

Paul's First Letter to the THESSALONIANS

Dear Friends in Thessalonica:

Greetings, to all you dear friends in the church there in Thessalonica who are united in mind and heart with God our Father, and with Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ richly bless each one of you and give you peace!

The Life and Faith of the Thessalonians

²As we talk to God about you in our prayers, we always thank Him for every one of you.

³We are continually reminding Him about the great work you've accomplished thru your faith in Him, and all the things you've done because you love Him. Also, about how patient you've been thru all the trials you've endured because of the sure hope you have of eternity in Heaven with God our Father because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.^a

⁴We pray this way because we have full confidence, dear brothers and sisters who are loved by God, that He has chosen you to be His very own.

⁵We are sure of this because when we brought the Great News to you, we didn't bring you only words. But the Holy Spirit was there, powerfully convicting and fully convincing you that we were telling you the truth. And you remember the kind of lives we lived among you; our only concern was for your well-being.

⁶And you followed our example and that of the Lord, because even in spite of severe persecutions, you gladly embraced our message; and God blessed you with great joy from the Holy Spirit.

⁷As a result, you became examples to all the believers thruout Greece.

⁸As a matter of fact, by broadcasting the Lord's message as you did, you made an impact not only in Greece, but everywhere else as well. News about your faith in God has gone out to such an extent that we don't need to say anything about it.

⁹People are now telling us how effectively our message entered your hearts, turning you from idols to serve the living and true God.

¹⁰They tell us how you are now waiting for God's Son, Jesus, to come from Heaven. He is the One whom God raised from the dead, and who is our Rescuer from the coming fierce anger that God will unleash against the ungodly.

Paul's Work in Thessalonica

2You friends know that our visit with you was not ineffective.

²As you remember, we came to you right after being insulted and severely beaten and jailed in Philippi.^a But in spite of the great strain we were under, even when we were with you,^b with God's help we spoke out with boldness and gave you God's Great News.

³There was nothing false or impure in the earnest instructions we gave you. We didn't come with impure motives, or to trick you.

⁴Instead, whenever we speak we are overwhelmed with the fact that God has considered us worthy of being entrusted with His Great News. So we don't tailor our messages in any way in order to make them fit the desires of certain people. Our only concern is to please God, who is continually testing the sincerity and honesty of our hearts.^a

⁵You also know that we never flattered you in order to gain your approval. And God is our witness that we didn't avoid offending you in order to receive a big offering.

⁶Nor at any time did we seek the praise of anyone, neither from you nor anyone else.

⁷As apostles of Christ, we could have been a burden to you, demanding our rights,^a but like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children, we were gentle and kind.

⁸Since we have such extreme love for you, we deeply wanted to give you not only God's Great News, but our own lives as well. You have become that dear to us.

1:3a Dying for us, and then constantly helping us to live to please God. Philippians 2:13.

2:2a Acts 16:16-40.

2:2b Acts 17:1-9.

2:4a Preacher, preach the whole truth (without

addition or deletion) and leave all the consequences with God! Acts 20:27.

2:7a ... by asserting our authority over you, and by demanding your financial support.

⁹You remember, dear friends, how we worked and slaved night and day to earn our own living,^a in order to keep from being a burden to any of you as we were bringing you God's Great News.^b

¹⁰You are witnesses, and God is too, that we were faithful in living holy, upright, and blameless lives among you, our fellow followers of the Lord.

¹¹You also know how earnestly we corrected and comforted each of you, in the same way that a loving father does with his own children.

¹²We challenged you to live your lives for God in a way that is fitting and proper for those whom He is inviting to share His own Kingdom and glory.^a

¹³Here's another reason why we continue to thank God without ceasing: When you heard what God had to say to you thru us, you didn't consider the message you were hearing to be coming to you from men, but from God! And God truly was speaking! And what God was saying, and still says, is continuing to work effectively in the lives of those of you who are believing Him.

¹⁴This is confirmed, my brothers and sisters, by the fact that you have become just like God's assemblies of His people in Judea who are united with Christ Jesus. You yourselves have suffered the same treatment from your own countrymen that they have from the Judeans.^a

¹⁵It was the Judeans who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and it was they who drove us out. They continue to displease God, and are hostile to everyone.

