



*Moving Toward  
Maturity and Joy in Christ*

*Philippians  
1 & 2 Thessalonians*

Material prepared by Seth Mauldin  
for the use of studying the Holy Bible.

Every effort has been made to accurately provide citations for works consulted;  
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## Main Text

These columns will have a few comments paired with each of the verses that deal with the main content and themes of the text. They are intended to act as a guide to help you keep the thought and flow of the text as you go through the book.

## Sample Page

- 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,  
**To** the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

*Here is where you are to make your observations on the text. The lessons will not have questions to answer, but by reading through the text of the book and making your notations, each one will be prepared to discuss and contribute in the class.*

- 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers;

- 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

## Side Points

These columns will be used to make comments on other issues, false teachings, and popular notions that pertain to the text, but are not necessarily part of the passage's context.

Explanations and introductions to new sections of the letter will also be found in this column.

# Suggestions for Use

I want you to get the most from this study that you possibly can. On my part, that means coming prepared to teach the class in a thoughtful and meaningful way. On your part, that means setting aside some time during your week to read the text and prepare your own thoughts. This is meant to be a “self-guided” study. I’ve included some thoughts alongside the text of each chapter, but the “way you do the lesson” is by reading through the text of these epistles and making notation of your *own* thoughts.

We’ll have plenty of time in class for me to share more of my own—but I want each of you to grow in your knowledge and increase your own Bible-study skills. Look for connections in the text. Use the space and draw all over the page! Write down all of your thoughts and questions around each verse. Then, at the end of each chapter try and piece it all together: What do you see as the main themes? How do the thoughts of the author build on each other as they flow and progress? How does it fit in the overall arc of the book? Each chapter will end with a few thought questions for you to answer—but you should arrive at the end of every division with more than a few thoughts of your own.

The text that has been used in this workbook is the New American Standard 1995 Update edition. I would suggest that you would benefit from pairing the following tools with your reading, and choose at least one additional translation to assist in your study.

- A good bible dictionary such as Strong’s—always available in the bargain bin at stores.
- A concordance for checking cross references...
- After recording your own initial thoughts, perhaps consult a commentary or work book; a short bibliography is included in the back of the book.
- Other translations you might consider include: The NET (has over 60,000 translator notes; the ESV, NKJV, and the NIV2011).

God bless you in your studies.

# Introduction to Philippians

Like many of the cities where the first congregations were established, the city of Philippi had a certain degree of notoriety. In 42 BC, after the assassins of Julius Caesar had been defeated, Philippi was made into a Roman colony. More specifically, it became a place of retire-



ment for military veterans. As one can imagine, this eventually became what we might think of as a patriotic city. As a Roman colony they could lay claim to all of the status that came with Roman citizenship. The population had a large amount of former military men. Eventually, the number of altars and temples dedicated to the emperor grew at such a rate that emperor worship would be one of the key facets of city life. Much of this is reflected in what Paul and his companions found when they entered the city as recorded in Acts 16.

While Paul would have normally sought out a Synagogue, this city did not possess one. This can be taken as a sign of the city's extremely low population of Jews (*a quorum of 10 men was required for a synagogue*). As a result, Paul's initial converts came from a group of women who met down by the river to pray. Lydia, a Thyatiran immigrant and seller of purple, is held out by name. Soon after, Paul's audience was extended to those in the local jail. After casting out a demon from a misused young girl, Paul was charged with inciting behavior that was unlawful for good Roman citizens. It was there, following the miraculous shaking of the prison, that the jailor would ask the question that led to the salvation of his household: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

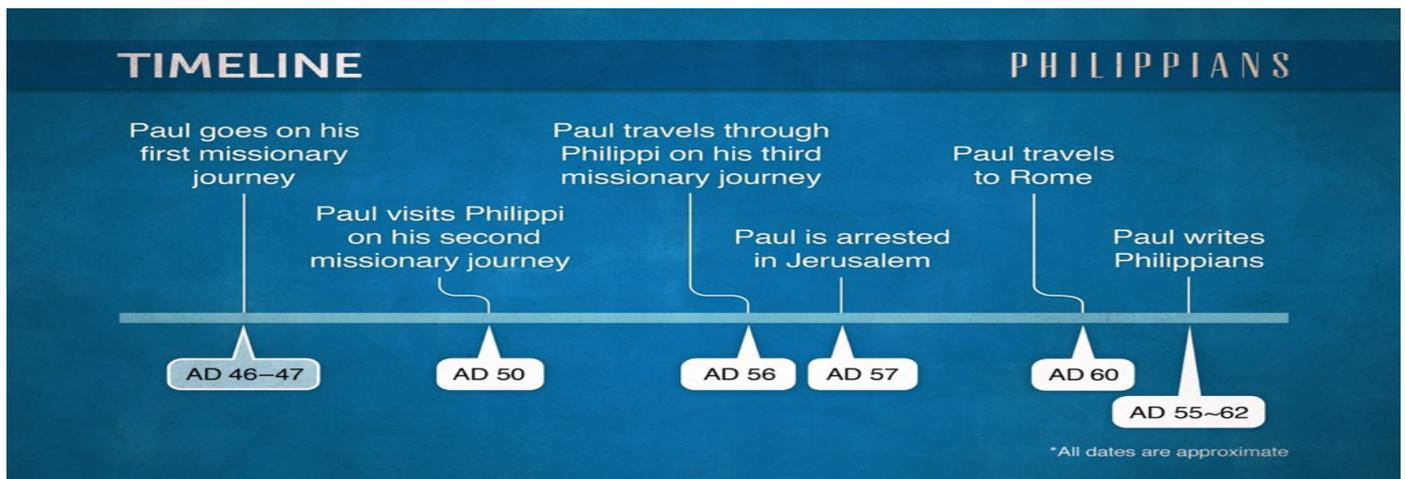
After receiving amends for their unlawful treatment by the authorities, they were let out of jail, but were begged to leave the city. After entering Lydia's house and encouraging the brethren, they took their leave and set out for Thessalonica by way of Amphipolis and Apollonia.

If any of Paul's epistles were to compete with the letters to Thessalonica for pure joy, it would surely be the letter to Philippi. There was a special relationship between Paul and these brethren, who on more than one occasion had been the only ones to provide him with financial support. They had been enthusiastic from the very start

(1:5), and had continued on without experiencing any drop in their zeal (4:15-18). While there is some sense that there was some disunity among the brethren, overall the congregation seems to have been dedicated and strong.

OUTLINE	PHILIPPIANS
1. Introduction and Paul's Report	(1:1-26)
2. Exhortations on Unity	(1:27-2:30)
3. Warnings against False Teachers	(3:1-21)
4. Further Exhortations and Thanksgiving	(4:1-23)

Paul's reason for writing, aside from expressing his joy and thanks for their gift, seems to be on helping them face their own struggles. What they had seen Paul undergo, they were now suffering in their own lives (1:29-30). Paul was in a unique position to encourage them. Paul, a prisoner for the sake of Christ, could speak to them about selflessness and content in a way that few others could match. He could draw on experience, both past and present, to help put his and their suffering in perspective. Through the example he set in his imprisonment, he showed others the pathway to peace and joy even in the midst of difficulty. As one author has stated, "*Paul writes the letter to explain how the suffering of Christ and the suffering of the servants of Christ lead to ultimate vindication by God's triumphant grace.*"



# Your Outline

## Main Text

It is always humbling to see Paul's consistent deflection of self-elevation. He loved to speak of himself as being a servant.

