfect.** Gr. *katartizō* (see on Luke 6:40; Gal. 6:1). Paul was anxious to supply what was lacking in their spiritual equipment. He had previously extolled their faith, love, and hope (1 Thess. 1:3), but he recognized that they lacked essential virtues (see on chs. 4:11; 5:14), and needed to “increase more and more” (ch. 4:10) in the Christian graces.

**11. Now God himself.** With these words Paul begins a fresh section, and records a specific prayer. The fact that God and Christ are mentioned together emphasizes the unity of these two members of the Godhead. For comment on Paul’s titles for the Father and the Son see on Rom. 1:7; Gal. 1:4; Phil. 2:5.

**Direct.** Literally, “make straight” (cf. Luke 1:79; 2 Thess. 3:5). Paul’s path had been blocked by Satan (1 Thess. 2:18), so the apostle turned to the Father and Christ, asking them to clear away all obstacles and to make it possible for him and his companions to visit the Thessalonians again.

**12. And the Lord.** Or, “but the Lord,” placing vs. 11 and 12 in contrast with each other. Paul is virtually saying: Whatever happens to me, I wish you to grow in spiritual stature.

**Make ... to increase.** Gr. *pleonazō*, “to superabound.” The additional “abound” serves to emphasize the intensity of Paul’s desire for his converts. He prays that Christ

will give them an ever-deepening love, first, for their fellow believers, then for those without the church. He wanted the ardent love that he felt for them to be reproduced in their own hearts on others' behalf. Fervent love for one another is a sign to the world of the genuineness of the Christian religion. This is Christ's explicit teaching (John 13:34, 35).

**13. To the end.** Or, "so that," pointing to the result of having hearts overflowing with love.

**Stablish.** Gr. *stērizō* (see on Rom. 16:25). In 1 Thess. 3:2 *stērizō* is translated "to establish." Paul is confident that Christ will stabilize the believers' hearts, and recognizes that the Thessalonians cannot accomplish that work for themselves.

**Unblameable.** Gr. *amemptoi*, "blameless," "deserving no censure," "free from defect" (cf. on Eph. 1:4; Phil. 2:15; 3:6). The apostle's wish for his converts is that in spiritual matters they be free from every flaw.

**Holiness.** This indicates the sphere in which Christ is to make the believers blameless. He will so enable them to live holy lives that they will be able to stand without censure before the Judge of the universe. "Unblameable in holiness" represents the highest possible ethical and spiritual standard. The apostle believes that such a standard can be reached by the grace that Christ supplies to those of His followers who increase in love. To believe less would be to deny the gospel.

**Before God.** Paul's concern is that his converts should be adjudged blameless, not by men, who are fallible, but by God who searches the hearts and knows what is in the mind.

**Even our Father.** Compare v. 11.

**Coming.** Gr. *parousia* (see on Matt. 24:3). The coming of our Lord is one of the keynotes of this epistle (see 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 4:16; 5:23). In the present setting Paul sees the day of Christ's coming as the time when the believer's character must be established. There will then be no possibility of change.

**Saints.** Gr. *hagioi* (see on Rom. 1:7). In the NT *hagioi* generally refers to the redeemed children of God (Matt. 27:52; Acts 9:13; 1 Cor. 1:2; etc.). Some believe that *hagioi* here refers to the angels who accompany Christ at His *parousia* (Matt. 25:31). Others believe that Paul is thinking of the dead and living saints who are united at the time of Christ's appearing (1 Thess. 4:13–17) and with whom Jesus will be associated at that time.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 AA 234

6–10 AA 255

8 EW 28; MH 167

11, 12 ML 221

12, 13 AA 263; 5T 693

13 MB 149

## CHAPTER 4

1 *He exhorteth them to go on forward in all manner of godliness, 6 to live holily and justly, 9 to love one another, 11 and quietly to follow their own business: 13 and last of all to sorrow moderately for the dead. 15 And unto this last exhortation is annexed a brief description of the resurrection, and second coming of Christ to judgment.*

**1. Furthermore.** Gr. *loipos*, “for the rest,” translated “finally” in 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:8; 2 Thess. 3:1 (see on Phil. 3:1). Paul now turns from prayer to an extended exhortation concerning Christian living.

**We beseech.** Gr. *erōtaō* (see on Phil. 4:3). Instead of using apostolic authority and issuing commands to his readers, Paul, with tact and humility, entreats them to listen, and addresses them as brethren.

**Exhort.** Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4). Paul does not content himself with entreaty. He adds earnest exhortation to his appeal. He had prayed that the Thessalonians might be made ready for the Lord’s coming (ch. 3:12, 13), but prayer alone would not suffice. There was something for them to do. Their part was to heed the instruction given, and, by the Lord’s grace, to act upon it.

**By the Lord Jesus.** Literally, “in the Lord Jesus” (cf. on Phil. 2:19). Paul was not giving personal opinions or advice, he was writing by divine inspiration. He was exhorting in the name of the Lord, and by His authority. Tactful as this approach is, it bears a strong note of authority, and is calculated to carry great weight with its hearers.

**Received of us.** Paul reminds his readers of what they had been taught while he was with them (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1; Gal. 1:9; Phil. 4:9). Practical instruction had been given them (cf. 1 Thess. 2:2, 7, 8, 13).

**To walk and to please God.** That is to walk so as to please Him. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) adding the words “even so also walk,” or “even as ye are also walking,” or “just as you are doing” (RSV). The object of the walking, or living (see on ch. 2:12), should be to gain God’s approval of their conduct (cf. on v. 4). The apostle had taught the Thessalonians to live, not like the Jews in general, who were displeasing to God (v. 15), but rather in accordance with gospel principles, and thus to have divine approval continually.

**Abound more and more.** The apostle has lofty heights of Christian excellence in view for his converts. He believes they can go far beyond their present achievements (cf. Ed 18). Such confidence in their possibilities would open the hearts of the Thessalonians for the serious admonitions that follow.

**2. Ye know.** Compare ch. 2:1, 2, 9, 11, where Paul stresses the Thessalonians’ personal knowledge of his previous ministry to them. He is making no new demands upon them.

**Commandments.** Gr. *paraggeliai*, “announcements,” or “charges,” hence, “commands,” and often used in classical literature of military orders. The reference here is to the instructions previously given by Paul in Thessalonica.

**By the Lord Jesus.** Or, “through the agency of the Lord Jesus.” The apostle is again reminding his readers that his teachings were given under divine authority. Now that he was about to speak of particular sins of which some in the church were guilty, he was most anxious that every member should recognize that he was enunciating Christ’s own principles (cf. v. 8). Such recognition would ensure a positive response to the standards of which he now reminds them.

**3. The will of God.** God’s will here represents His desires for His children. It is not His will that even one member of His family should perish because of any kind of sin (Matt. 18:14).

**Sanctification.** Gr. *hagiasmos* (see on Rom. 6:19). The term *hagiasmos* is an inclusive one, and is not to be limited to chastity, although the apostle has chastity in the forefront of his mind in the present context. The will of God, however, can be fulfilled only in our complete consecration. Christ died to make our holiness possible (Eph. 5:25–27), but such a result is not obtained in a moment. Justification is accomplished momentarily when the repentant sinner accepts God’s forgiveness, but not so with sanctification, which is a continuous work of grace (see on Rom. 12:1, 2). It is “not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime” (AA 560).

**Abstain.** Gr. *apechomai*, “to hold oneself away from,” hence, “to abstain.” God expects the Christian to keep away from sin, not to expose himself to temptation (see on 1 Cor. 6:18).