¹⁶By forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles so that they too might be saved, they were acting as they

always have, piling up their sins to the limit. But now God's wrath is striking them in full measure.

Paul's Desire to Visit Them Again

¹⁷But, my dear brothers and sisters, ever since we were torn away from you for a short time—away in person, that is, not in our thoughts—our eager desire has made us most zealous in our attempts to see you.

¹⁸We so much wanted to come your way again—at least I, Paul, did, more than once—but Satan has always blocked us.

¹⁹What are we hoping for then? What would make us truly happy? When we receive the promised rewards as we are ushered into the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming,^a what would climax that joy? You would!

²⁰Indeed, it is you who make up both the glory and joy of that anticipated reward.^a

3 Because of this great affection for you, when I couldn't stand it any longer, I finally decided it would be best if I sent Timothy to you, while I stayed on in Athens alone.

²As a servant of God, and as my fellow worker in telling the Great News about Christ, Timothy is a dear brother. I sent him to strengthen you, and to encourage you concerning your faith.

³I didn't want any of you to be shaken from your stand for Christ by the tests and trials you are presently meeting up with. But you yourselves know that as faithful followers of Christ we can expect this kind of treatment.

2:9a They worked and supported themselves. See Acts 18:1-3; 20:33-34.

2:9b ... *about what He had done and would yet do for you.*

2:11-12a Paul was altogether faithful as a devout Christian and as a Christian minister. He did not fail to *earnestly correct, comfort, and challenge* every person in his care. He did so *in the same way that a father does with his own children.*

The particular charge and correction for the Thessalonians was that they *live their lives for God*, because their calling was to an eternally glorious Kingdom. They, and all others since Jesus' death and resurrection, have been *invited to share God's own Kingdom and glory.* We are not invited simply to be citizens of His Kingdom, but to be princes and priests and rulers in *His Kingdom*—ruling together with Him.

Too often we consider Heaven as merely a wonderful place where we will be able to relax and enjoy ourselves. Far above that, however, God has

promised to exalt us to the position of being fully like Him, as His children in His family. The wonder of it all is that we who are now so weak on earth will be so mighty and so glorified together with Him in Heaven. Therefore, it is essential that we *live our present lives in a way that is fitting and proper* for such a wonderful God and Father, so that we may indeed attain to the high calling which can be ours thru Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

2:14a See 3:4 and 2 Timothy 3:12.

2:19a Matthew 16:27; 1 Corinthians 3:8-15; Revelation 22:12.

2:19-20a Paul is speaking here to people he had won to faith in Christ. He evidently had reference to such Scriptures as Daniel 12:3, which states, *Those who are wise will let their light shine as brilliantly as the noonday sun. And those who turn many to right standing with God and to right living will shine as the stars forever and ever,* and Proverbs 11:30, which states, *And the person who wins souls is wise.* Paul knew from such Scriptures

⁴When we were with you, in fact, we kept telling you in advance that we would be persecuted. And as you well know now from experience, it's happened as I told you.

⁵That's why, when I couldn't stand the suspense any longer, I sent Timothy to find out how you were enduring the test of your faith. I was deeply concerned that by some means the tempter might have succeeded in luring you away from the Lord Jesus.^a Then all of our hard work among you would have been for nothing.

⁶But now Timothy has just returned to us from you with the great news about your lasting faith in Christ and your loving concern for us. He says you still have such good memories of our time with you, and you still have the same burning desire to see us that we have to see you.

⁷So in the midst of all of our distress and persecution, dear brothers and sisters, we have been so greatly encouraged by your uncompromising and lasting faith!

⁸Now we can survive, if you continue to stand firm in your faith and obedience to the Lord.

⁹How can we thank God enough for you? How can we sufficiently thank God for all the joy we experience as we rejoice before Him because of you?

¹⁰Both day and night we talk to God about you, in exceeding measure, asking Him to make it possible for us to see you again, so that we may be able to finish out whatever is still lacking in your faith.