It was an immense encouragement for Paul to be able to give thanks for brethren who had supported him in his work.

## Chapter One

- 1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus,  
**To** all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:
- 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,
- 4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,
- 5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

## Side Points

How amazing that a congregation that began with a handful of women and no Jews has already grown to being able to appoint both elders and deacons!

While Paul is speaking of financial support, it is still true that most of what Paul gave thanks for regarding his brethren was for their spiritual faithfulness, not their physical accomplishments.

## Main Text

What a joy to know that the One who calls us does not abandon us in our task.

Paul's confidence in his brethren not just a feeling—they had strongly demonstrated their faithfulness.

This struggling together in the work of the gospel had created a strong bond between Paul and these brethren.

His prayer was their good attitudes would continue to grow and that their effectiveness would increase.

- 6 *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.
- 7 For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.
- 8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
- 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,
- 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

## Side Points

Verses like this are sometimes used to teach concepts like the impossibility of a believer to lose their salvation.

The reasoning goes, if a believer did fall away then that would be a reflection on Jesus as having not finished His work.

But the very next verse demonstrates that Paul's confidence was partly based in what he'd seen in the believers there.

Their demonstration of faith and works were a good indication that they would continue on that same path.

Paul's statement is that in both their immediate participation in the gospel, as well as their future efforts, Christ would continue to be with and bless His people.

## Main Text

What may have appeared to be a setback (his imprisonment) had opened up new doors.

Now the gospel was being spread to the highest parts of the Roman empire.

They knew he was a prisoner because of Christ, not because the emperor said so.

His brave stand and continued faith were contagious.

Some were emboldened to be better; some were pushed to be petty.

11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

12 Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

13 so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,

14 and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;

## Side Points

Sometime we forget that if we are not acting as channels for Christ, there is no other way for us to bear the right kind of fruit.

The Praetorian guard (a group of over 9,000 soldiers) served as the personal guard for Caesar. They held a position of power and often held great influence over the emperor. But they were unable to intimidate Paul. We can imagine the sort of behavior that would eventually cause them to have admiration and respect for Paul.

Paul is not excusing or ignoring their bad behavior.

## Main Text

While their motives were impure, at least the gospel message they preached had not been tainted. It is a remarkable statement of Paul's selfless nature and love for Christ that he could have an attitude that rejoiced because people were still hearing the truth about Christ.

This sets up the next section of the text. Paul is confident that he will be delivered from prison, but vs 20 also makes it clear that his deliverance might be by being freed from this life.

- 16 the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;
- 17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.
- 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.  
**Yes, and I will rejoice,**
- 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

## Side Points

Paul is not saying that these are men who wouldn't be held accountable for their hearts. He speaks of their selfish ambition, something that is clearly condemned. The point is that Paul could not control them, he could only control how he responded to them.

This is the sort of faith that we are striving for: It is the sort of faith displayed by Daniel and his friends. Whether by life or death, God is still in control.

## Main Text

If he continued to life, it would be for Christ. If he died, he would go to be with Christ.

There was a genuine conflict at work in Paul. Like all Christians, he would know that going on to an eternal reward would be the best of all personal options. But he wanted more time to help affect other brethren that he desired to take with him.

Through his prayers he'd reached the conclusion that he'd most likely stay on and continue to be of benefit to them. Their faith would be encouraged when they were reunited.

- 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- 22 But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.
- 23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;
- 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.
- 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,
- 26 so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

## Side Points

*See; Galatians 2:20*

Reading these verses can be a real test of how comfortable we have grown here.

Would we be willing to set aside what is best for us personally in order to seek what is best for others.

## Main Text

Paul was ready to work for them. He hoped that in his absence their devotion to God would remain as firm as ever.

Persecution is usually a sign of doing something right. For them, it was proof that they were behaving like Christ as they were rejected by the world. For the ones who were doing the persecuting it was a marker of their destruction.

It is not only apostles who are called to suffer.

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28 in no way alarmed by *your* opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God.

29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

## Side Points

This is another variation of Paul's "walk worthy of your calling" with which he exhorted the churches in Ephesus and Colossae.

When our faith is genuinely placed in God, and we are thrown into His work, we have no reason to be alarmed by the opposition. It is expected.

We are usually encouraged when we hear of others enduring hardship for Christ; how will we act when *we* are called to do the same?

## Chapter One Questions:

1. How had Paul's imprisonment opened up new doors?

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2. How did Paul feel about others preaching the gospel?

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3. What was Paul's view of his future prospects?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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## Main Text

Aside from being an obvious yes, these make up the motivation for what follows.

Because we have all of vs 1, we passionately pursue unity of mind, love, spirit, and purpose.

This can only be accomplished through humility in the truest sense.

It is assumed that we'd look out for ourselves—seeking the good of others is something that must be cultivated.

## Chapter Two

- 1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,
- 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.
- 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;
- 4 do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

## Side Points

Although he is not finished providing them with examples to follow, Paul now transitions to urging the brethren there to exhibit the same level of selflessness seen in himself, and ultimately in Christ.

Or as he spoke of the Corinthians, outdoing each other in showing honor.

The message of our culture is the exact opposite.

## Main Text

We cannot fully understand what is being described by Paul.

We have not seen or experienced what Christ was willing to give up. But not only did He willingly relinquish it, He has the most extreme exchange of position in all of history.

Experiencing what it is to be human was not pleasant—but it was necessary. And Jesus experienced it all, including His most ignoble death.

Because of His willingness to fulfill God's plan of salvation, the Father has elevated the Son above everyone and everything.

- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.
- 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
- 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

## Side Points

It is hard not to be overwhelmed in reading this section.

As we try to contemplate selflessness toward each other, it gives cause for reflection.

Is there anything I'm not willing to let go for others?

Am I willing to be made low so that others can be lifted up?

Is there any end to my obedience? Do I have a line that I'm not willing to cross for the Lord?

Am I going to take part in the glorious return of Christ when all knees will bow to Him?

## Main Text

Others may not have seen His glory while on earth, but they will have no choice to acknowledge it then.

What a Savior!  
What a salvation!  
How motivated should we be to throw ourselves into the work of the Lord?

God cannot stand a complainer.

Consider that such a small act goes an incredibly distance in letting our lights shine for Christ.

11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing;

15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

## Side Points

While Paul is obviously not teaching that our works or efforts earn our salvation, he is consistent that whether we are numbered with the saved depends on whether we carefully walk according to God's will.

The Old Testament frequently equated the complaints with unbelief.

## Main Text

This is not an act of pride. It is an attitude of humility and reveals that depth for which Paul cared for his brethren.

Even if his service to them required his death, he could still find joy.

Paul was not being dour; this was a genuine call.

Timothy was often Paul's go-to messenger. He could trust him completely, although he hated to be separated from his company.

16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

18 You too, *I urge you*, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

20 For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

## Side Points

We can relate. If we've poured our hearts into someone, it is devastating when they reject the truth—even if we may have done much good in the situation as a whole.

