



The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.

NUMBER ONE IRON OAKS DRIVE • PARIS, ARKANSAS 72855

COMMENTARIES

EXPOSITION OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS **1 THESSALONIANS**

by John Gill

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth*
— Psalm 60:4

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1 THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Thessalonica was a very large, populous, and flourishing city, it was “liberae conditionis”, as Pliny says^{f1}, a free city, and the metropolis of Macedonia; it was formerly called Halis^{f2}, and had the name of Thessalonica given it by Philip king of Macedon, on account of his conquest of Thessalia, which this name signifies; and some say he gave this name to a daughter of his on that occasion, who was afterwards the wife of Cassander; who, others say, called this place by his wife's name^{f3}, which before was Therme: its name with the Italians is Salonichi, and is now in the hands of the Turks, as all Greece is: here the Apostle Paul came after he had been at Philippi, and stayed about three weeks, and preached every sabbath day, and his ministry was blessed to the conversion of some Jews, a multitude of devout Greeks, and many of the chief women of the place, which laid the foundation of a Gospel church; to which the apostle wrote this epistle, and is the first of all the epistles he wrote: the occasion of it was this; the unbelieving Jews, vexed to see the apostle's success, raised a mob of the baser sort of people, and assaulted the house of Jason, where the apostle and his companions were; but Paul and Silas were sent away by night to Berea, which the rabble understanding, followed them thither; when Paul was sent as if he was going to the sea, but was conducted by the brethren to Athens, who gave orders that Silas and Timothy should come to him with all speed, as they did; and Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica to establish and comfort the young converts there; and returning with good news of their faith, and charity, to the apostle at Corinth, he sent them from thence this epistle, and not from Athens, as some have thought: the design of which is to encourage them under their afflictions and sufferings; to exhort them to stand fast in the Lord, to abide by his truths and ordinances, and to live an holy life and conversation, and to regard the several duties of religion, towards God and one another, and those that were set over them; and in it he instructs them concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the coming of Christ, articles of very great

importance and concern: the writing of this epistle is placed by Dr. Lightfoot in the 51st year of Christ, and in the 11th of Claudius Caesar.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS 1

This chapter contains the inscription of the epistle; the apostle's salutation of the persons it is written to; his thanksgiving for blessings received by them; an account of the manner in which the Gospel came to them, how they behaved when it was preached to them, and of the success of it in their conversion. The inscription which expresses the names of the persons concerned in the epistle, and describes those to whom it is written, and also the salutation, which is the same as in other epistles, are in (~~ΣΟΜΕ~~1 Thessalonians 1:1) and then follows a thanksgiving to God made in prayer to him for the special graces of the Spirit bestowed on them, as faith, hope, and love, and the lively exercise of them in which they were; the source and spring of which was the electing love of God, (~~ΣΟΜΕ~~1 Thessalonians 1:2-4) and the evidence of their election of God to the apostle, was the manner in which the Gospel came to them; not merely in the external ministry of it, but in the internal efficacy of it, through the power of the Holy Ghost, (~~ΣΟΜΕ~~1 Thessalonians 1:5) and the effects of it upon them; it found an hearty reception among them, in much affliction, and with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that they not only professed it, and became the followers of Christ and his apostles, but were examples unto others, (~~ΣΟΜΕ~~1 Thessalonians 1:6,7) for the fame of the Gospel being preached unto them, and of their faith, were spread everywhere, so that the apostle had no need to say anything about it, (~~ΣΟΜΕ~~1 Thessalonians 1:8) the manner of their entrance among them, and the issue of it, their conversion, were so manifest to all; which is described by what they were turned from, idols; and by what they were turned to, the living God; and by the ends of it, which were to serve God, and wait for Jesus Christ; the arguments engaging to which are, his relation to God as his Son, his being raised from the dead by him; his being in heaven, exalted at his right hand there, from whence he is expected; and his having, by his sufferings and death, delivered his people from wrath to come, (~~ΣΟΜΕ~~1 Thessalonians 1:9,10).