¹¹May God our Father, Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ open the way now for us to come to you!

¹²And may the Lord cause your love for each other and for everyone else to increase and to literally abound, in the same way that our love does for you.

¹³This will result in your hearts being firmly established in holy dedication to Him. The end result will be that you will then be without guilt when you stand before our God and Father on that great Day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all His holy ones.^a

A Life that Pleases God

4 In addition, let me say this, dear friends: You learned from us how you should live to please God. And, in fact, that's the way you are living. But we urge and beg you by the authority of the Lord Jesus that you be even more concerned than ever to live to please Him.^a

²Because you know what the instructions were that we gave you from the Lord Jesus.

³God wants all of you to live in absolute purity—especially that you keep yourselves from committing sexual immorality.^a

⁴This means that each of you is to learn to control your body in an honorable way, in moral purity,

⁵not yielding to any lustful desires, as the people of the world do who don't know God.^a

⁶So you must never go beyond the bounds God

that he would be rewarded by Christ according to the number of people he had influenced and won to follow Jesus, and according to the quality of faith and dedication he had built into these people.

This is surely something for all of us to bear in mind. No doubt our rewards will be determined by many other factors as well, but the winning of others and the building up of the faith of believers will be a prime consideration on the part of our Lord.

3:5a The temptations that Satan uses are many. There are the various allurements of the world, including time-wasting entertainments that do nothing for our eternal souls or the souls of others, the seeking of wealth for selfish reasons, and the desire for possessions for the sake of ease, pride, and power—and so many more.

Then there are the many appetites of our body that Satan keeps tempting us to satisfy in a wrong way. And old friends will come around and do their very best to tempt us to return to our sinning.

There's also the danger of false teachers leading

us astray.

And the severity of persecution is not easy to endure.

Satan has many methods of seducing us even after we have been converted to Christ. But God is far more powerful than Satan. Call on Him urgently for help when you are tempted! And keep your mind on the prize ahead. Those who are lost have only Hell to look forward to. What a sad and awful future! Remain true to Jesus, no matter what the temporary consequences may be! The future with Him is so bright. "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!"

3:13a 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Matthew 24:29-31.

4:1a Never feel that you have arrived spiritually. There are ever greater heights and depths to attain in our dedication to Christ, and in our obedience and service to Him.

4:3a See Ephesians 5:3 note.

4:5a Romans 1:18-20.

has set, and cheat another man by sinning with his wife.^a As we have told you and so strongly warned you before, the Lord never fails to severely punish all such sinning.^b

⁷Because when God called us to follow Him and inherit His Kingdom, He didn't tell us we could continue to live impure lives. No, He has called each of us to live a holy life!^a

⁸The one who rejects this instruction, then, is not rejecting man, but God, who also has given us His Holy Spirit.^a

⁹Now I certainly don't need to write you anything about loving others who love and obey the Lord, because God has already taught you to love one another.

¹⁰In fact, you have already shown your love for all of God's people thruout all of northern Greece. But we urge you, dear friends, to abound in your love toward them.

4:6a This also includes sinning with another woman's husband. And all sex among singles is cheating the person you may eventually marry, as well as the person who may eventually marry that one with whom you are sinning.

4:6b Don't ever think you will get away with it. God always sees what you are doing (Proverbs 5:21; 15:3) at all times. And you will be rewarded or punished according to how you are living (Galatians 6:7-8), without fail. Sooner or later you will pay dearly for your sin. Instead, live in such a way that God can and will bless you.

4:7a But we need His constant help in order to do this. And He has promised that help. John 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 1. And the rewards for faithfulness are so great, both now and forever—but the alternative so horrendous!

4:8a ... so that we may be able to live holy lives.

4:13a One fact about which God does not want His people to be ignorant concerns those who die as true Christians. It is His sure promise that they will be resurrected to life everlasting at Christ's second coming. Christians are not to grieve at the passing of a saved loved one in the excessive manner as the people of the world. It is natural to deeply miss a loved one taken by death, and the Christian grieves at the separation. But greater than the grief is the wonderful joy that comes with the knowledge that the loved one is with the Lord and is happier than he or she ever was in this life. ... to be with Christ, which would be far better ... Philippians 1:23.