Again, Paul could have this attitude because his life already belonged to Christ.

## Main Text

Rather than take this as a general widespread condemnation, he is probably making a reference to those self-willed preachers of ch. 1.

Timothy stood as a stark contrast whose worth had already been proven.

Paul begins to describe why he sent this messenger back to be with his brethren.

21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

22 But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father.

23 Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things *go* with me;

24 and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

## Side Points

The immediate inclusion of another faithful co-worker would seem to support the limited target of vs 21.

## Main Text

Originally, Epharoditus had been sent by the brethren to comfort Paul.

He had certainly done so, and had even risked his life by serving Paul.

After his close call with death, his church family back home had been very worried, and Paul thought it best to send this good man back home.

He was there acting as proxy for the church. They were unable to all minister him in his chains.

26 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned *about you*.

29 Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;

30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

## Side Points

This is an interesting example of demonstrating how the Spirit functioned in the first century. Spiritual gifts were not just sitting at the Apostle's fingertips for their everyday use when they felt like doing so. Here was a sick and dying servant, and yet he was not healed by the hand of Paul. God allowed him to recover.

## Chapter Two Questions:

1. What lessons were they to learn from Christ's example?

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2. What attitude plays a key role in our example to our generation?

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3. How had Timothy proven himself to the brethren?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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## Main Text

Whether or not they were already being bothered by the Judaizing teachers or Paul was just preparing them for eventual encounters, he is going to provide them with a an example of what it really means to trust in Christ and not in the weakness of the flesh.

Whatever credentials they might have had, his could not only match but excel their own.

All aspects of the law were kept just so.

## Chapter Three

- 1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.
- 2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;
- 3 for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,
- 4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:
- 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

## Side Points

Some people find Paul's language both here and elsewhere to be somewhat jarring. But when people's souls were at stake, Paul seldom pulled any punches when using accurate language to describe the character and behavior of those who would pull people off of the right path.

## Main Text

Paul had led the way in going after Christians and had diligently pursued the works of the Law.

As loss; something that he was glad to let go.

Not only his prestigious past, but anything that you could imagine—when compared to what is found in Christ, it is completely worthless.

Paul had learned not to trust in the flesh, or to try and achieve justification through works of righteousness, but to place himself within the saving power of what can only be found in Christ.

6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

## Side Points

This was not a grudging abdication.

Rubbish = That which is thrown to the dogs; or the manure or dung heap.

Paul's struggle with the Law and the subsequent freedom found in Christ (ala Romans 7-8) come to mind.

## Main Text

All that Paul had given up and sacrificed for Christ did not mean that he had risen to the “top level” of spirituality.

He knew that there was more work to do, and he was determined to do it.

Whatever was behind—all that made up his life prior to Christ:

Whatever was ahead—anything that he must go through to reach the goal.

Perfect; Mature

This attitude—  
pressing on...

- 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.
- 12 Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead,
- 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- 15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;

## Side Points

The language of this section is beautiful to read:

I seek to attain, but know that I must still seek....

I want to lay hold of the hope and reason that caused Christ to first lay hold of me.

Not—“*these many things I dabble with*”

If we are going to attain the prize, we won’t be able to make it without a single-minded purpose.

## Main Text

Regardless of what the immature may seek to do...

Pattern: His instruction and teaching, along with the other apostles.

By contrast, others do not walk according to the pattern and it has led them away.

Not only away, but to their destruction.

Walking the pattern helps us to keep our minds on where we are headed, and the great reward that we will receive.

- 16 however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.
- 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.
- 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ,
- 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.
- 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;
- 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

## Side Points

Paul had no place for the traditions of men. But he always stressed the importance of walking along the pattern and traditions of the apostles.

Many who buck tradition today see themselves as being more enlightened than the rest. How enlightened does it sound to be an enemy of the cross of Christ?

The eventual result is not greater heights of spirituality, it is a greater degree of earthly and fleshly thinking.

## Chapter Three Questions:

1. Why could Paul have had confidence in the flesh?

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2. Why did Paul choose to place his confidence elsewhere?

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3. What was Paul's attitude about growth and perfection?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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## Main Text

Not in themselves,  
not in others, but  
*in the Lord.*

Paul doesn't take  
sides. He appeals to  
them both.

They are to have the  
same attitude, and it  
is to be one that is  
inspired by the  
Lord.

What a shame for  
those who have their  
names written in the  
same book to not be  
on the same page.

A proper attitude of  
joy and gentleness  
go a long way to  
achieving peace  
within a body.

## Chapter Four

- 1 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to see*, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.
- 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.
- 3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of the* gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
- 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!
- 5 Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.

## Side Points

Continue to see the warmth and affection that Paul had. They were the crown that he wore!

Simply giving up or continuing on in bitterness was not an option.

(Possibly Timothy or Epharoditus who were being sent)

Sometimes a little outside help is needed to resolve conflict.

When is the appropriate time to rejoice? There is always an occasion to find some sort of joy because of what we have *in the* Lord.

## Main Text

Anxiety about what we don't have can be cured by thanksgiving and acknowledgement of what God has already done.

We may not be able to fully understand it, but that doesn't keep us from appreciating it.

What am I putting in my heart? Does it promote the attitude of pressing on?

They had once again been able to support Paul financially.

- 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.
- 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
- 10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity.

## Side Points

There is an overall mindset that Paul has been describing. We look forward. We are headed to another place. We get there by ensuring the present is filled with the right attitude. Being in the Lord. An attitude of joy. Seeking unity with others. Verse 8 is a great summary of what we ought to fill our minds with as we seek to lay hold of our upward calling.

More emphasis on tradition and pattern.

## Main Text

Even when they hadn't been able to help, Paul had been content.

These were not words of false modesty. This was how Paul had lived since his response to the Lord. It was not an easy task...

But his Savior was up to supplying him with the strength.

Although he *could* live without, it was still good that he didn't have to.

We aren't given the reason, but this does emphasize the close bond between Paul and the brethren.

- 11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.
- 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.
- 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
- 14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.
- 15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

## Side Points

Christ does not empower us to score touchdowns, run marathons, or make it until 5:00 at the office. He gives us the strength to be content and be faithful to Him in all of our circumstances.

## Main Text

Having already made it clear that he could have done without, Paul draws out the real benefit in supporting preachers. It is an opportunity for spiritual growth on their part. They are engaging in the spread of the gospel.

Beyond Paul being pleased, God was pleased with their support of the kingdom.

As they had supplied Paul's physical needs, God would ensure that they were spiritually filled.

- 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a *gift* more than once for my needs.
- 17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.
- 18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.
- 19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
- 20 Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

## Side Points

Part of what made their sacrifice so meaningful, apart from the great need, was that this was a real sacrifice. Often we give from our abundance, and it may not *feel* as though we've really missed out on much. It is good to remind ourselves of at least one of the reasons why we give. We are actively helping in the gospel being spread.

## Main Text

Having commanded peace and right thinking among the brethren, having commended them for their good works, he closes the letter with his customary prayer for grace.

- 21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.
- 22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.
- 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

## Side Points

The results of the gospel being made known among the guard?