Ver. 1. *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus*, etc.] These are the persons concerned in this epistle, and who send their greetings and salutations to

this church; Paul was the inspired writer of it, and who is called by his bare name, without any additional epithet to it, as elsewhere in his other epistles; where he is either styled the servant, or apostle, or prisoner of Christ, but here only Paul: the reason for it is variously conjectured; either because he was well known by this church, having been lately with them; or lest these young converts should be offended and stumble at any pompous title, which they might imagine carried an appearance of arrogance and pride; or because there were as yet no false apostles among them, who had insinuated anything to the disadvantage of Paul, as in other places, which obliged him to assert his character and magnify his office; or rather because this was the first epistle he wrote, and he being conscious to himself of his own meanness, and that he was the least of the apostles, and unworthy to be called one, chose not to use the title. Silvanus is the same with Silas, who was with the apostle at Thessalonica and at Corinth, when he wrote this epistle; he was originally a member of the church at Jerusalem, and was one of the chief of the brethren there, and a prophet; (see ~~Acts~~ Acts 17:4 18:5) (~~Acts~~ Acts 15:22,23), Timothy was also with the apostle at the same place, and was sent back by him from Athens to know their state, and returned to Corinth to him with Silas; he stands last, as being the younger, and perhaps was the apostle's amanuensis, and therefore in modesty writes his name last: the reason of their being mentioned was because, having been with the apostle at this place, they were well known by the church, who would be glad to hear of their welfare; as also to show their continued harmony and consent in the doctrines of the Gospel; they stand in the same order in (~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 1:19),

unto the church of the Thessalonians: which consisted of several of the inhabitants of Thessalonica, both Jews and Gentiles; (see Gill on "~~Acts~~ Acts 17:4"), who were called under the ministry of the word by the grace of God, out of darkness into marvellous light, and were separated from the rest of the world, and incorporated into a Gospel church state. This was a particular congregated church of Christ. Some have thought it was not as yet organized, or had proper officers in it; since no mention is made of pastors and deacons, but the contrary is evident from (~~1~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13), where they are exhorted to know, own, and acknowledge them that laboured among them, and were over them in the Lord, and esteem them highly for their works' sake. This church is said to be

in God the Father; were interested in his love and free favour, as appears by their election of God, (~~1~~ 1 Thessalonians 1:4), and they were in the

faith of God the Father, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the profession of it, and so were distinguished from an assembly of Heathens that were in the faith of idols, and not of the one true and living God, and especially as the Father of Christ; they were in fellowship with God the Father, and they were drawn by the efficacy of his grace to himself and to his Son, and were gathered together and embodied in a church state under his direction and influence; he was the author of them as a church, and they were plants of Christ's heavenly Father's planting, not to be plucked up; and they were, as the Arabic version renders it, "addicted" to God the Father; they were devoted to his service; they had his word among them, which they had received not as the word of men, but as the word of God; and his ordinances were duly and faithfully administered among them, and attended on by them:

and in the Lord Jesus Christ; they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world; they were chosen in him as their head and representative; they were in him as members of his body, and as branches in the vine; they were openly in him by the effectual calling and conversion, were in the faith of him, and in the observance of his commands, and in communion with him; and so were distinguished from a Jewish synagogue or congregation: all this being true, at least of the far greater part of them, is said of them all, in a judgment of charity, they being under a profession of the Christian religion:

grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the apostle's usual salutation and wish in all his epistles to the churches; (see Gill on "~~ROM~~Romans 1:7"), the words "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" are left out in the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions; and the Arabic version omits the last clause, "and the Lord Jesus Christ"; and the Ethiopic version only reads, "peace be unto you and his grace".

Ver. 2. *We give thanks to God always for you all*, etc.] For all the members of this church, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, greater or lesser believers, officers or private Christians; for their being a church, for the gifts bestowed on them, for the graces hereafter mentioned that were wrought in them and exercised by them; the glory of all which is given to God, and thanks for the same, which shows them to be gifts of his, and not in the least owing to any merits of men: the apostle ascribes nothing to their free will, previous dispositions and qualifications, diligence and

industry; nor does he attribute anything to himself and to his companions, who were only ministers by whom these believed; but he refers all to God, to his grace and goodness: and he returned thanks to him for it, and that “always”; whenever he thought of it, made mention of it, or was at the throne of grace, as follows,

making mention of you in our prayers; to God, daily, both in private and in public, at which times thanksgivings to God were made on their account; for thanksgiving is a part of prayer, and requests are always to be made known unto God with thanksgiving. The Ethiopic version renders this clause in the singular number, “and I am mindful of you always in my prayer”; and leaves out the word “all” in the former clause.