**Fornication.** Gr. *porneia* (see on Matt. 5:32; Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 5:1). This sin needed emphatic denunciation among Gentile converts, for they had been reared in an atmosphere where moral laxity was accepted and vice consecrated as a religious rite (see Vol. VI, pp. 91, 92). The patron deity of Corinth, whence Paul was writing, was Aphrodite, the goddess of love and generation, and her worship was accompanied by the wildest orgies. It would be difficult for Christians in any pagan city to remain unaffected by such blatant immorality. But all that is contrary to chastity of heart, in speech and behavior, is contrary to the command of God in the Decalogue, and to that holiness which the gospel requires (cf. Matt. 5:27, 28; Acts 15:29; 1 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3). In our day, when standards of sexual conduct are lowered, when chastity is so commonly regarded as being outmoded and divorces are so frequent, this injunction deserves the scrupulous attention of every professed follower of the Lord.

**4. Know.** Or, “understand.” In 1 Thess. 5:12 Paul uses the verb, “to know,” in the sense of “to know the worth of,” “to appreciate,” “to respect.” Different forms of the same verb are used in 1 Thess. 4:5; 2 Thess 1:8; Gal. 4:8 to describe those who know not God, that is, they do not understand or appreciate Him.

**Possess.** Gr. *aktaomai*, “to acquire,” “to get for oneself,” “to procure for oneself.”

**Vessel.** Gr. *skeuos*, “a thing,” “an object,” “vessel,” “jar,” “dish.” *Skeuos* is translated “vessel” 19 out of the 23 times it is used in the NT. There is difference of opinion as to its meaning in this verse. Some hold that Paul is referring to the Christian’s body, with special reference to its sexual functions. This interpretation accords with the context, which treats of sexual purity (vs. 3, 5), but not so well with the meaning of *aktaomai*, “to acquire” (see above under “possess”). However, it is possible to give to *aktaomai* the meaning “to gain control over.” General scholarly opinion prefers to interpret *skeuos*, “vessel,” as referring to a man’s wife. Such opinion has scriptural support in 1 Peter 3:7, where the wife is described as “the weaker vessel,” and in rabbinical literature, which speaks of the wife as a “vessel” for the man. This interpretation would make Paul say this: “Each Christian should know how to take a wife for himself in a consecrated and honorable manner.”

One other view calls for consideration. A few interpreters have suggested a division of the verse which results in this translation: “That each one of you respect his own wife, and that he get gain in sanctification and honor.” They have held that the second thought

applies to business relationships, the getting or acquiring of wealth, and that Paul is urging that this be done on an ethical basis. But such an interpretation disturbs the flow of Paul's thought, which is concentrating on matters of sexual purity in vs. 3–7.

Paul's approach to the subject of impurity and marriage in this epistle is in harmony with his discussion of similar topics in 1 Cor. 7. He sees marriage as a divinely appointed union that will aid Christian partners in avoiding sexual temptations (see on 1 Cor. 7:1–5).

**5. Lust.** Gr. *pathos*, “emotions,” good or bad, but in the NT only evil desires (Rom. 1:26; Col. 3:5).

**Concupiscence.** Gr. *epithumia*, “desire,” “craving,” “longing,” but in the NT generally evil desire, specifically, “lust” (see on Mark 4:19; Rom. 7:7). The phrase “lust of concupiscence” may thus be rendered, “passion of lust.” The close connection between 1 Thess. 4:4 and 5 supports the view that Paul is dealing with sexual aspects of marriage. In v. 4 he makes the positive approach; in v. 5 he stresses the attitude Christians should avoid. Though reared in an immoral atmosphere, they should not allow themselves to be tainted by that immorality.

**Gentiles.** Or, “heathen.” Since the Thessalonians themselves had been Gentiles, or heathen, they understood Paul's references. But the fact that the apostle now clearly distinguishes them from the heathen would encourage them to maintain the distinction by refusing to indulge in immorality, as the Gentiles did.

**Which know not God.** See on Rom. 1:21, 28.

**6. Go beyond.** Gr. *huperbainō*, “to step over,” “to go beyond,” metaphorically, “to transgress.” The verb is used only here in the NT.

**Defraud.** Gr. *pleonekteō*, “to take advantage of another,” “to overreach.” A different word (*apostereō*) is used for “defraud” in 1 Cor. 7:5, but the meaning is similar.

**In any matter.** Rather, “in the matter.” One's understanding of what is implied by “the matter” vitally affects the interpretation of this verse. Some hold that the reference is to commercial transactions, and that Paul is admonishing his converts to be honest in their dealings. This view cuts across Paul's line of thought as expressed in vs. 5 and 7, where he clearly deals with sexual purity. It seems preferable to assume that the apostle is maintaining his topic throughout vs. 3–7, and that he delicately states that fornication is a form of robbery, since it takes that which rightfully belongs to another.

**Avenger.** Gr. *ekdikos* (see on Rom. 13:4). The Lord is here portrayed as the executor of judgment. He who forms the tie that unites husband and wife, watches over it (see Matt. 19:5, 6). Relationships which are thought to be secret, which come before no earthly tribunal, are seen by the Lord (see Heb. 4:13). He judges. The wrongdoer cannot escape His punishment. In this way Paul reminds his readers that sin, especially the kind of which he is speaking, will not go unpunished. This statement is given as the first reason for not defrauding one's brother.

**All such.** That is, all people who practice the fleshly sins of fornication, adultery, and every other form of sexual impurity.

**Forewarned.** Gr. *proeipon*, “to say before,” that is, formerly. Paul is giving no new counsel. He is repeating the teaching he had previously given to the believers.

**Testified.** Or, “testified earnestly,” “charged religiously.” Paul had faithfully warned his converts against the corrupting influences that bore sway in society. Such solemn admonition needs to be taken to heart by the church of God today, surrounded as it is by the debasing influences of a corrupt society.

**7. For.** This preposition introduces the second reason given by Paul in his appeal for purity of conduct (see on v. 6).

**Called.** See on ch. 2:12. The call of God is a powerful reason for eschewing all forms of impurity. Compare on 1 Cor. 6:18–20; 1 Peter 1:14–16.

**Unto uncleanness.** See on ch. 2:3. The preposition “unto” (*epi*) may be rendered “for,” since it refers to purpose. God has called no man to be unclean or impure.

**Unto.** Gr. *en*, literally, “in.”

**Holiness.** Gr. *hagiasmos* (see on Rom. 6:19), translated “sanctification” in 1 Thess. 4:3 (see comment there). The preposition (*en*) differs from that used with “uncleanness” (*epi*), and denotes the sphere in which God expects His called ones to live—the sphere of holiness (cf. Heb. 12:14). Holiness should characterize every aspect of the Christian’s life.

**8. Despiset.** Rather, “rejecteth,” that is, he who rejects Paul’s counsel (vs. 3–7) is actually rejecting the word of God. This view places great weight on the moral standards set forth by the apostle.

**Hath also given.** Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of “also” and favors the reading “is giving” instead of “hath given.” God is continually imparting His Holy Spirit to His children.

**Unto us.** Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “unto you.” Paul is not speaking of his own inspiration by the Holy Spirit, but of the provision God has made for His people to be victorious over all forms of sin. The Lord has not only called His children to holiness, and given positive commands against uncleanness, but has provided power whereby they may reach His high standard. Thus strengthened, the Christian is able to surmount all obstacles in his quest of a character like that of his Master (cf. Eph. 3:16–19; Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:11).

**9. As touching.** Or, “concerning.”

**Brotherly love.** Gr. *philadelphia* (see on Rom. 12:10). Compare Heb. 13:1; 1 John 3:14; 4:20, 21. Paul has discussed (1 Thess. 4:6) a particular type of the violation of principles of love, but feels it unnecessary to pursue the subject further.

**Taught of God.** When one has accepted the new covenant of grace, and has allowed the Lord to write the divine law in his heart, he is taught of God, and is no longer dependent solely upon human instruction (see Heb. 8:10, 11).