## Chapter Four Questions:

1. What was the key to resolving conflict?

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2. How are we to solve anxiety and other problems of the heart?

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3. What blessing comes with participating in the gospel?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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# Introduction to First Thessalonians

In the days of Paul, Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia and served as its capital. This is still reflected today with modern Thessaloniki holding some measure of importance. It was also a “free city,” and enjoyed all of the status that came with that designation.

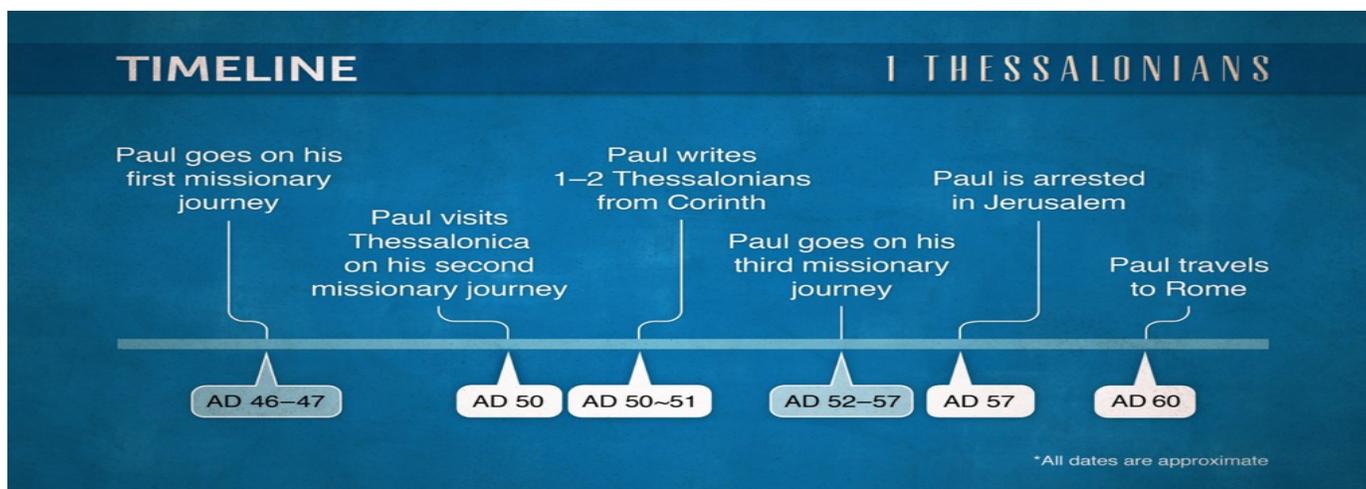


Paul came to the city on his second missionary journey, this time taking along Silas and Timothy as his traveling companions. Their journey had first taken them to Philippi (Acts 16), but after Paul and Silas had been imprisoned they moved on despite their success in that city. Once in Thessalonica, Paul apparently preached for three Sabbaths in a row (Acts 17:2) and was had many respond to the gospel. Although there were some Jews in that number, it was mostly made up of gentiles and the leading women in the city (Acts 17:4).

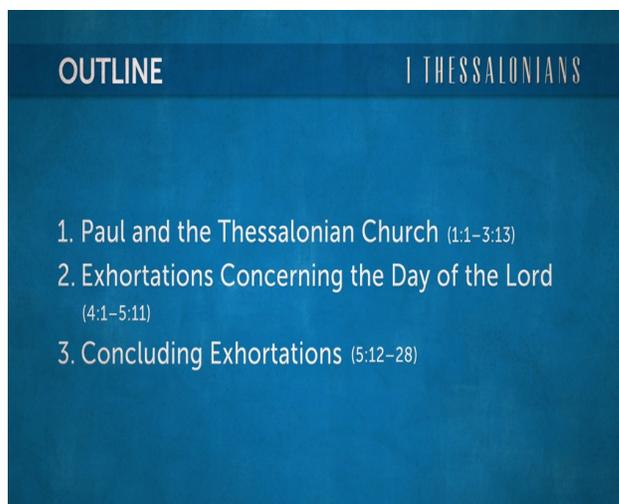
The unbelieving Jews in the city did not take well to have their numbers poached by Paul, and they responded by attacking the home of Paul’s host and by attempting to paint them as revolutionaries to the local authorities (Acts 17:5-6). This opposition forced them to leave for the city of Berea, where even there they were hounded by the Jews from Thessalonica. Eventually they make their way to Corinth. Paul arrived there in, what one can easily imagine, a state of very low spirits. He had been run out of Philippi, forced to flee Thessalonica, and chased out of Berea. Small wonder that he reminded the Corinthians that he had been with them “*with much weakness and trembling,*” (1 Cor. 2:3).

Paul carried with him an intense desire to learn of the fate of his brethren in Thessalonica. Had they been able to remind faithful? What effect was the persecution having on them? It would be the good news of their perseverance that would energize and enable Paul to pursue the work with renewed enthusiasm.

This urgency for his brethren was one of the chief reasons for Paul’s writing. He was overjoyed at their faithfulness and wanted to commend them to the fullest degree. But they were being faithful *in spite* of opposition, not because of its absence. And that meant that Paul also needed to encourage them and deal with the threats they faced. It seems that Paul once again faced the threat of people trying to discredit the gospel by casting doubt on his character. He was not a caring father figure—he was just a peddler who had abandoned them at he first sign that he would be able to turn a profit! On top of this, they still faced the persecution by the fervent devotees of the local pagan deities. Additionally, there would have been the temptation, (chapter four seems to draw particular attention to that of a sexual nature) to return to certain aspects of idol worship.



Finally, in a theme that bridges the two letters, Paul must also write to clear up some misconceptions about the return of Christ. One can easily imagine that in a mere three weeks Paul could scarcely have answered every nuance of doctrine. Some thought that the return of Christ was limited in availability. Others worried about the fate of those who had already died—had they missed a share in glory? What about those who were still living—what is their part?. After expressing joy and encouragement for the brethren, Paul would turn his attention to helping them gain a better understanding of the return of Christ.



# Sample Outline of 1 Thessalonians:

1. Greeting (1:1)
2. Prayer of thanksgiving (1:2-3)
3. Reminiscences of Thessalonica (1:4-2:16)
  - a. *Response of the Thessalonians (1:4-10)*
  - b. *The preaching of the gospel at Thessalonica (2:1-16)*
    1. *The preachers' motives (2:1-6)*
    2. *The preachers' maintenance (2:7-9)*
    3. *The preachers' behaviour (sic) (2:10-12)*
    4. *The preachers' message (2:13)*
    5. *Persecution (2:14-16)*
4. The relationship of Paul to the Thessalonians (2:17-3:13)
  - a. *Paul's desire to return (2:17-18)*
  - b. *Paul's joy (2:19-20)*
  - c. *Timothy's mission (3:1-5)*
  - d. *Timothy's report (3:6-8)*
  - e. *Paul's satisfaction (3:9-10)*
  - f. *Paul's prayer (3:11-13)*
5. Exhortation to Christian living (4:1-12)
  - a. *General (4:1-2)*
  - b. *Sexual purity (4:3-8)*
  - c. *Brotherly love (4:9-10)*
  - d. *Earning one's living (4:11-12)*
  - b. *The time of the parousia (5:1-3)*

# Sample Outline of 1 Thessalonians: Cont.

## 6. Problems associated with the parousia (4:13-5:11)

*a. Believers who died before the parousia (4:13-18)*

*b. The time of the parousia (5:1-3)*

*c. Children of the day (5:4-11)*

## 7. General exhortations (5:12-22)

## 8. Conclusion (5:23-28)

# Your Outline of 1 Thessalonians:

# Your Outline Continued:

## Main Text

Paul is holding up these brethren as an example of genuine conversion. This begins with their location. They were a church **in God, in Jesus.**

Always take note of Paul's constant inclusion of brethren in his prayers.