Ver. 3. *Remembering without ceasing*, etc.] The phrase “without ceasing”, is, by the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, joined to the last clause of the preceding verse; and the remembrance the apostle speaks of is either a distinct thing from the mention made of them in prayer, and suggests that they bore them on their minds at other times also; or it is the same with it; or rather a reason of their mentioning of them then, because they remembered them, and the following things of theirs:

as your work of faith; by which is meant not the principle of faith, for as such that is God's work, the product of his grace, and the effect of his almighty power; but the operative virtue and exercise of it under the influence of the grace of God: the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions render it, “the work of your faith”; and so some copies, and the Syriac version, “the works of your faith”. The Targumist in (³⁰¹²Habakkuk 1:12) represents God as holy *a twnmyh ydbw*[b, “in works of faith”: faith is a working grace, it has a deal of work to do, it has its hands always full, and is employed about many things; it is the grace by which a soul goes to God, as its covenant God, lays hold on him as such, pleads his promises with him, asks favours of him, and is very importunate, and will have no denial; and by which it goes to Christ as at first conversion, afterwards for fresh supplies of grace, out of that fulness of grace that is in him; it receives him and all from him, and through him pardon, righteousness, adoption of children, and an eternal inheritance; and it is that grace which carries back all the glory to God and Christ, and to free grace; it glorifies God, exalts Christ, humbles the creature, and magnifies the grace of God, it has much work to do this way; and it works by love, by acts of love to God, to Christ, and to the saints; and it puts the soul upon a cheerful obedience to

every ordinance and command, and hence obedience is styled the obedience of faith; and indeed all good works that are properly so are done in faith, and faith without works is dead; it is greatly engaged against the world and the devil; it is that grace by which Satan is opposed and overcome, and by which the believer gets the victory over the world; so that he is not discouraged by its frowns, and cast down by the trials and afflictions he meets with in it, nor drawn aside by its snares and allurements; something of this kind the apostle had observed and remembered in these believers: he adds,

and labour of love; love is a laborious grace when in lively exercise; love to God and Christ will constrain a believer to engage in, and go through, great hardships, difficulties, toil, and labour, for their sakes; and love to the saints will exert itself, by serving them in things temporal and spiritual, ministering cheerfully and largely to their outward wants, for which reason the same epithet is given to love in (^{scilicet} Hebrews 6:10) as here; regarding and assisting them in their spiritual concerns; praying for them and with them; building them up in their most holy faith; communicating their experiences, and speaking comfortable words unto them; reproofing them for sin in love, and with tenderness; restoring them when fallen in a spirit of meekness; and stirring them up to love and good works: love has much toil and labour, not only in performing the several duties of religion, both towards God and man; but in bearing all things, the burdens of fellow Christians; the infirmities of weak believers, forbearing them in love, forgiving their offences, and covering their sins:

and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, or “of our Lord Jesus Christ”. These persons had a good hope through grace given unto them, and which was founded in Christ Jesus, in his person, blood, and righteousness, and so was as an anchor sure and steadfast; and it had him for its object, it was an hope of interest in him, of being for ever with him, of his, second coming and glorious appearance, and of eternal life and happiness through him; and this was attended with patience, with a patient bearing of reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, for the sake of Christ, and a patient waiting for his coming, his kingdom and glory; and this as well as the others were remembered by the apostle, and his fellow ministers, with great pleasure: and that

in the sight of God and our Father; or before God and our Father; which may be read in connection either with the above graces, which were

exercised, not only before men, but before God, and in his sight, who sees not as man seeth, and who cannot be deceived and imposed upon; and so shows that these graces were true and genuine, faith was unfeigned, love was without dissimulation, and hope without hypocrisy: or with the word remembering, as it is in the Syriac version, which reads, “remembering before God and our Father”; that is, as often as we appear before God, and lift up our hands and our hearts unto him in prayer, we bear you upon our minds before God; and particularly remember your operative faith, laborious love, and patient hope of Christ.