**To love one another.** The purpose of divine instruction is to promote brotherly love in the believers’ hearts (cf. on ch. 3:12). Fervent brotherly love is one of the strongest evidences of conversion (AA 262).

**10. Indeed ye do it.** This was another reason for Paul’s not needing to write more concerning brotherly love. The Thessalonians had already shown their love toward the believers in northern Greece, and Paul had commended them at the beginning of the epistle for their “labour of love” (see on ch. 1:3). He does not explain what form their brotherly love took, but it was doubtless Christian hospitality toward fellow

Macedonians. He now uses this proved trait as a basis for appeal in respect to purity of life. Having demonstrated their love on such a large scale, surely they will practice it in their day-by-day relationships with their brethren in the church.

***We beseech.*** Rather, “we exhort” (cf. on v. 1).

***Increase more and more.*** Compare the phrase “abound more and more” (v. 1). The love that the Thessalonians displayed is not yet perfected. He entreats them to strive for still higher attainments. The Christian path is one of continual progress. It is only when we love one another fully that God’s love is perfected in us (1 John 4:12, 20, 21).

***11. Study.*** Gr. *philotimeomai*, literally, “to be fond of honor”; here, “to be ambitious,” “to aspire.”

***To be quiet.*** That is, to live a quiet life, to live calmly. There may have been fanaticism among the Thessalonian believers. Fanciful ideas and doctrines were being promulgated by a few to the disquieting of the many (see 2 Thess. 3:11, 12; AA 261). It appears, from the context and the tenor of the epistle, that these unsettling views were connected with the doctrine of the second advent (see 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 5:1–11; cf. AA 228, 229).

***Do your own business.*** Or, “mind your own affairs.” It would appear from this that some of the church members had been meddling in affairs that were not their own, possibly even in the affairs of the church (cf. on 2 Thess. 3:11, 12).

***Work.*** One of the best safeguards against meddling is active pursuit of one’s own work. But it seems that some were teaching that in view of the second advent it was too late to work at ordinary pursuits. As a result, some had stopped working for a livelihood and were depending for support upon the generosity of their brethren.

***We commanded.*** Paul had already dealt with the problem while he was with the Thessalonians, so he can now appeal to his previous verbal instructions, and he not only commanded this way of life but set a notable example of industry, independence, and helpfulness (cf. on Acts 18:3).

***12. Walk.*** Gr. *peripateō* (see on ch. 2:12).

***Honestly.*** Gr. *euschēmonōs*, “becomingly,” “in a seemly manner.” The admonition refers, not to business relations, but rather to living a consistent Christian life, minding one’s own affairs, and diligently working for one’s living so as to be self-supporting.

***Them that are without.*** That is, outside the church, non-Christians (see on 1 Cor. 5:12). Living consistently the Christian life will commend itself to the unbelieving world.

***Lack of nothing.*** Or, “need of no man.” Whichever translation is taken, the meaning is clear. The Christian should aim to be independent, not dependent on others for his support.

***13. I would not.*** Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “we would not,” that is, we do not wish. Paul may be consciously associating Silas and Timothy in his statement, or the use of “we” may be editorial (see on ch. 1:1).

The apostle here broaches a fresh topic, the fate of the Christian dead in relation to Christ’s return. It may be that Timothy, who had just returned from Thessalonica (ch. 3:6), had brought the news that the church members were gravely concerned over the fate of those of their number who had died since being converted. How could such share in the glories of Christ’s kingdom at His coming? Paul now considers the subject in detail (vs. 13–18), and passes on to deal with the closely related topic, the time of Christ’s

appearing (ch. 5:1–11). He treats both matters, not as new doctrines, but as familiar teachings on which the believers needed further instruction and admonition. Paul had not had time to answer every question or to clarify every topic while with them.

***Are asleep.*** Gr. *koimaō*, “to sleep,” “to die.” Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “are falling asleep.” More were continually being laid to rest. For sleep as a figure for death see on John 11:11. Greek inscriptions show that a burial place was sometimes known as *koimētērion*, a word also used for a dormitory, or sleeping room. In Christian usage the dead were thought of as sleeping, awaiting the resurrection morning.

***That ye sorrow not.*** It would appear that the Thessalonians had been unduly grieving over those of their number who had died since accepting the gospel. Those who remained feared that the deceased would lose the glorious experience that Christians expected to enjoy at Christ’s return. Paul devotes vs. 13–18 to removing this misapprehension and to consoling the believers. He explains that there is no need for the living Christian to be sorrowful over his dead brother, for the hope of the resurrection removes the cause for sorrow. Paul is not frowning on natural grief. He is teaching the believers not to be immersed in hopeless human sorrow but to lift up their heads in expectation of reunion with their departed loved ones at the time of their Lord’s return and the resurrection.

***Even as others.*** Rather, “even as the rest,” that is, the non-Christians.

***Which have no hope.*** The non-Christian has no equivalent of the Christian’s hope. The unbeliever has no grounds for expecting life after death. To him, death must be the end, for he knows no power that can break the bonds of death and give life to the dead. The Christian alone knows Him who has conquered death on behalf of Himself and His followers. Thus Paul contrasts the believer’s outlook with the hopelessness of the pagan world around him.

***14. If we believe.*** The Greek shows that there is here no expression of doubt. The conditional clause assumes the death and resurrection of Jesus to be true. Since Paul had presented these teachings to the Thessalonians when he first entered their city (Acts 17:1–3), his converts were well grounded in these basic tenets of the Christian faith. Paul now wants them to use these teachings as a foundation on which to build belief concerning the future resurrection of the Christian dead. The death and resurrection of Jesus give to the Christian a sure hope of resurrection (see John 14:19; see on 1 Cor. 15:20–23). Therefore the Thessalonians should not despair when their loved ones die.

***Which sleep.*** Rather, “which have fallen asleep,” that is, the Christians who have already died.

***In Jesus.*** Literally, “through Jesus.” Various interpretations have been offered to explain the force of this difficult expression. Some think that Paul means that death is a sleep only by virtue of Christ’s life-giving power that will one day awaken the dead. If Christ’s power did not operate, death would be the end. Others connect the phrase “through Jesus” with the latter part of the verse, making it read, “even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep” (RSV). Such a translation is possible, but the Greek tends to favor the KJV rendering.

Still others regard the expression as parallel with the phrase “dead in Christ.” This interpretation is perhaps to be preferred inasmuch as the two expressions occur in close contextual relationship.

**With him.** That is, with Jesus, from the grave. Paul reaches the crux of his reply to the troubled Thessalonians. They have been concerned over the fate of their dead. The apostle now assures them, by a categorical statement, that God has planned for those Christians who have died to be resurrected as Jesus was resurrected. Such words assured the believers that their loved ones were not forgotten. This inspired assurance would satisfy the queries of the Thessalonians and set their minds at rest. It should be noted that Paul is concerned primarily with the fact that the righteous dead are not forgotten, not with the chronological details of the resurrection. These are set forth in 1 Cor. 15:23: “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” Paul wished to stress the fact that as God brought forth Christ from the grave, even so would He bring forth the sleeping saints from the graves.

Some teach that Paul is here speaking of disembodied souls, which, they assert, ascend to heaven at death and return with Jesus when He descends to this earth at the time of the second advent. But the Bible nowhere teaches that the soul of man is immortal and that it ascends to heaven at death (see on Matt. 10:28; Luke 16:19–31; 2 Cor. 5:2–8). Furthermore, the interpretation is quite out of harmony with the context. Paul is not speaking of immortal souls, but of “them which are asleep” (1 Thess. 4:13), “them also which sleep in Jesus” (v. 14), “the dead in Christ” (v. 16). The “dead in Christ” *rise* (v. 16), not descend. The living are described as not preceding them, with reference to being with the Lord (v. 15). All enter the kingdom together (v. 17). If the dead preceded the living and spent some time with the Lord prior to the resurrection, the apostle’s language would be quite meaningless, in fact, absurd. His comfort would be misplaced. Paul would have told the Thessalonians to dispel all their concern, for their loved ones were enjoying the bliss of heaven. But this he did not do. This he could not do. His teaching was in harmony with that of his Lord (see on John 14:3). Some commentators, seeing the problems involved, freely admit that “the disembodied souls are not here spoken of” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown).