Evidence of conversion: Faith produced good deeds. They *loved* to engage. Their faith was vibrant and done "In the presence" of God.

Being chosen of God carries with it great responsibility.

Paul preached a powerful message and they responded in a sincere way.

## Chapter One

- 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,  
**To** the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.
- 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers;
- 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,
- 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you;
- 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

## Side Points

Paul always looks for opportunities to shine the spotlight on co-workers.

As side note, unless Jesus is God, you can't put Him in the type of grammatical construction of vs 1.

Individual prayer is important; so is prayer with other believers: (We vs2)

Paul uses "brothers" over 20 times in writing this letter.

(v4) The chosen are those who respond to the call. God calls people through the preaching of the gospel: See 2 Thess. 2:14.

## Main Text

They not only imitated Paul in his behavior, but by becoming fellow sufferers.

The example Paul references is like a stamp or a seal (Hebrews 8:5 uses the same word for pattern.) This is high praise.

There are at least three more evidences of their conversion in these two verses.

The kind of reception they gave to Paul; Their very real turn from idols; Their looking forward to the return of Christ.

- 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,
- 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
- 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.
- 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve <sup>d</sup>a living and true God,
- 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

## Side Points

We can do well to imitate the easy parts of faith; true conversion calls for us to embrace it all.

The nature of our faith can and will have an impact on other brethren.

What do you imagine would be the report that sounded forth from your faith?

It matters that we find good replacements. If we turn from idols without turning to a sincere faith, we will only find ourselves returning.

## Chapter One Questions:

1. What are some of the attributes of true conversion that Paul identifies in the first chapter?

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2. What did Paul say the brethren there had become, first in verse 6, and then in verse 7? What is the significance?

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3. What are some ways that the word can sound forth from local congregations in our day?

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4. Write your summary of chapter one:

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## Main Text

It is important to remember that one of the reasons Paul writes is to defend the gospel by a defense of his conduct:

**Vain:** Paul didn't come as an empty handed beggar, but with the gospel.

Paul points, not to his success, but to his suffering as a mark of his own authenticity.

Rather than change the message or stop spreading it, Paul continued to preach.

Paul does not avoid the charges that are thrown against him. He lays them out here.

## Chapter Two

- 1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,
- 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.
- 3 For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit;
- 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.
- 5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—

## Side Points

It is always right for brethren to defend themselves, *when*, the integrity of the gospel is at stake.

We can easily imagine how difficult it would have been to speak with boldness after what was suffered in Philippi.

When Paul speaks about how he did *not* preach the gospel, it gives a reverse image of how many false men bring a false message.

## Main Text

In this Paul is mirroring Jesus. The Lord had all manner of power, but He did not weaponize it. Paul did not need to constantly hide behind the authority of his apostleship to force people to listen to his message or to respond.

Instead, Paul and his coworkers handled them with an affection that can only be described as motherly.

Rather than take advantage of them, they treated them the way any parent would their child: with great affection and deep self-sacrifice.

There could be no doubt that Paul had conducted himself with integrity.

- 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.
- 7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children.
- 8 Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.
- 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
- 10 You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;

## Side Points

When put in roles of authority and leadership, how do we seek to get others to follow our example?

How often has this described your behavior and attitude toward brethren?

Because you were *very dear to us*. It should be the natural response to want those closest to us to experience the truth.

While Paul is speaking of his labor from a financial perspective, the model of selflessness and thinking of others is applicable in any situation.

## Main Text

Along with the care of the mother, Paul gave them the instruction and discipline of the father—urging them to do the right thing.

This was not for Paul’s personal legacy, but for the glory of God.

Paul is doing more than commending them—he is *reminding* them that what they’ve believed is from God, not just a message from men.

The fact that the God was at work in them is made evident not only by the fact that they are being persecuted, but also in that they are being strengthened and enabled to face these sufferings. God has always done this for His people.

11 just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children,

12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews,

15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men,

## Side Points

It could be that Paul is adding a “firmer” image in the father, but more likely it serves to further emphasize his devotion to them from another angle.

This is a good place to ask of self: What are my motivations in interacting with my brethren?

It is tempting to speculate as to “how” the word performs its work—but sometimes we need to settle for the fact that the text simply says it does. We can all tell that we’ve been changed by God’s word and His plan.

## Main Text

Some of Paul's enemies opposed him because of their rejection of Jesus as the Christ, others because of their hatred for the Gentiles.

Paul had not abandoned them. He had not left them by choice, and was determined to see them again.

He had tried, but Satan, through some unknown means, had thwarted his efforts.

Paul was so proud of these brethren—he was confident in their genuine faith. He had no greater joy than to know that his children walked in the truth.

16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.

18 For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and *yet* Satan hindered us.

19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

20 For you are our glory and joy.

## Side Points

Remember that in Matthew 23, Jesus spoke most harshly of those who kept others from entering into the kingdom.

How easy it can be to assign ill motives to others!

However Paul meant this, it is a reminder that in doing the work of God, we *do* face active resistance from forces—often unseen and spiritual—that do not want us to succeed. This need not be supernatural, but simply Satan working through the lives of hard-hearted people who hate the truth.

## Chapter Two Questions:

1. Why was it important that Paul remind them of what he'd suffered?

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2. What sort of relationship roles did Paul take on in his treatment of his brethren in Thessalonica?

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3. In what ways did they become imitators of Paul in regard to suffering?

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4. Write your summary of chapter two:

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## Main Text

Paul would have preferred to have more co-workers, but could not bear waiting to hear.

Timothy was sent to not only ascertain their status, but to bolster their faith in whatever way was needed.

The opposition and persecution should not come as a surprise. Just as Paul had tried to prepare them for what they'd face, he had warned them of what he would endure.

The souls are what are important. Paul was not seeking physical gain, but to fulfill his ministry of bringing others to the Lord.

## Chapter Three

- 1 Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone,
- 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,
- 3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.
- 4 For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.
- 5 For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

## Side Points

This is such an emotional chapter. The intensity that Paul feels toward his brethren is touching to the reader and an opportunity to reflect on our own relationships with each other.

It might have caused the brethren to have second thoughts about Paul: If someone suffers like this, can they really be a good man?

But Paul's suffering was not a mark of God's displeasure, it was evidence that he was working for the Lord.

## Main Text

Great relief—the brethren there thought of him as he did of them.

The reason is tied to verse 8:

Now that they knew of their devotion to the Lord, they felt an enormous sigh of relief. This knowledge gave them immense comfort in their trials.