Ver. 4. *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*] Which intends not an election to an office, for this epistle is written not to the officers of the church only, but to the whole church; nor to the Gospel, the outward means of grace, since this was common to them with others, and might be known without the evidence after given; nor does it design the effectual calling, sometimes so called for this is expressed in the following verse as a fruit, effect, and evidence of the election here spoken of, which is no other than the eternal choice of, them to everlasting life and happiness: this is of God, an act of God the Father, made in Christ Jesus before the world began, and which springs from his sovereign will, and is the effect of his pure love and free favour; and therefore these persons who are the objects of it are said to be “beloved of God”; for so the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read the words, and which agree with (2 Thessalonians 2:13) for this choice does not arise from the merits of men, or any conditions in them, or from the foresight of their faith, holiness, and good works, but from the free grace and good pleasure of God; and is the source and spring of all grace, and the blessings of it, and even of good works; and is a sure, immutable, and irreversible act of God, being founded on his own will, and not on the works of men; the knowledge they had of this was not what the Thessalonians themselves had, though they might have, and doubtless had the knowledge of this grace, and which may be concluded with certainty from the effectual calling; and is a privilege which many particular believers may, and do arrive unto the knowledge of, without any extraordinary revelation made unto them: but here it intends the knowledge which the apostle and his companions had of the election of the members of this church; not by inspiration of the Spirit of God, but by the manner of the Gospel's coming unto them, and the effects it had upon them, as expressed in the following verses; and from their faith, hope, and love, mentioned in the preceding verse; and which was the ground and

foundation of their thanksgiving for them; *see on Gill* “^{² Thessalonians 2:13”.}

Ver. 5. *For our Gospel came not unto you*, etc.] The apostle calls the Gospel “our Gospel”, not because he and his fellow ministers were the authors of it; for in this respect it is solely of God, being the produce of his wisdom and grace, and by the revelation of Jesus Christ, hence he calls it the Gospel of God in (^{¹ Thessalonians 2:2,8,9) nor because they were the subject of it, for they preached not themselves, but a crucified Christ, and him only, though it was a stumblingblock to some, and foolishness to others; but because it was committed to their trust, and they were the preachers of it, and agreed in the ministration of it; and it is opposed to, and is distinct from, that which was preached by the false teachers; and here intends not barely the Gospel itself, but chiefly their preaching of it: and this came unto them being sent of God, for wherever the Gospel comes, it comes with a mission and commission from God; and being brought unto them by the apostles, who were bringers and publishers of the good tidings of good things, it came unthought of, unsought and unasked for by them; and that not only externally, which to have is a great blessing, but internally, εἰς ὑμᾶς, “into you”; it came not barely into their ears vocally, and into their heads notionally; but into their hearts, and worked effectually there; it was mixed with faith, and was profitable; it became the ingrafted word, and dwelt richly in them: for it came to them not}

in word only; it did come in word, it could not come without words, there is no interpreting of Scripture, no preaching of the Gospel, nor hearing of it without words, without articulate sounds; but not only with these, nor with wisdom of words, with enticing words of man's wisdom, with words which man's wisdom teacheth; as also not in the mere notion and letter of the Gospel, which when it comes in that manner is a dead letter, and the savour of death unto death:

but in power; not merely preached in a powerful way, or attended with miraculous operations, though doubtless both were true; for the apostle was a powerful preacher, and his ministry was confirmed by signs and wonders and mighty deeds; but from neither of these could he conclude the election of these people: but the preaching of the Gospel was accompanied with the powerful efficacy of the grace of God, working by it upon them; so that it became the power of God unto salvation to them; it came to them in the demonstration of the Spirit of God, and of power, quickening them

who were dead in trespasses, and sin, enlightening their dark understandings, unstopping their deaf ears, softening their hard hearts, and delivering them from the slavery of sin and Satan; from whence it clearly appeared that they were the chosen of God, and precious:

and in the Holy Ghost; the Gospel was not only preached under the influence, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and attended with his extraordinary gifts for the confirmation of it, which it might be, and be no proof of the election of these persons to eternal life; but it came by the power of the Holy Spirit to their souls, working and implanting his graces in them, as faith, hope, and love, and every other; and he himself was received along with it, as a spirit of illumination and conviction, of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, and of faith and adoption; all which gave full evidence of their election:

and in much assurance; not on the preacher's side, as if the Gospel was preached by him with great assurance, boldness, and confidence; or with great strength of evidence, giving clear and full proof of what was delivered sufficient to ascertain it, and persuade anyone to the belief of it; or with "much fulness", as some render the words, that is, of the Gospel of Christ, and of the gifts of the Spirit, and to a multitude of persons; all which might be, and yet be no proof of the choice of these persons in Christ to eternal salvation; but the Gospel preached to them was blessed to produce in them much assurance, or a large assurance, if not a full one, of the grace of faith in Christ, and of hope of eternal life by him, and of understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel, and of interest in the blessings of grace held forth in them; and this being a fruit, was an evidence of electing grace:

as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. The apostle appeals to themselves for the truth of what he had said; who must have observed, and could not but remember, with what meanness they appeared, with what fear and trembling, with what plainness and simplicity, without the enticing words of man's wisdom; what a contemptible figure they made, how they wrought with their own hands, and endured reproach and persecution for their sakes, that they might obtain salvation by Christ with eternal glory; and had nothing to recommend them to them, to win upon them, and engage their attention, and strike their affection; or persuade them to receive their persons, and believe their doctrines; wherefore the effects their ministry had upon them were not owing to the

charms of words, the force of language, and power of oratory; or to any external thing in them, or done by them; but must be ascribed to the Spirit of God, and to the power and efficacy of his grace.

Ver. 6. *And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord*, etc.] So far followers of them as they were of Christ, in embracing the Gospel, submitting to the ordinances of it, professing the name of Christ, and suffering for his sake; the Alexandrian copy reads, “of God”, and others, “of Christ”:

having received the word; the Gospel, the word of truth, peace, and righteousness, and of salvation by Christ; which they received not as the word of man, but of God; and that

in much affliction; referring to the uproar made by the baser sort of people, instigated by the unbelieving Jews, and the trouble they gave to Jason and other brethren, mentioned in (~~ACTS~~ Acts 17:1,5-9) and this is a considerable commendation of them, that at a time when others were offended and fell off from hearing the word, and a profession of the Gospel, they should receive it, and that

with much joy of the Holy Ghost; not with a carnal joy, or with a mere flash of natural affection, as in the stony ground hearers, and in the Jews, who rejoiced for a while in John's ministry, and in Herod, who sometimes heard him gladly; but with a spiritual joy of the Holy Ghost's producing in them, applying the word with power to them, giving them a spiritual gust of it, and pleasure in it, raising in their souls a joy upon the most solid foundation.

Ver. 7. *So that ye were ensamples to all that believe*, etc.] They were not only followers of Christ and his apostles, whom they took for examples of faith, holiness, courage, meekness, and patience; but they were patterns of good works; and of suffering afflictions to other believers, even to all that knew them, or heard of them, particularly

in Macedonia; as at Philippi and other places: though the Gospel was first preached there, and they had received it, and a Gospel church state was formed there; yet these were more forward in the exercise of grace and discharge of duty, and were even ensamples to them to copy after; so the first are sometimes last, and the last first:

and Achaia; another part of Greece, the metropolis of which was Corinth, where there also was a very considerable church; but these saints at Thessalonica set them an example in many things, and particularly in acts of beneficence and liberality, being one of the churches of Macedonia spoken of in (~~400~~2 Corinthians 8:1).

Ver. 8. *For from you sounded out the word of the Lord*, etc.] By which is meant the Gospel, and is so called because it is from the Lord, as the author of it: and it is of the Lord, as the subject of it; and it is by the Lord, as the minister or dispenser of it; and it is owing to the efficacy of his grace that it is useful and successful, and ought to be attended to, received, and obeyed, not as the word of man, but as the word of the Lord. This is said to have “sounded out”, alluding to the blowing of a trumpet, to which the Gospel is sometimes compared, as to the silver trumpet under the law, for the gathering of the people of Israel; or to the trumpet blown in the years of jubilee, which proclaimed liberty, release of debts, and restoration of inheritances, as the Gospel in a spiritual sense does; or to the trumpet used in war to prepare for the battle, and therefore should not give an uncertain sound; or as used musically, the Gospel being a joyful sound; and this sounding of it may denote the clear publication and open declaration, and large spread of it far and near: though, when it is said to sound forth from the Thessalonians, it is not to be understood as if the Gospel first began to be preached among them, and from thence went to other places; it was preached at Philippi before it came to them, and at many other places before it was there; the word of the Lord, according to the prophecy of (~~200~~Isaiah 2:2) came from Jerusalem; Christ and his apostles first preached there, and from thence their words and sound went to the ends of the earth; but not so much the preaching of the Gospel, as the fame and report of its being preached in this place, is here meant: and so the Latin translation of the Syriac version renders it, “for from you went the report of the word of our Lord”; the fame of its being preached and received at Thessalonica, in the manner it was, spread itself,