**15. By the word of the Lord.** The apostle is appealing to a higher authority than his own (cf. on 1 Cor. 7:6, 10, 12, 25).

**We which are alive and remain.** Literally, “we the living ones, the remaining over ones,” that is, those who, in contrast with the righteous dead, remain alive until Christ’s return. Paul here appears to express a hope that he, and the converts to whom he is writing, will be alive when Jesus comes, a hope common with Christians of all ages. But he does not explicitly state that he will live until that great day (see Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 10:11; Phil. 4:5; Titus 2:13; see Additional Note on Rom. 13). He clarifies his thoughts on the matter in 1 Thess. 5:1–11, where he deals with the unexpectedness of the second advent and the uncertainty of his or their still being alive at the time of their Lord’s return (v. 10). It appears that the Thessalonian believers misunderstood Paul’s statements, and some willfully perverted them and taught that the day of the Lord was even then at hand (see on 2 Thess. 2:2). It was to rectify this error in their thinking that the apostle wrote his second letter a short time later (AA 264; see p. 262).

**Coming.** Gr. *parousia* (see on Matt. 24:3). *Parousia* was sometimes used for the arrival of a Roman general to celebrate a triumphal procession through the streets of a city. The word is thus appropriate for describing Christ’s triumphal return.

**Not.** The negative is strongly expressed in the Greek.

**Prevent.** Gr. *phthanō*, “to come before,” “to precede.” This was the meaning of “prevent” when the KJV was translated. But the word has changed its meaning so that it no longer correctly translates the Gr. *phthanō*. Paul is assuring his readers that the living Christians will not be united with their Lord before those who have fallen asleep. “The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them” (vs. 16, 17). Thus the living saints will have no priority over those who have died in the Lord. This teaching makes clear the true state of those who have died “in Christ.” They are asleep, awaiting the Saviour’s coming. They have not yet been united with Him, but, like the living Christians, await the second advent for their longed-for union with the Master (cf. John 11:23–25). Neither class has precedence over the other; both will be taken to glory together by their Lord at His coming.

**16. For.** Rather, “because.” Paul is stating the factual basis for his teaching in v. 15.

**The Lord himself.** The personal, visible, bodily appearing of the Lord in great majesty is here clearly described. Christ does not send a deputy, nor does He come spiritually. He Himself comes in person. The same Jesus who ascended to heaven now descends from heaven. Just before He went to heaven He promised to return (John 14:3). The church was assured when He ascended in a cloud that “this same Jesus” would “come in like manner” (Acts 1:9–11). Paul reiterates these promises and records additional details concerning the manner of their fulfillment.

**Shall descend.** Gr. *katabainō*, “to go down,” “to come down,” “to descend,” used nowhere else in the NT for Christ’s second advent, but used of the Son of man’s coming down from heaven for the first advent (John 3:13; 6:33, 38; etc.). Christ’s descent at His second coming is implied in other scriptural accounts of His return (Matt. 16:27; 24:30; etc.).

**A shout.** Gr. *keleusma*, “a command,” “a shout of command.” The word occurs only here in the NT. In non-Biblical writings *keleusma* is used of an officer issuing orders to his troops or of a charioteer urging his horses. It is not clear from the Greek construction whether Christ utters the command or whether another being cries aloud as the Lord descends, but contextual evidence favors Christ as the speaker (see below on “archangel,” and “the trump of God”). No specific reason is here given for the “shout,” but the “shout,” “the voice of the archangel,” and “the trump of God” are immediately followed by the rising of the “dead in Christ”; hence the arousing sounds may be taken as preliminaries to the resurrection of the just (cf. John 5:25, 28, 29; 11:43). Christ comes from heaven proclaiming His victory. He has conquered death and the grave (Rev. 1:18). No longer can the enemy, death, hold any of the redeemed in his cold grasp. The righteous dead respond to their Lord’s command and rise from their graves.

**Archangel.** Gr. *archaggelos*, “chief angel,” “first angel,” compounded from *archi*, a prefix denoting “chief,” or “high,” and *aggelos*, “angel,” hence, “chief of the angels.” The word *archaggelos* appears in the NT only here and in Jude 9, where Michael is said to be the archangel. This commentary holds the view that Michael is none other than our Lord, Jesus Christ (see on Dan. 10:13; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7). This interpretation makes it possible to conceive of Christ’s own voice, as the voice of the archangel, being heard as He descends (see on Jude 9).

**The trump of God.** Or, “a trump of God.” This does not necessarily refer to any particular trumpet as belonging exclusively to God, but rather to an instrument that is used in God’s service. The OT frequently refers to trumpets in connection with notable interventions by God, either actual or predicted (Ex. 19:13, 16, 19; Ps. 47:5; Isa. 27:13; Joel 2:1; Zeph. 1:16; Zech. 9:14). Trumpets were also used for assembling God’s people (Num. 10:2–4), for the sounding of war alarms (vs. 5–9), and for national occasions (v. 10). In the NT the sounding of a trumpet is associated with the gathering of the elect and the raising of the dead (Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52).

**And the dead in Christ.** The conjunction “and” is used to indicate the result accompanying the heaven-reverberating sounds, namely, the raising of the righteous dead. The “dead in Christ” are those who fell asleep in faith, including OT saints (see on Rom. 4:3; 1 Cor. 15:18; cf. Rev. 14:13). They are included among those whom Jesus described as “the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36). Paul elsewhere calls them “they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:23). Their being raised corresponds to the “first resurrection” (see on Rev. 20:5, 6). The phrase “the dead in Christ” is here used to distinguish the sleeping saints from two other classes of people: (1) the unrighteous dead, who, as a body, are not raised at Christ’s second coming; (2) the living Christians, who are being assured that their beloved dead will be at no disadvantage when Jesus returns, but will rather receive prior attention by being first raised and thus being placed on an equal footing with the living saints.

**Shall rise first.** That is, shall rise before the living are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (v. 17).

**17. Then.** That is, after the righteous dead have been resurrected.

**We which are alive and remain.** See on v. 15.

**Caught up.** Gr. *harpazō*, “to snatch away” (see on Acts 8:39; Phil. 2:6; Rev. 12:5).

From *harpazō*, by way of the Latin verb *rapiō*, is derived the English word “rapture,” a term that some use in a technical theological sense to describe the catching up, or carrying away, of the saints, of which Paul here writes. Those who thus use the word “rapture” teach that Christ’s visible, audible appearance with power and great glory will be preceded some years earlier by His coming secretly and invisibly to the air of this planet to catch away His saints, while the rest of earth’s population lives on through a period marked by a tribulation under the rule of Antichrist.

But the present passage, which they declare describes this secret coming, speaks of Christ’s coming with a “shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”—hardly a secret event. Furthermore, this is obviously “our gathering together unto him,” concerning which the Thessalonians were troubled, but which is *after* the revelation of Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:1–3), not before, as set forth in the “pretribulation rapture” view (see Additional Notes on Rev. 20, Note 2). The trumpet is mentioned also in Matt. 24:30, 31 in a context that clearly describes a visible coming: “All the tribes of the earth ... shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” There is nothing in the phrasing of these scriptures that even remotely suggests that the coming described in Matt. 24 is different from that described in 1 Thess. 4. Hence both passages describe one event happening at one point of time. This is the uniform teaching of all the Scriptures. For a discussion of certain false concepts on which the belief in a secret rapture is based see Additional Notes on Rev. 20, Note 2.