Their faithfulness was reason to give praise to God. It was an answered prayer; one that they had offered repeatedly. For this, they could not express enough thanks to God.

- 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,
- 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith;
- 8 for now we *really* live, if you stand firm in the Lord.
- 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,
- 10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

## Side Points

What strong and vivid imagery Paul uses to describe their mutual affection:

These were people who *longed* to be with each other.

Can you imagine waiting, holding your breath, not really feeling alive—all on account of the thoughts you had for your brethren?

How quickly we move on from our blessings. We've expressed thankfulness once, and then we forget!

## Main Text

In response to Satan's attempts to block their path, Paul's desire is for God to clear the way.

Love is a vital ingredient in the local body. Paul does not mention it because they do not have it, but because we cannot have too much.

Our hearts are only established on a firm foundation *if* they are rooted in love.

- 11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you;
- 12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you;
- 13 so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

## Side Points

Paul continues to use the same word Lord to refer to Jesus that the Septuagint used in the OT to refer to God. It is a subtle but consistent emphasis on the divinity of Jesus.

We might be blameless be according to the standards of some, but what matters is if we can be blameless before God.

## Chapter Three Questions:

1. Why might the brethren have been disturbed by Paul's afflictions?

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2. How did Paul feel toward the brethren, and what was the report of how they felt toward him?

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3. How can brethren work to cultivate the same time of relationship?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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## Main Text

Now that Paul's confidence in their faith has been made sure, he can encourage them to continue in their faith and guide them in struggle.

Continuing to excel is a strong theme of the last two chapters.

Paul's commands are not his personal views; they carry authority.

God does not take a casual attitude toward moral purity.

Paul could be referring to an individual's body, but seems to be referring to one's wife.

This is modified twice; with sanctification and honor, and not with lustful passion.

## Chapter Four

- 1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.
- 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of the Lord Jesus*.
- 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;
- 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,
- 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

## Side Points

As with love, we can never have too much growth in our faith.

These verses are not an indication of an outbreak of immorality in the church, but a reminder that we all need constant encouragement to move beyond our culture.

Paul wasn't just teaching the culture of his time as he is often accused. Again, this carried *authority*.

Interpreting verses 4-5 to be speaking of a spouse is not always very popular because it supposedly requires a "low view" of marriage. But it doesn't seem to be a far cry from what Paul writes in 1 Cor. 7:9—not to mention the immediate modifiers of sanctification and honor.

## Main Text

Whether married or not, their lusts are not to be fulfilled by taking advantage of others.

These verses serve to underscore how counter cultural we are to be., and how seriously God takes immorality.

This teaching carries both authority and severity.

Paul is not writing because the church needs a lesson in love: They had already shown that they both understood and practiced real godly love.

Love is something that increases with practice. It is something that can easily diminish when it isn't put to frequent use.

- 6 *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*.
- 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.
- 8 So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.
- 9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;
- 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,

## Side Points

The sexual relationship is bound inside of marriage. And while it does provide for the flesh, it is not to be reduced to something that is without honor and merely becomes a tool for lust fulfillment.

How often does our world see something like an affair as just fodder for entertainment and jokes?

The three churches that we know of in Macedonia are Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica. Paul seems to be saying that their love had extended beyond the local church and on to these brethren as well.

## Main Text

Paul encourages them to abound in underrated virtues. Simply tending to your own affairs and providing for your own needs goes a very long way in creating the right sort of life.

Paul is not comparing degrees of sorrow, but there is a contrast between those who have hope in Christ and the world that only knows despair and uncertainty.

Christians can have confidence for those who've died in Christ based on the resurrection of the Lord.

Those who have died have not somehow missed out on the return of Christ.

11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,

12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

## Side Points

It is often assumed that many parts of the Christian life are made up of grand gestures and sweeping changes. There are some behaviors that may be in need of radical alteration—but just consider how much can be said for simply keeping your nose clean.

Now Paul turns his attention to clearing up misunderstandings about death and the return of Christ. This section runs through 5:11 specifically, and then through the rest of chapter five in a more general manner by means of our reaction.

Paul was not teaching that the return was right around the corner. But, as all Christians would to some degree, hoped that it was sooner than later.

## Main Text

The end of the age will be brought on by the Lord. It will be clear and everyone will know the exact moment that it begins. It is not an event that is going to somehow slip us by, or exclude those who are not paying attention.

The comfort referenced in verse 18, while including everything that Paul has just said, surely finds its greatest target in the words of vs 17: “So we shall always be with the Lord.”

- 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
- 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.
- 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

## Side Points

Whatever we may be able to take from this by of an “order of events,” don’t lose focus that Paul’s emphasis is on assuring them that the return of Christ is not something that can be missed.

Proponents of the rapture will sometimes appeal to verse 17 as an example of its inclusion in the text, (it is from the Lain translation of this text that the rapture is taken)—but this misses the context of the chapter and the overall point that Paul is making. To teach a doctrine that is literally based on some people “missing out” would severely undermine the comfort he is trying to give to the brethren here!

## Chapter Four Questions:

1. What does it mean to be called in purity and sanctification?

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2. What does Paul pair together sexual immorality with a word like “defrauded” (NASB)?

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3. How is the believer’s sorrow different than that of the world?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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## Main Text

The brethren were just as concerned with their place in all of this as with those who had departed. But Paul reminds them that they already know the basics of this doctrine.

Emphasis is placed on both the nature of the return, and the attitude of the world. It will be unexpected.

Christians expect the return and it shows in the ways that they live their lives.

## Chapter Five

- 1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.
- 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.
- 3 While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.
- 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;
- 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

## Side Points

It is interesting how often NT writers will simply remind their audience that they need to stick to what they know. Don't allow your faith to be disturbed or distracted by something other than the basics that you've been taught!

The world always preaches a message of imaginary peace—all is well; no need to change or worry.

## Main Text

Blessed is the servant that is found by the Master to be watching for His return.

In a literal way, those who are drunkards hide their actions in the dark. Beyond just the influence of alcohol, Christians are always to be of sober mind. We are never drunk in our thinking.

Instead of dullness of the mind, we are equipped with armor to face the day.

This is what will enable us to walk that Path that God has set out for us.

- 6 so then let us not sleep as <sup>b</sup>others do, but let us be alert and sober.
- 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.
- 8 But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.
- 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

## Side Points

Temperance for those in Christ is not limited to a single area of their life.

All of our actions are to be those that can be done in the light.

It is those who have a full appreciation for God's wrath that can be truly thankful that He has made plans for our salvation.

## Main Text

“Excel still more...”

While not called out by the usual term, Paul can only be talking about elders in these verses. This is the only office that both labors and instructs while also being given charge over believers.

All members of the body are in need of *something*, and we are to have the right attitude as it is carried out.

Our responsibilities stretch beyond the community of the Church: we must approach those in the world—whom it may be most difficult—with the right attitude as well.

- 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.
- 12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction,
- 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.
- 14 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.
- 15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

## Side Points

One could read these as simply some general exhortations to good behavior. But it would be a disservice to disregard what Paul has just said. If the resurrection and return of Christ is real to us it will change our behavior. Our actions are based on a genuine belief that the Lord is going to return and will do so in judgement.