not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place; not only at Philippi, Berea, Athens, and Corinth, and other cities and towns in those countries, but also in other parts of the world; and what greatly contributed to it were the uproar that was made at Thessalonica, and continued at Berea upon the first preaching of the Gospel in those parts by the unbelieving Jews; as also the large numbers both of Greeks and Jews, and of devout women of considerable families, that were converted: to which

may be added, that Thessalonica was the metropolis of Macedonia, and a city of great trade, and much frequented from all parts both by sea and land; and by this means it came to pass, that not only the fame of the preaching of the word among them went abroad everywhere; but, as the apostle adds,

your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; meaning the grace of faith bestowed on them, by which they received the Gospel in the love of it, assented to it, and professed it, and which has God for its object, and is very valuable, since such public notice is taken of it; and which shows that it was not kept to themselves, and lay hid in their own breasts; but they declared it both by words and by deeds, by making a profession of it, and by walking agreeably to it:

so that we had no need to speak anything; the Syriac version adds, “concerning you”; concerning the preaching of the Gospel among them, their faith in it and profession of it, all being so well known in the several places where they came; for it seems it was usual with the apostles, when they came to any place, to speak of their success in others, and of the faith, and hope, and joy of other Christians, for the encouragement of, and as ensamples to those to whom they minister; but with relation to the Thessalonians this was unnecessary.

Ver. 9. *For they themselves show of us*, etc.] Either the above reports of the preaching of the Gospel to the Thessalonians, and of their faith in God; or rather the persons to whom these reports were brought, openly and publicly, and largely declared concerning

the apostles, what manner of entering in we had unto you; under what difficulties they laboured, what contention they had with the unbelieving Jews, what reproaches were cast upon them, and what persecutions they endured when they first entered their city and synagogue, and preached the Gospel to them; and in what manner they did preach it, with what boldness, sincerity, uprightness and affection, and without flattery, covetousness, and vain glory; and with what power it came to them, and what success attended it, and how readily, cheerfully, and reverently both they and that were received by them:

and how ye turned to God from idols; immediately and at once, upon the preaching of the Gospel to them, being first turned by the powerful and efficacious grace of God; for the first work of conversion is God's work;

then they themselves, under the influence of the same grace, turned to the one God, from their internal idols, their sins and lusts, and from their external idols, their many false and fictitious deities: for the Thessalonians before the Gospel came among them were idolaters; here the “Dii Cabiri”, the great and chief gods of the Gentiles, were worshipped; as Jupiter and Bacchus, Ceres and Proserpina, Pluto and Mercury, Castor and Pollux, and Esculapius; these the Macedonians, and particularly the Thessalonians, worshipped with great devotion and reverence^{f4}: but now they turned from them and forsook them,

to serve the living and true God; who is called the living God, because he has life in and of himself, and is the fountain of life to others; from whom all living creatures have their life, and are supported in it by him; and in opposition to the above idols, which were inanimate things made of wood or metal, and were images of men that had been dead long ago: and the “true” God, because he is truth itself, and cannot lie, who faithfully performs all his promises, and is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth; and in opposition to the nominal and fictitious deities of the Gentiles, which were only in name, not in truth and reality, or by nature gods: now though these Thessalonians had before done service to these idols, they now turned from them to serve the one living and true God; not only externally, by embracing and professing his Gospel, submitting to his ordinances, and walking according to the rules prescribed by him; but also internally, in the exercise of faith, hope, love, and every other grace.