**Together with.** Gr. *hama sun*. The adverb *hama* signifies “at the same time,” while the preposition *sun* here means “together with.” A literal translation of this portion of v. 17 thus reads, “at the same time together with them we shall be snatched away.” Such an assurance would set the Thessalonians at rest by explaining to them that the Christians who were then dead and those who remained alive would be simultaneously united with their Lord.

**In the clouds.** Compare Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:9; Rev. 1:7.

**To meet the Lord.** Literally, “unto a meeting of the Lord,” expressing the fulfillment of the purpose for which the righteous have been caught up from the earth, that is, that they might meet their Lord. At the moment of meeting, the Christian’s dearest desire is fulfilled—he is united to the One whom he loves above all others (cf. on Phil. 1:23).

**In the air.** The saints have ascended from the earth, the Lord and His accompanying hosts have descended from heaven; they meet in the air, between earth and heaven.

**And so.** That is, as a result of Christ’s coming and the consequent events described in vs. 16, 17, all believers are united with their Lord.

**Ever be with the Lord.** Paul does not attempt to take his readers further than the ecstatic moment of meeting. Disciples of all ages are at last united with the Master, the future is assured. There is no need at this juncture to delve into what lies beyond. But we know from other scriptures that after the union the redeemed continue the journey they have begun and go with Christ to His heavenly home (see on John 14:2, 3). Thus shall they “ever be with the Lord.”

**18. Wherefore.** Or, “so then.” This verse presents the conclusion of Paul’s reasoning in vs. 13–17. He has explained the relationship of the dead and the living believers at the time of Christ’s coming, to set at rest the minds of the troubled Thessalonians who feared that their dead would not share in the benefits and glories of the Lord’s return.

**Comfort one another.** This is more than a suggestion. In a kindly way the apostle is commanding the believers to meditate on “these words” (vs. 13–17), to perceive their comforting import, and to share such consolation with one another so that all may be encouraged by their message.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–3AA 262; CH 584

2, 3 SL 87

3 AA 559, 566; GC 469; 2T 170; 8T 64

4 2T 450, 472, 474, 475

7, 9–12AA 262

13, 14 AA 257

14 AA 259; DA 786; GC 550

16 DA 832; GC 301

16, 17 DA 320; EW 16; GC 322, 625; LS 66; PK 240; PP 339; SR 412; 1T 60; 5T 14

16–18AA 258; GC 302, 548; LS 51; ML 345; PP 89; 1T 41

17 AA 34; EW 110, 273, 287; ML 349; 1T 184

## CHAPTER 5

1 *He proceedeth in the former description of Christ’s coming to judgment, 16 and giveth divers precepts, 23 and so concludeth the epistle.*

**1. Times and the seasons.** For the meaning of this phrase see on Acts 1:7. Paul has carefully explained about “them which are asleep” (ch. 4:13), and has reminded his converts of the order of events at the second advent, but, for reasons that follow, he does not propose to discuss the chronology of the last days.

**Ye have no need.** The Thessalonians had received thorough instruction from the apostle (cf. chs. 2:11, 13; 3:4; see on ch. 4:1, 2), and he had given them all needful information concerning “the times and the seasons.”

**2. Know perfectly.** Rather, “know accurately.” Not that the Thessalonians knew all there was to know about “the day of the Lord,” but that they were well aware of its sudden coming. From this it is clear the apostle had given them the Lord’s teaching on the subject (Matt. 24:32–44; etc.). There was need only to confirm them in their knowledge and to press home its significance.

**The day of the Lord.** Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the first “the.” Such an omission in Greek possibly indicates that the phrase “day of the Lord” was a formula understood by the church. For the meaning of the phrase see on Acts 2:20. Paul makes frequent reference to the formula, or its equivalent, sometimes abbreviating it as “the day,” or “that day” (1 Thess. 5:4; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2:2). Here, “the day of the Lord” refers to Christ’s second advent.

**Cometh.** The form of the verb in Greek stresses the certainty of the Lord’s return.

**As a thief.** Compare Christ’s words in Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39, 40. Compare also 2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15. By his use of the figure of a thief the apostle emphasizes the *unexpectedness* of the second coming, thus warning his readers to be ready for its occurring at any time (see on 1 Thess. 4:15). If they heed his words, they need not be taken unawares (cf. Luke 21:34–36; 1 Thess. 5:4).

**In the night.** The Gospels often connect the coming of Christ with nighttime (Matt. 24:43; 25:6; Mark 13:35; Luke 12:35–38; 17:34). The early church took the illustrations literally and expected the Lord’s return to occur around midnight. Jerome mentions a Jewish tradition, based on the midnight coming of the Lord at the first Passover in Egypt, that the Messiah was to come at midnight. He attributes to this the “apostolic tradition” that the pre-Easter vigil should continue until midnight, in anticipation of the coming of Christ (Jerome, on Matt. 25:6). The apostle’s use of the word “night” should be seen, also, in the context of vs. 4–6.

**3. When they shall say.** Or, “whenever they may say.” Paul does not specifically identify who “they” are, but it is clear from the context (vs. 4–6) that he is referring to unbelievers. Although the apostle does not specifically state the time when the worldlings utter the words attributed to them, it is clear from the remainder of the verse that the words must be spoken immediately prior to Christ’s coming.

**Peace and safety.** These words, spoken by those who have not prepared for their Lord’s return, refer to inner tranquillity and external security, and reveal the satisfied state of the speakers’ minds. The calm is unjustified, for disaster is close at hand, and the unbeliever should really learn from the Christian, who is watchfully ready for last-day events. The Scriptures teach that the time immediately preceding Christ’s appearing will be one of universal distress (see on Luke 21:25, 26). See below on “sudden” and “destruction.”

**Sudden.** Gr. *aipnidios*, “unexpected,” “unforeseen,” “sudden.” The word occurs in the NT only here and in Luke 21:34.

**Destruction.** Gr. *olethros*, “destruction,” “death,” “ruin,” a noun derived from the verb *ollumi*, “to destroy.” Thus the phrase “sudden destruction” implies that “the day of the Lord” will bring unexpected catastrophe to the unbelieving world.

**Cometh.** Gr. *ephistēmi*, “to stand over,” “to stand by,” “to approach,” especially used of sudden appearances (Luke 2:9; 20:1; 24:4; Acts 6:12; etc.; cf. on Acts 12:7).

**As travail.** Or, “even as birth pang.” Childbirth cannot be called an unexpected event, but the onset of labor, with its pains, comes suddenly. Paul uses the figure to illustrate the suddenness of the last-day catastrophes.

**Shall not escape.** Rather, “shall in no wise escape,” no more than a woman can escape the birth of her child. Thus the apostle stresses the inevitability of the destruction that will come upon those who have rejected their Saviour. Paul appears to have had Christ’s own words (Luke 21:34–36) in mind as he wrote these thoughts to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:3).

**4. But ye, brethren.** Paul now contrasts his converts with the unbelievers who figure in v. 3.

**In darkness.** That is, in ignorance, and, indirectly, in wickedness. In the NT, “darkness” is frequently used for a state of spiritual poverty and reprobation (Matt. 4:16; 6:23; John 3:19; Acts 26:18; Rom. 13:12). Christians are no longer in that state (1 Thess. 5:5; 1 John 2:8–10).

**That day.** That is, “the day of the Lord” (v. 2).

**Overtake.** Gr. *katalambanō*, “to lay hold of” (see on John 1:5), here used in the sense of catching, seizing. The informed child of God, guided by the light that streams from the Divine Word, need not be caught in the destruction of the last days. He may be adequately prepared for all that will come upon the world and its inhabitants.