4:14a Paul had talked with those who had seen, eaten and talked with Jesus after He had risen from the dead. Paul had also seen Him and talked with

¹¹Also, make it your goal to lead an orderly, peaceful life, minding your own business and working industriously, as we already taught you.

¹²In that way, you will gain the respect of those who are not followers of the Lord, and you won't have to depend on anyone for the things you need.

The Coming of the Lord

¹³And listen, dear friends, I don't want you to be ignorant about what's happened to the true followers of the Lord who have died, so that you don't grieve over them as others do who have no hope.^a

¹⁴For since we are fully convinced that Jesus died and then came back to life again,^a we know that all who have found forgiveness and new life thru Him, and have fallen asleep in death, God will raise back to life again. He will bring them all back with Jesus when He returns.

¹⁵I can tell you exactly what the Lord has said

Him. He had solid proof that Christ had indeed risen.

Christ's death on the cross is the Christian's assurance of God's forgiveness of his sins. And Christ's resurrection from the dead is his assurance that he too will rise and live forever. These assurances should give every child of God the hope and the knowledge that when Christ returns, He will bring with Him all of His who have already left this life.

4:16a Matthew 24:29-31; John 5:28-29; Acts 1:9-11.

4:15-16b Paul wanted these new believers in Thessalonica to know positively that what he has to say here is *what the Lord has said about this*. His letters were inspired by *the Lord*, of course, but these verses contain the direct word to Paul *from the Lord*. The message is: *When the Lord returns, those of us who are alive will clearly not rise up to meet Him ahead of those who have died*. In other words, when the Lord comes, *the dead who belong to Christ will be the first to rise*.

The Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a powerful shout of command, together with the voice of an archangel and the sounding of the trumpet of God. What a display of splendor and power that will be! And what a joyous occasion it will be for the Lord, for His angels, and especially for all of us who have longed and waited and looked for His coming. The *archangel* will announce the coming of the King! *The Lord Himself* will come with rejoicing and *with a powerful shout of command!* He will command the dead who belong to Him to rise back to life, and those still alive to be changed, to receive their glorified bodies.

Concerning *the trumpet of God*, compare Isaiah 27:12-13, Matthew 24:29-31, 1 Corinthians 15:51-

about this: When the Lord returns, those of us who are alive will clearly not rise up to meet Him ahead of those who are asleep in death.

¹⁶Because the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a powerful shout of command,^a together with the voice of an archangel and the sounding of the trumpet of God! The dead who belong to Christ will then come back to life and be the first to rise.^b

¹⁷Then we who are living for the Lord and are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. From that moment on, we will always be with the Lord!^a

¹⁸So continue to encourage one another with this Great News!^a

Be Ready for the Lord's Coming

5 But, my brothers and sisters, you don't have any need for me to write you about the period

53; Revelation 8:1-2; 11:14-19; 15:1 to 16:21. These Scriptures all point to the same event. This trumpet sound is called *the last trumpet* in 1 Corinthians 15:52, so this event coincides with Matthew 24:29-31. Clearly, the Rapture of God's people will take place soon after the Battle of Armageddon. That's when *the last trumpet* of this age will sound. No Scripture declares a Rapture before the Great Tribulation.

Be sure to read the note for Matthew 24:30 and Appendix 201, page 467, in regard to the Rapture.

4:17a Then, after the dead who belong to Christ have been raised, *we who are still alive will be caught up with them*. And there, together, we will *meet the Lord in the air*. There will never again be a separating of loved ones or of friends. Most wonderful of all, there will never again be a separation from our wonderful Lord. *From that moment on we will be with the Lord forever!* We will *be with the Lord*, to see Him, to live with Him, and to enjoy Him forever.

4:18a And, oh, what comfort this Great News is! This is our hope, our expectation, and our goal. Therefore keep your eye on the goal, daily, hourly, and moment by moment. See also Luke 21:36; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

5:1-2a When will the Day of the Lord come? See Appendix 223, page 484.