Paul prescribes different types of confrontation for different situations.

It is up to the individual to break the cycle of bad behavior.

## Main Text

Would this surprise people coming from one who had suffered so much? In Christ there is always cause for joy.

And it is through consistent tuning our will with Gods that we can gain this perspective.

19 and 20 almost certainly go together. For some reason, those with inspired messages were being halted from speaking in the assembly.

This isn't to say that they should just listen to all messages equally. Prove them to see what they are made of, and hold on to what is worth keeping.

- 16 Rejoice always;
- 17 pray without ceasing;
- 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
- 19 Do not quench the Spirit;
- 20 do not despise prophetic utterances.
- 21 But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good;
- 22 abstain from every form of evil.

## Side Points

Shortest verse in the Bible (in the Greek text.)

God's will... in 18 is singular, but it references all 3 commands. Does this describe the life you are living in Christ?

In Corinth, there was "too much" Spirit. Here there wasn't enough. There is danger in extremes!

*See Romans 12:9*

## Main Text

We desire *every* part of our being, Body and Spirit to be sanctified: There is no part of us which is not to be holy. It all belongs to God.

Paul has confidence that this prayer will be answered.

A greeting that is free of malice, outward pomp, and any sort of ulterior motive.

Not just farewell;  
Always grace.

**23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**24** Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

**25** Brethren, pray for us.

**26** Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

**27** I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.

**28** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you

## Side Points

The first section of the letter is capped off with a prayer pertaining to the return: See 3:11-13. Now he does so again as he draws the letter to a close.

*See Rom. 15:30;  
Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3-4*

The language in vs 27 is very strong. This was to be shared with *everyone*.

## Chapter Five Questions:

1. Compare the attitude of the Christian versus the world when it comes to expecting and preparing for the end:

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2. What is our attitude to be toward those who lead the church?

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3. How do verse 16-18 serve to portray a Christian's life?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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# Introduction to Second Thessalonians

It is hard to determine exactly how much time has passed inbetween the writing of the two letters. It is apparent that, whatever the interval, the letters were written very close together. While a letter such as II Corinthians makes it obvious that there has been a good deal more communication and information between letters, II Thessalonians almost seems to have been written on the very heels of the first letter. Many of Paul's thoughts read as though he were writing a post script to the first letter—including observations he wished he'd made in the first.

That is not to say that there was *no* communication between Paul and these brethren. It seems that some of what was written in the first epistle had already achieved the intended result. For instance, this second letter does not focus at all on Paul's defense of his character and conduct. Whatever attacks were being made against him have seemingly been dismissed.

## OUTLINE

## 2 THESSALONIANS

1. Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:1-12)
2. Misunderstanding regarding the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)
3. Exhortations (3:1-15)
4. Conclusion (3:16-18)

The problems and misunderstandings regarding the return have persisted. Some seem to have taken his teaching about the return as an excuse to sit around and wait. Others have been affected by the bad behavior of others: Chapter 2:1-2 make reference to the faith of brethren being shaken, and the cause is traced back to someone spreading misinformation. To respond, Paul once again addresses the return, but on this occasion delves more deeply into things which must first take place.

# Sample Outline of 2 Thessalonians:

1. **Greeting (1:1-2)**
2. **Prayer (1:3-12)**
  - a. *Thanksgiving (1:3-5)*
  - b. *Divine judgment (1:6-10)*
  - c. *Paul's prayer (1:11-12)*
3. **The parousia (2:1-12)**
  - a. *The day of the Lord not yet present (2:1-2)*
  - b. *The great rebellion (2:3-12)*
    1. *The man of lawlessness (2:3-10a)*
    2. *The man of lawlessness's followers (2:10b-12)*
4. **Thanksgiving and encouragement (2:13-17)**
  - a. *Thanksgiving (2:13-15)*
  - b. *Prayer for the converts (2:16-17)*
5. **The faithfulness of God (3:1-5)**
  - a. *Request for prayer (3:1-2)*
  - b. *God's faithfulness (3:3-5)*
6. **Godly discipline (3:6-15)**
  - a. *The disorderly (3:6-13)*
  - b. *The disobedient (3:14-15)*
7. **Conclusion (3:16-18)**

# Your Outline of 2 Thessalonians:

## Main Text

Emphasis on ownership, location, and source of strength.

Paul isn't just flattering: These are the sorts of things that we should be thankful for in others.

Paul had been anxious for their faith, but now he is excited to acknowledge their great growth.

Paul continues to acknowledge that suffering is not an indication of God's displeasure, but is usually an indication of faithfulness.

## Chapter One

- 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,  
To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
- 2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater;
- 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.
- 5 *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

## Side Points

What is *only fitting*: This is a pattern for us to follow.

It is rare for Paul to boast about the love and unity in a church, but the brethren in Thessalonica were a rare bunch.

## Main Text

We don't have to worry about whether or not God will take care of His saints.

The relief may not be in an immediate sense, but the judgment carries with it a promise of retribution and vindication.

Paul's point is simple and impossible to miss: Those who reject God will be rejected by Him and receive due punishment.

For those who believe, He will give us rest.

- 6 For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,
- 7 and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,
- 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.
- 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,
- 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

## Side Points

This is not a picture of the popular Jesus. People don't like to think of the Christ as coming with some sort of violence. And yet Paul does not hold back in his description of what will happen to those who have persecuted God's people, as well as to those who have made the choice to reject the Lord.

This is part of God's righteous judgment. Those who see this as repulsive don't understand the awful nature of sin; the cost of rebellion, or what the requirements of God to act with perfect justice.

## Main Text

In light of the coming judgment, Paul's earnest plea is that they will be included with the group mentioned in verse 10.

- 11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,
- 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

## Side Points

## Chapter One Questions:

1. Why is it only fitting that we give thanks for brethren?

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2. Why is the scene in verses 6-9 a picture of justice?

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3. Who will be the focus on the final day?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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## Who Is the Man of Lawlessness?

The identity of the man of lawlessness is a controversial topic, and sometimes a heated one as well. I don't think that this must be the case. There are a few principles that are important to keep in mind.

First, remember that Paul has one main point here: He is emphasizing that the end has not yet come. A very simple reduction of the text would be—*if you are still here, then the end has not yet taken place.*

Second, it also bears mentioning that there is danger in trying to over literalize judgment language as well as prophetic language. We could point to many Old Testament passages that spoke of prophetic judgment where the actual fulfillment of those events is hardly the picture you'd imagine; certainly without the New Testament shining its light on the Old.

Third, I think it is important to remember that many biblical prophecies have multiple layers of fulfillment. There might be an immediate application, a future application, and then finally the most complete sense of its fulfillment. For example, Daniel prophecies about the Abomination of Desolation in Daniel 11:21. Many, including myself, see this as being fulfilled in the inter-testamental period by the wicked Antiochus Epiphanes. And yet, when Jesus speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:15-16, He also references the Abomination of Desolation—specifically making mention of that which was spoken by Daniel. So who is this abominable desolator? It would seem to have fulfillment in multiple characters.