**5. Ye are all.** Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading, “for ye are all.” The clause is an explanation of the thought in v. 4 that Christians “are not in darkness.” Paul generously includes all the Thessalonian members in his statement, although he is well aware that some are weak (vs. 14, 15).

**Children of light.** Literally, “sons of light.” The Christian is a son of God (1 John 3:2), and God is light (John 1:9), so the Christian is a son of light by virtue of his relationship to the Father of lights (James 1:17). In addition, the gospel brings light (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Peter 2:9); so those who live according to the gospel dwell in light (see on Luke 16:8; John 12:36).

**Children of the day.** Literally, “sons of day.”

**We are not.** Note the change from “ye” to “we.” The apostle includes himself and his companions with the Thessalonians. He stated the ideal, trusting that it will inspire even the weakest member to reach the high standard of truly being “children of light.”

**6. Let us not sleep.** Or, “let us not go on sleeping.” The children of light will have no advantage if they fall asleep. “Sleep” here implies indifference to the nearness of Christ’s coming, a lethargy that keeps the Christian from being prepared for final events (cf. Matt. 25:5). Paul exhorts his friends not to be ensnared by such spiritual sloth, but to be wide awake (cf. Mark 13:35–37; Luke 21:34–36; Eph. 5:14–16).

**Others.** That is, the children of darkness, who are unaware of the terrible and glorious events that herald the Lord's return.

**Watch.** Gr. *grēgoreō*, "to become fully awake" (cf. on v. 10), "to watch," used frequently in the Gospels for spiritual alertness (cf. Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:33, 34; Luke 12:37).

**Sober.** Gr. *nēphō*, "to drink no wine," "to be sober." It is unlikely that Paul is referring to actual drunkenness among the Thessalonians (cf. 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). He is rather admonishing the Christian to be steady, temperate, calm in spirit, in view of the great "day" that is coming.

**7. They that sleep.** An observation, drawn from everyday life, to bring out the contrast between those who are "children of the day" and those who are "of the night" (v. 5).

**8. But let us.** In strong contrast with those whose conduct is described in v. 7.

**Sober.** Continuing, by repetition, the thought begun in v. 6.

**Putting on.** That the Christian needs to put on certain qualities implies that he is not naturally clothed in them. Here Paul tells him to don defensive spiritual armor, implying that war is in progress and that the Christian will need to safeguard himself from attack (see on Eph. 6:11, 12). For a fuller treatment of the Christian panoply see on Rom. 13:12, 14; 2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:13–17.

**The breastplate.** See on Eph. 6:14, where the breastplate is defined as being "of righteousness" (cf. Isa. 59:17; 2 Cor. 6:7).

**Of faith and love.** That is, the breastplate which is faith and love. The two qualities, faith and love, are integral parts of righteousness. Faith is the active laying hold of that righteousness that Christ imparts to the believer. Love, that great attribute of God's character (1 John 4:8), is shed abroad in our hearts by God's Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). The apostle had already commended the Thessalonians for their exercise of these qualities (1 Thess. 1:3). Here he urges them and all Christians to make fuller use of these attributes as sure defenses in their conflict with evil.

**Helmet.** See Eph. 6:17, where this piece of armor is defined as being "of salvation," whereas here Paul describes it as being "the hope of salvation." In so doing he teaches that salvation, in its ultimate stage, lies still in the future (see Matt. 24:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 3:5).

**9. For God.** Paul presents his understanding of God's purposes as the basis for the hope of salvation (v. 8).

**Appointed.** Gr. *tithēmi*, "to set," "to place," translated "to appoint" in Matt. 24:51; Luke 12:46; 2 Tim. 1:11; Heb. 1:2; 1 Peter 2:8. The word concerns God's purpose toward men, which is, and always has been, benevolent (see on John 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:9).

**Wrath.** Gr. *orgē* (see on Rom. 1:18).

**Obtain salvation.** Paul has just stated God's purpose negatively and now proceeds to give it positive expression. The Lord desires and designs that all men should be saved (see above on "appointed"; see Isa. 55:1; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17), and, by the gift of His Son, has made salvation possible.

**By our Lord.** Salvation is the gift of God, but, like all of God's goodness to man, it is bestowed through the person of Jesus Christ (cf. on Rom. 6:23).

**10. Who died for us.** See on Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3. The specific purpose of the sacrifice is here stated to be that all believers might “live together with” Jesus. This purpose is fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of our Saviour.

**Wake.** Gr. *grēgoreō* (see on v. 6).

**Sleep.** See on ch. 4:13. Paul is reverting to the topic that started the train of thought recorded in ch. 4:13–18, that is, the status of the Christian dead as compared with the living believers at the time of Christ’s return. Here he assures his readers that there will be no difference in the position of the two. Ultimately, both classes of Christians will “live together with him,” that is, with Christ (cf. on ch. 4:14–17).

**11. Wherefore comfort.** Compare on ch. 4:18, where almost identical words are used.

**Yourselves.** Rather, “one another,” as in ch. 4:18. Paul shows that the work of encouraging the downhearted is not the work only of the ministry. All Christians are to comfort their fellows.

**Edify.** Gr. *oikodomeō*, “to build up” (see on Acts 9:31). By mutual consideration of such elevated themes as the Lord’s coming, and the glory of the saints’ inheritance, church members can build up one another’s spiritual courage (cf. on Mal. 3:16–18; Acts 20:32).

**As also ye do.** The apostle is ever ready to give his converts credit for any good they are already doing, but does not hesitate to urge them not only to continue good practices but to intensify them (cf. on ch. 3:12). With this exhortation, Paul concludes his treatment of the topics begun in ch. 4:13.

**12. And.** Rather, “but,” showing the connection between the thought here and that in v. 11.

**Beseech.** Gr. *erōtaō* (see on Phil. 4:3; 1 Thess. 4:1). Paul does not wish the Thessalonians’ brotherly care for one another to weaken respect for church officers.

**To know.** That is, to recognize, therefore, to respect (see on ch. 4:4).

**Labour.** Gr. *kopiaō* (see on Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 1:3). It was Paul’s custom to ordain elders in every church he established (Acts 14:23). The new officers were necessarily inexperienced, and were perhaps not receiving proper recognition. Those who minister to the church should be respected. They should be remembered and acknowledged for their own sake (see 1 Cor. 16:15–18; Heb. 13:7). Such consideration places a great responsibility upon church officers to be men of God.

**Are over.** Gr. *proīstēmi*, “to set over,” “to superintend,” “to preside,” translated “to rule” in Rom. 12:8 (see comment there).

**Admonish.** Gr. *noutheteō*, “to put in mind,” “to warn,” “to admonish” (see on Acts 20:31; cf. on 1 Cor. 4:14; 2 Thess. 3:15). The word comes from *nous*, “mind,” and *tithēmi*, “to put.” Paul recognizes the weaknesses of his flock and the probability that its officers would need to guide, firmly, its members.

**13. To esteem.** Gr. *hēgeomai* (see on Phil. 2:3), here, “to have an opinion of.”

**Very highly.** Gr. *huperekperrissōs*, “beyond measure,” “more exceedingly,” “very highly.”

**In love.** This is added lest the spiritual quality of the Thessalonians' esteem for their elders be questioned.

**For their work's sake.** Or, "because of their work." The Christian church has no room for man worship, but encourages proper respect of those who bear worthily sacred responsibilities.

**Be at peace.** This firm injunction suggests that church unity at Thessalonica had been disturbed, possibly by disagreement between officers and laity, since he says "among yourselves." There must be no rivalries, no divisions in the church, with some acknowledging one worker as their spiritual leader, while others contend for another, as was the case later at Corinth (see 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4–6; 4:6; cf. Rom. 12:18; 14:19).