5:3a Not annihilation, but ruination, as when a body is ruined but still living, as in 1 Corinthians 5:5.

5:3b The time when people were saying *Everything is so peaceful and safe now* in greater measure, perhaps, than before or since, occurred just before World War I. Many of the churches were preaching that their destiny included *ushering in*

of time or the date when all this will happen.

²Because you yourselves know as well as I do that the Day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief coming in the night.^a

³It will happen when people are saying, "Everything is so peaceful and safe now." Then sudden destruction^a will overwhelm them! It will come suddenly, like birth pangs when a woman is about to give birth to a child,^b and there will be no escape.

⁴But you, my brothers and sisters, are not in the dark^a about such matters. So the great Day should not surprise you like a thief.

⁵You are not people of the night, whose understanding is fogged in darkness. You are all children of the day, who have light and understanding about these matters.^a

⁶So let's not be asleep, as others are.^a But let's continually be on the alert, always in control of

the Kingdom of God. Everything was getting better and better, they said. Soon there would be no more war. They claimed that the people of the world were too civilized to ever again use war as a means of settling misunderstandings and disputes.

It was following such talk and the false sense of security this brought, that World War I broke loose in all its fury on mankind. Never before had there been a war involving so much of the entire world. It was the beginning of the *birth pangs* of Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8b. The rebirth of Israel has already resulted from these *birth pangs*, and the birth of the Kingdom of Christ on earth will soon be the final result.

The first birth pang was World War I. Since then there have been many pangs. And the pangs will increase in frequency and intensity as the coming of the Lord draws ever closer.

5:4a Prior to that day, or that period, Christians need not be in darkness as to what is happening, or as to the general working out of God's timetable. Jesus told His followers that no one knows or would know "the day and hour" of His return. Mark 13:32. But thru Paul He tells us here that we should be alert and awake to the promises and signs of the Lord's coming. The Lord has *not* left His own *in darkness* in regard to *that Day*. The Lord has given us much information about the end time.

5:5a You have light because you have God's message to mankind, from which you can discover how God would have you live. You can then be ready at all times, no matter when He comes, or if He calls you by death, even today. You also have God's many words of prophecy.

5:6a We dare not be asleep or insensible to God's instructions to us. Those in such a state are in

our desires and passions.

⁷Because those who sleep do so when darkness falls,^a and those who get drunk get drunk in the darkness of night.^b

⁸But those of us who belong to the light of day need to take every precaution to make sure that we are fully awake spiritually, and in full control of our lives.^a So put on the breastplate of faith and love,^b and as a helmet, make absolutely certain that you have the Scripture-based hope that you will be saved.^c

⁹Because we know that God has not appointed us to be destroyed by His wrath,^a but to be saved by means of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁰He died for us, so that whether we are still alert and watchfully living for Him when He comes, or have died in true hope, we will live together with Him forever.

¹¹So for that reason, continue to encourage and build each other up,^a just as you are doing.

Final Instructions and Greetings

¹²Now, dear friends, we urge you to respect and

darkness, facing sure judgment. Only those who are ready will enter God's Heaven. Matthew 24:36-51; 25:1-13; Luke 12:35-40; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

5:7a Darkness falls when God's message is ignored or unheeded.

5:7b Stupefied by their sinful, self-centered indulgences.

There is the danger of even us Christians becoming drunk with pleasures, possessions, or even the cares of this life. Our preparations for the Great Day of the Lord's coming, and our thoughts and desires concerning that Great Day must always have top priority!

5:8a ... *and not stupefied by the pleasures and goals of this brief and uncertain life. Today is the Christian's day.* It is not a day in which to be *asleep!* This is the day of opportunity to serve the Lord with diligence and with power. This is the day just before our Lord's coming! But those who are of *the night* are sound *asleep.* They are drunk with various desires, appetites, and successes of the world. While they are living for what they can gain from this brief day of darkness, the true Christian is looking forward to the everlasting Day of Life (multiplied billions of trillions of years without end) promised us by the Lord!