So it would seem that the idea of the man of lawlessness is not a specific character, but a type of person. Furthermore, what is described by Paul in these verses seem to be descriptive of a perpetual cycle that will continue until the end has come. Others have speculated that this is in reference to the Pope and the Catholic church, or the anti-Christ, or some other such figure. It may be that there was an immediate fulfillment of this in someone like the Roman emperor Domitian. But I would still argue that what is described by Paul is something that has happened in the past, and will continue until the Lord comes back.

First, consider a picture like that of Daniel chapter 8. Here we have a description of what is specifically identified as Greece, and probably speaking of Alexander the Great. He is envisioned as an unstoppable Goat, destroying everything with his powerful horns. But take notice of the way he is described, and some of the events that will happen around him:

- He magnifies himself greatly—8:8
- He persecutes the holy ones—8:24
- He deceives many—8:25
- Opposes the Prince of princes—8:25
- Is overthrown by Divine Power—8:25

All of that should sound very familiar after reading II Thessalonians. Compare the characteristics of these two figures.

<b>The Great Grecian Goat of Daniel</b>	<b>Paul's Man of Lawlessness</b>
<b>Magnifies himself greatly</b>	<b>Exalts himself above all else 2:4</b>
<b>Opposes the Prince of Princes</b>	<b>Takes the seat of/displays himself as God 2:4</b>
<b>Deceives many</b>	<b>Leads others astray through false signs 2:9ff</b>
<b>Overthrown by Divine power</b>	<b>Slain with the Lord's breath 2:8</b>

The description of these two men are so similar that, if not for the Greek empire already having been overthrown, we would assume Paul was talking about the goat. This same type of language is repeated again in Revelation 13:1-10. This is similar to what John writes about the anti-Christ. It isn't just one specific figure. It is a type of person who existed then and will continue to exist even today. In spite of whatever immediate fulfillment may have taken place in the first century, my conclusion is that Paul is describing a cycle that will continue until the end. As long as these events continue to play out (*are you still alive?*) then you can be sure that you have not missed out on the return of Christ.

## Main Text

Paul now returns to the topic of the return, only now he faces new challenges.

Again, the faith of the brethren was at stake. They had not missed the return, and Paul had not said that it was right around the corner.

There were those who were either misrepresenting his teaching, or trying to pose as the apostle. But Paul says that there are events which must take place before the end.

There will be apostasy, those who lead astray, and those who are punished before the end comes.

A gentle rebuke.

## Chapter Two

- 1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,
- 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.
- 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,
- 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.
- 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

## Side Points

*See page 67-68 for a more thorough discussion of interpretation and implications of this section.*

## Main Text

Paul's audience had some degree of knowledge of who or what Paul meant.

The principle of his efforts were at work, but had not been allowed to fully develop.

However strong or convincing the man might be, he would be totally powerless before the coming of the Lord.

His coming would be impressive, and it would be tempting to follow after him.

But it will only be those who do not love the truth who are carried away.

- 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.
- 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.
- 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;
- 9 *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,
- 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

## Side Points

Some have seen an immediate application for the brethren in that there was some degree of protection for a while. But when Christianity was declared a crime, all protection would be gone, and full Roman persecution would begin.

“His coming” or His day are often used of immediate judgments, (Babylon, Rome) that point to the final judgment.

Connect this back to the picture in chapter 1. Those who are on the deceiving end of God's wrath are there because they chose to be.

## Main Text

When one doesn't love the truth, it is very easy to follow after a lie.

In the final judgment, these are those that are described in 1:7-9

Although the brethren had made an excellent start, it was still right of Paul to remind them that they had been called with a specific purpose.

Once we obey the gospel, our lives are not our own. They are to be holy and set apart.

It is the teaching of Christ, handed down by His apostles that assists us.

- 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,
- 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.
- 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
- 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

## Side Points

*See Romans 1:24-28*

Earnest belief in a lie does not make it any more acceptable.

It is helpful to see this verse in its entire context. God's plan to choose has existed from (and before) the beginning. But Paul immediately explains in the next verse *how* Paul calls—through the preaching of the gospel.

When tradition is so often seen as a religious dirty word, it is good to be reminded that Paul exhorted the keeping of certain traditions!

### Main Text

We are strengthened by God through the hope that He has given us for what lies ahead; He also strengthens our hands for the work that we must do until we get there.

- 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace,
- 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

### Side Points

The letter is not yet finished, but this section is concluded.

## Chapter Two Questions:

1. How is the man of lawlessness described?

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2. What things must take place before the end?

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3. What is the importance of holding to the Apostle's traditions?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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## Main Text

Paul desires that the great reception he experienced with them would take place everywhere.

Paul has confidence in his God's physical protection during his work, and that God would protect the brethren from spiritual harm.

Again, Paul focuses on the importance of keeping on in what they had begun, as well as the importance of following apostolic authority.

## Chapter Three

- 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just *as it* did also with you;
- 2 and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.
- 3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*.
- 4 We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will *continue to* do what we command.
- 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

## Side Points

Paul not only prayed for them, but always desired their prayers on his behalf.

Such as the Jews who had chased him from Thessalonica.

What a blessing to be convicted—to have a type of conciliation, that your brethren are doing their best to faithfully follow God.

## Main Text

Paul's description, "unruly," (the same word for undisciplined in vs 11) goes beyond someone who's life is chaotic. It is a description of one who is not willing to submit to authority. Their lives are in chaos *because* they do not submit to and follow the apostle's teaching.

Similarly, this was not how Paul had behaved among them. It was not the example he'd left.

As on other occasions, he'd been willing to work with his hands if the need required. He could have made demands otherwise, but used this as a teaching moment.

- 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.
- 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,
- 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;
- 9 not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.
- 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

## Side Points

In context, this is probably dealing with those who had found excuse for slothful behavior. In practice it was a command that would extend to any behavior that went outside the bounds of what they had been taught.

It is interesting that Paul did not go in demanding to be supported. In a way, he proved himself to the brethren before accepting their financial support. Many times, he did not take support from the group when it began, but afterward when they had the opportunity to pay it forward as Paul took the gospel to other cities.

## Main Text

Paul's example segues into those were not following it all.

Again, there were those who had taken a wrong attitude toward the second coming of Christ. If He was to return soon, then they had no problem giving up their duties and simply waiting for His return. These were to be admonished, and all were to maintain fervor in doing good works.

Paul makes does not leave room for interpretation. The one who is unruly is to be made to feel that they are unruly. But the goal is restoration, not defeat.

- 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.
- 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.
- 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.
- 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person <sup>b</sup>and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.
- 15 *Yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

## Side Points

These dangerous behaviors are not limited to the context at hand...

The inclusion of "in the Lord" really underscores that there is something immoral about choosing to abandon your responsibilities and take advantage of others.

Paul's aim is not that we are trying to make someone seem contemptible. But we are trying to get them to inwardly reflect on their actions and see the dishonor in what they've done.

**Main Text**

What better source of real peace than from the Lord who's very nature is peace?

This would allow them to distinguish between the genuine, and the fake letters that were already starting to be in circulation.

- 16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!
- 17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.
- 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**Side Points**

## Chapter Three Questions:

1. What are some of the traits of brothers who should be avoided?

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2. Why did Paul not demand his right as an apostle?

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3. How are we to approach those who are in need of correction?

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4. Write your summary of the chapter:

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