**14. We exhort.** Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4).

**Warn.** Gr. *noutheteō* (see under "admonish," v. 12).

**Unruly.** Gr. *ataktōi*, "out of the ranks," "disorderly," used in the NT only here. The corresponding verb *atakteō* occurs in 2 Thess. 3:7, and the adverb *ataktōs* in 2 Thess. 3:11 (see comment there).

**Comfort.** Gr. *paramutheomai* "to encourage," "to cheer up."

**Feebleminded.** Gr. *oligopsuchoi*, literally, "little-souled ones," that is, those who are little of heart, or the fainthearted. Such ones, possibly those overburdened with sorrow for the dead (ch. 4:13–18) or uncertain of the time of Christ's return (ch. 5:1–11), were to be comforted, not reprimanded. Christians should speak words of comfort and encouragement to timid, needy souls (Heb. 12:12, 13; cf. Gal. 6:2).

**Support.** Gr. *antechomai*, "take an interest in," "to pay attention to," "to help." The weak, whom Paul wishes to see supported, are probably those who are being tempted by impurity (ch. 4:3–7). Such members need spiritual support rather than censure, that they may be saved from yielding to temptation.

**Be patient.** Gr. *makrothumeō*, literally, "to be of a long spirit," hence, "to be long-suffering," "to be slow to anger," "to be patient." The same Greek word is used in 1 Cor. 13:4 to describe charity, or love, which "suffereth long." The love of God in the Christian will lead him to be kindly patient toward all, both within and without the church.

**15. See.** The form of the Greek verb implies "be vigilant," "see continually."

**Render evil for evil.** Or, "give back evil in exchange for evil." It is the natural tendency of the heart to do this, but the Christian way is different. Christ forbids retaliation in kind, and urges His followers to return good for evil (see on Matt. 5:38–48 cf. on Rom. 12:17).

**Follow.** Gr. *diōkō*, "to run after," "to pursue," "to aspire to." Instead of perpetuating evil by retaliation, the Thessalonians are admonished always, under all circumstances, to aspire to the good. Paul knew that those who pursued good would have little if any time for doing evil.

**Among yourselves.** Or, "unto one another."

**16. Rejoice evermore.** Literally, "always rejoice," with emphasis in the Greek on the idea "always." Paul placed value on the ability to be happy (see on Phil. 3:1; 4:4; cf. 2 Cor. 6:10). Whether from possession of present good or anticipation of future happiness, the Christian has abundant reason for rejoicing. With forgiveness of his sins his

conscience is free, and peace fills his soul. He knows that “all things work together for good” to him (see Rom. 8:28). Why should he ever be downcast? Those who are constantly complaining do not have genuine religion (MH 251).

**17. Pray without ceasing.** Literally, “incessantly pray,” with emphasis in the Greek on the idea of continuity (cf. on v. 16). There should be a constant spirit of prayer breathing through the Christian’s life. Never must the connection with Heaven be broken (see on Luke 18:1). Paul labored “night and day” (1 Thess. 2:9); he also prayed “night and day” (ch. 3:10). His many activities did not crowd out his prayers. Active connection with his heavenly Father was always maintained. So it should be with us. Compare the prayer life of Jesus (see on Mark 3:13).

**18. In every thing.** That is, under all circumstances, whether of joy or sorrow (cf. on Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2). Here we have definite assurance that even those things which appear to be against us may work out for our good; for God would not ask us to be thankful for that which would harm us (MH 255). Daniel gave thanks when he knew of the decree designed to take away his life (see Dan. 6:10). Paul himself has left a striking example of being thankful under the most adverse circumstances (see Acts 27:20, 35). Thanksgiving should be the Christian’s rule; health and joy are promoted by it (MH 251).

**For this.** These words may include not only the giving of thanks but also the continual rejoicing and prayer (vs. 16, 17).

**The will of God.** God is concerned with the whole life of His children, but He feels especial concern for their spiritual health. He wishes Christians to be happy, prayerful, and thankful. Our failure to cultivate these traits represents a failure to fulfill the divine will.

**In Christ Jesus.** The will of God was exhibited in Christ Jesus. He who would ascertain God’s will for his own life should study the life of Jesus and there perceive the supreme illustration of what God intends the Christian to be. Nowhere will there be found a more consistent pattern of happiness, prayerfulness, and gratitude than in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

**19. Quench.** Gr. *sbennumi*, “to extinguish,” “to put out,” “to stifle,” “to suppress.” In Matt. 12:20; Mark 9:44–48; Eph. 6:16; Heb. 11:34 the word is used for extinguishing fire and in Matt. 25:8 for the failure of lamps. Since the Spirit is associated with fire (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:3), *sbennumi* is particularly appropriate. It is probable that the Thessalonian church had been cooling the ardor of some of its number who had been exercising spiritual gifts (see on 1 Cor. 12:1; 14:1) in an enthusiastic manner. Paul cautions the church against extinguishing the flames of the spiritual fires that burn in their midst, lest they drive away the Holy Spirit. By so advising, he gives no license to fanatical manifestations that discredit the Spirit, but speaks only of such works as may be rightly sponsored by the Holy Spirit.

**20. Despise.** Gr. *exoutheneō*, “to make of no account,” “to despise utterly.”

**Prophecyings.** See on 1 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 4:11. From the close connection between vs. 19 and 20 of 1 Thess. 5, it would appear that prophesying was one of the main ways in which spiritual gifts were displayed in Thessalonica. The church’s interest in Christ’s return (chs. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:1–11) would add cogency to the gift of prophecy. There were a number of true prophets in the apostolic church (see Acts 11:28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:8–11).

**21. Prove.** Gr. *dokmazō* (see on ch. 2:4). Careful discrimination is to be made in distinguishing the false from the true (see AA 263).

**All things.** Specifically the manifestation of the Spirit (vs. 19, 20). God has provided definite tests to determine whether a prophet is genuine: (1) The true prophet must confess Christ in life as well as in word (1 John 4:1–3). He will acknowledge and confess Christ’s deity (1 John 2:22, 23). (2) His teachings must accord with the teachings of Scripture (see Acts 17:11; Gal. 1:8, 9). (3) The result or fruitage of his teaching must be good (Matt. 7:18–20).

**Hold fast.** The believer is not only to test spiritual gifts, but, having discerned the difference between the true and the false, the good and the bad, he is to hold the good, to retain it, in spite of all temptations to let it go.

**That which is good.** That is, the good among the spiritual gifts.

**22. Abstain.** Gr. *apechomai*, “to hold oneself away from” (see on ch. 4:3).

**Appearance.** Gr. *eidōs*, “form,” “outward appearance,” “kind.” Paul has referred to the “good” (v. 21) in the singular since he sees the “good” as being the one fruit of the Spirit; but he recognizes that “evil” appears in many guises, and he warns his converts against all the many forms in which it masquerades. The reading of the KJV has sometimes been used to prohibit the doing of that which is right simply because it may appear wrong to some onlookers. As appropriate as such counsel may be under certain circumstances, it is not this that the apostle is here setting forth. There are also many exceptions to such a rule. Jesus healed on the Sabbath (John 5:2–16; etc.), and ate with publicans and sinners (Matt. 9:10–13). To the prejudiced Jewish leaders these acts had the appearance of evil. But in spite of this prejudice (Matt. 12:9–13), Jesus did these acts as part of His great work of righteousness. However, He kept Himself entirely free from every form of evil.