5:8b Faith in God's promises, and love for both God and man in a very real sense.

5:8c Are you claiming *the sure hope that you will be saved* according to God's complete message? Or

honor those who work so hard among you, who continue to make sure you are living for the Lord, always warning and admonishing you.^a

¹³Always have the highest loving regard for them because of the life-saving and life-building work they are doing. And live in peace with each other.

¹⁴Seriously consider now these words of counsel: Warn those in the church who are wasting their lives and are neglectful of their duties, and are actually lazy and unconcerned about their responsibilities to the Lord and their fellow men.^a Encourage the timid,^b strengthen the weak, and be patient with everyone.

¹⁵Let no one pay back evil for evil to anyone, but encourage them to look for ways to help each other, and to help others too.

¹⁶Always be joyful.^a

¹⁷Pray continually.^a

¹⁸Give thanks to God in whatever circumstance you find yourselves,^a because God desires this kind of thankfulness from you because of all He has done for you thru Christ Jesus.

¹⁹Don't muzzle the Holy Spirit!

do you choose to ignore certain warnings and commands in the New Testament, believing they are nonessential as far as you are concerned? Nothing in God's word is to be taken lightly! In the same measure that you value your eternal soul, you must give diligent heed to all of God's word. 2 Peter 1:10.

5:9a What is Paul actually saying here? See Appendix 224, page 485.

5:11a We Christians are to continually encourage one another to continue to live in faithful obedience to Christ, in all matters. Colossians 1:23.

5:12a If they are not doing this, you have no business keeping them as ministers of the Lord's truths for yourself, your family, and others! The issues that deal with your relationship with God and the endless eternity before you are too all-important to be neglected or dealt with lightly!

5:14a The Greek word *atáktous* encompasses all of this statement, and more, in its full meaning. The word can also mean, *not at one's post.* That's a military term, and we are indeed at war! A war against evil and its awful consequences. We dare not be lazy or cowardly, or we face court-martial! Matthew 25:14-30 and Revelation 21:8 apply here.

5:14b Timid about witnessing or taking a stand for Christ. This can include other timidity as well. Christians need to learn to be bold and courageous in every situation, as they look to the Lord to undertake for them. Kneel to conquer!

5:16a Romans 8:28.

5:17a Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:4,6-7.

²⁰ Don't despise prophecies.

²¹ But do carefully test everything that is said,^a and accept whatever passes the test.

²² Refuse to have anything to do with any kind of evil.

²³ Now may God Himself, the God of peace, purify you completely. May your entire spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

²⁴ The One who calls you to Himself is faithful, and He will do what He has promised.^a

²⁵ And, brothers and sisters, keep on praying for

us too.

²⁶ Greet every follower of the Lord with a most heartfelt greeting.

²⁷ I bind you under oath before the Lord that this letter be read in the presence of all who are genuine followers of Christ Jesus.

²⁸ May God's richest blessings abound toward all of you thru our Lord Jesus Christ. So be it!

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul, Silas, and
Timothy

5:18a Romans 8:28.

5:21a ... *to make sure that it agrees with the word of God.*

5:24a 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Hebrews 2:18; 1 John 1:8-9.

And listen, dear friends, I don't want you to be ignorant about what's happened to the true followers of the Lord who have died, so that you don't grieve over them as others do who have no hope.

¹⁴For since we are fully convinced that Jesus died and then came back to life again, we know that all who have found forgiveness and new life thru Him, and have fallen asleep in death, God will raise back to life again. He will bring them all back with Jesus when He returns.

¹⁵I can tell you exactly what the Lord has said about this: When the Lord returns, those of us who are alive will clearly not rise up to meet Him ahead of those who are asleep in death.

¹⁶Because the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a powerful shout of command, together with the voice of an archangel and the sounding of the trumpet of God! The dead who belong to Christ will then come back to life and be the first to rise.

¹⁷Then we who are living for the Lord and are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. From that moment on, we will always be with the Lord!

¹⁸So continue to encourage one another with this Great News!

—I Thessalonians 4:13-18