**23. And the very God of peace.** Rather, “but the God of peace himself.” With this verse Paul begins the final section of his epistle, and molds it in the form of a prayer. He has upheld high standards (vs. 12–22), but recognizes that no man can reach them without divine aid; so his closing words direct his readers to the enabling power of God Himself. The title, “the very God of peace,” refers to the God whose outstanding quality is peacefulness, the God who is the source of all true peace (cf. Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Heb. 13:20, 21; cf. on Phil. 4:7). God ever seeks to restore peace between Himself and His rebellious subjects (see on 2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

**Sanctify.** Gr. *hagiazō* (see on Matt. 6:9; John 17:17; 1 Cor. 7:14).

**Wholly.** Gr. *holotelēs*, “perfect,” “complete in all respects,” from *holos*, “whole,” and *tēlos*, “end.” Luther renders *holotelēs* “through and through.” True sanctification involves the whole being: it is not really possible to be partially sanctified, in the sense of withholding certain areas of the life from being made holy. Every department of life must be submitted to the purifying power of God’s Spirit.

**Whole.** Gr. *holoklēros*, “complete in all its parts,” “complete,” “entire,” from *holos*, “whole,” *klēros*, “lot,” or “part.” The adjective may apply to each of the nouns that follow—“spirit,” “soul,” and “body”; or it may be construed with the verb “to preserve,” with the sense of “preserve in entirety.”

***Spirit and soul and body.*** Paul is not giving a study on the nature of man, but is making sure that no part of his convert's lives is left untouched by God's sanctifying power. Generally the Bible seems to speak of a twofold division in man, either body and soul, or body and spirit (see on Matt. 10:28; Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 5:3; 7:34). In Thessalonians these ideas are combined to emphasize that no part of man is to be excluded from the influence of sanctification. It is possible to see special significance in the divisions that Paul makes. By "spirit" (*pneuma*, see on Luke 8:55) may be understood the higher principle of intelligence and thought with which man is endowed, and with which God can communicate by His Spirit (see on Rom. 8:16). It is by the renewing of the mind through the action of the Holy Spirit that the individual is transformed into Christ's likeness (see Rom. 12:1, 2).

By "soul" (*psuchē* see on Matt. 10:28), when distinguished from spirit, may be understood that part of a man's nature that finds expression through the instincts, emotions, and desires. This part of one's nature can be sanctified, too. When, through the working of the Holy Spirit, the mind is brought into conformity with God's mind, and sanctified reason bears sway over the lower nature, the impulses, which would otherwise be contrary to God, become subject to His will. Thus the humble Christian may reach such a height of sanctification that when obeying God he is really carrying out his own impulses. He delights to do God's will. He has God's law in his heart (see Ps. 40:8; Heb. 8:10; cf. COL 3:12; DA 668).

The meaning of "body" (*sōma*) seems evident. It is the corporeal frame—flesh and blood and bones—which is controlled by either the higher or the lower nature. When the sanctified mind is in control, the body is not abused. Health flourishes. The body becomes a fit instrument through which the active Christian can serve his Master. Sanctification that does not include the body is not complete. Our bodies are God's temples. We should ever seek to keep them holy and glorify God in them (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

***Preserved.*** Gr. *tēreō*, generally, "to keep," but here and in Jude 1 translated "to preserve."

***Blameless.*** Gr. *amemptōs* (see on Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 2:10; 3:13). The one who is sanctified will be kept by God and presented faultless in the great day of the Lord's coming (cf. on Jude 24).

***Unto.*** Or, "at," that is, at the time of the coming.

***Coming.*** Gr. *parousia* (see on chs. 3:13; 4:15).

***Lord Jesus Christ.*** For comment on the Saviour's names see on Matt. 1:1; Phil. 2:5.

***24. Faithful.*** Compare 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23.

***He that calleth.*** Or, "he who is calling." see on Rom. 8:30. God's calling of the individual is the first in a series of divine operations that terminate in glorification.

***Will do it.*** That is, He will do the sanctifying and the keeping (v. 23). There is no failing with the Almighty.

***25. Pray for us.*** Paul constantly prays for his converts (chs. 1:2, 3; 5:23). He now pleads for their prayers on behalf of himself and his companions (cf. Rom. 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18, 19; Col. 4:3). There is no selfishness in this request, for his ambitions concern only the free course of the gospel message which he was called to proclaim (2

Thess. 3:1). Ministers and laymen need one another's prayers, and both should pray that nothing be allowed to hinder the advance of the gospel message to the ends of the earth (5T 718).

**26. Greet.** Gr. *aspazomai*, "to salute," "to greet" (Matt. 5:47; Mark 9:15; Rom. 16:3, 6; etc.).

**All the brethren.** Some of the members were weak, but Paul, from the depth of his brotherly love, wishes *all* to be included in his greeting.

**Holy kiss.** In the East, especially, the kiss was a common mode of expressing love and friendship in greeting (see Luke 7:45; Acts 20:37). The "holy kiss," or "kiss of charity" (1 Peter 5:14), was a symbol of Christian affection. It seems to have become a custom with early Christians to exchange this greeting at the time of the Lord's Supper (Justin Martyr *First Apology* 65). Later writings indicate that it was not the custom to give this "holy kiss" to one of the opposite sex (*Apostolic Constitutions* ii. 57; viii. 11).

**27. I charge.** Gr. *horkizō*, "to adjure," as in Mark 5:7; Acts 19:13. The use of such a strong word (cf. Deut. 6:13) may imply that some of the Thessalonian leaders were unwilling to have the epistle read to all the believers, or that some of the members were unwilling to listen (cf. 2 Thess. 3:14).

**By the Lord.** Paul was bringing not only personal but religious pressure to bear on those who first received the epistle. He implies that his epistle contains an inspired message that is urgently needed by all the Thessalonian believers.

**Be read.** That is, publicly, before the assembled Christians (cf. on Col. 4:16).

**Holy.** Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

**28. The grace of our Lord.** A similar salutation appears in all Paul's epistles (cf. Rom. 16:20, 24; 1 Cor. 16:23). The fullest form of benediction is given in 2 Cor. 13:14. The apostle's Christology shines forth throughout the epistle. At the beginning (1 Thess. 1:1) and at the end he invokes the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the believers.

**Amen.** Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this word.

The postscript following v. 28 appears in no early manuscript. It was a later editorial addition and not part of the original inspired account. Historical evidence favors Corinth as the city from which Paul wrote this epistle (see pp. 224, 225).

### ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-6AA 260

2 CM 127; 6T 166; 9T 135, 216

2, 3 FE 335, 354

2-5GC 38, 371

3 AA 220, 535; COL 411; DA 635; Ev 26; PP 104, 167; TM 233, 407; 4T 309; 5T 99, 187, 211, 233, 715; 8T 250

3-55T 10

4 ChS 41; 5T 216, 276; 6T 129; 9T 135

4, 5 GC 315

4-6DA 235

5 1T 404; 2T 441, 488; 3T 199

5, 6 4T 580

6 ChS 41; 5T 160, 409; 6T 410; 9T 135

8-10AA 260

12, 13 AA 261  
 13 2T 163  
 14 5T 489  
 14–24AA 263  
 15 8T 130  
 16–18GC 477  
 17 CH 423; GW 254, 258; MH 510; SC 98; TM 511; 2T 242, 397, 635; 6T 471; 7T 42  
 17, 18 5T 317  
 18 MH 255  
 19 CSW 28; 3T 428  
 22 AH 332; CH 591; Ev 680; EW 117; GW 129; MH 486, 491; MM 143, 218; TM 223; 1T  
 336, 353, 381, 490; 2T 248, 304, 306, 455, 457, 458, 615; 3T 239; 4T 364; 5T 138, 358,  
 367, 593; 6T 201  
 23 FE 144; GC 469, 473; ML 248; SL 7, 26; 3T 84, 570; 6T 475  
 24 1T 167; 2T 131  
 26 EW 117  
 3

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<sup>3</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Th 3:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.