Ver. 10. *And to wait for his Son from heaven*, etc.] The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the natural, essential, and eternal Son of God; and whoever is truly converted, is not only turned to God the Father, and believes in him; but also believes in, receives, embraces, and professes his Son Jesus Christ; who became incarnate, and, in the human nature he assumed, obeyed, suffered, and died and rose again, and ascended into heaven, where he now is, and will be till the time of the restitution of all things; when he will descend from thence, and come and judge the world in righteousness; and from thence the saints expect him, and look and wait by faith for eternal glory and happiness by him, and with him at his appearance and kingdom; so that many articles of faith are contained in this expression, which these Thessalonians were acquainted with, believed, and acted upon: and Christ the Son of God is further described as that person

whom he raised from the dead; that is, God the Father raised from the dead, and whereby he was declared to be the Son of God; and which supposes his dying for the sins of his people, as it expresses his rising again for their justification; things which the faith of these believers was led unto, and in which light they viewed him:

even Jesus, which delivered us from wrath to come; which is revealed from heaven against sin, and comes upon the children of disobedience; which all men are deserving of, even God's elect themselves, but shall not partake of, because they are not appointed to it, but to salvation; and because they are justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ, and so are saved from it; not from all fears about it, and apprehensions of it, which they are filled with, especially under first awakenings, and sometimes afterwards when under afflictive providences; but they are delivered from the thing itself, by which is meant vindictive punishment, even from all punishment in this life, for there is no wrath mixed with any of their mercies or their chastisements; and from all punishment in the world to come, which will fall heavy on others; and that because Christ has bore their sins, and the wrath of God and curse of the law, due unto them, in their room and stead.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS 2

The apostle in this chapter gives a further account of his ministry among the Thessalonians, of the nature, manner, and success of it, and of his regard to them, and conduct and conversation when with them; and commends their readiness in receiving the Gospel, and excuses his present absence from them. He appeals to them themselves for the truth of it, that his entrance to them, or preaching among them, was not in vain and without success, ([1 Thessalonians 2:1](#)) that it was with all boldness and intrepidity of mind, notwithstanding what he had suffered before for it, ([1 Thessalonians 2:2](#)) and with all integrity and faithfulness to the trust reposed in him by the Lord, without deceit and guile, or seeking to please men, but God the searcher of hearts, who had committed this trust unto him, ([1 Thessalonians 2:3,4](#)) and that neither then, nor at any other time, he had used flattery, or showed covetousness; which he calls God to witness, ([1 Thessalonians 2:5](#)) nor of them or others sought glory and honour, even that which was due unto him by virtue of his office, ([1 Thessalonians 2:6](#)) but had showed all gentleness, humanity, and, affection; which he illustrates by the simile of a nurse cherishing her children ([1 Thessalonians 2:7](#)) and by the willingness he showed not only to preach the Gospel to them, but to lay down his life for them, had it been necessary; so great was his affection for them, ([1 Thessalonians 2:8](#)) and, as a proof of this, he puts them in mind of his labours, both in preaching the word, and in working with his own hands; because he would not be burdensome and chargeable to them, ([1 Thessalonians 2:9](#)) and as for his conversation among them, he appeals both to God and them, how holy, just, and unblemished it was, ([1 Thessalonians 2:10](#)) and reminds them of his tenderness, diligence, and faithfulness, in exhorting, comforting, and charging them, particularly to walk worthy of God; since he had called them to his kingdom and glory, ([1 Thessalonians 2:11,12](#)) and then he expresses his thankfulness to God for their reception of the worth of the Gospel; not as an human invention, but as of God, which wrought effectually in them, ([1 Thessalonians 2:13](#)) the evidence of which were partly their imitation of the churches of Christ in Judea, in doctrine and

practice; and partly their suffering the same things they did, of the Jews, (^{<S124>}1 Thessalonians 2:14) who are described by their ill usage of, and cruelty to, Christ, their own prophets, and his apostles, by their not pleasing God, and by their opposition to men; an instance of which is given in prohibiting the apostles to preach to the Gentiles, whose end in so doing with respect to the Gentiles, was that they might not be saved; but God's end in suffering them so to do, was with respect to them that they might fill up their iniquity, and so entire wrath and ruin come upon them, as had been foretold, (^{<S125>}1 Thessalonians 2:15,16) and then the apostle concludes the chapter, by expressing his affectionate concern in parting with them, which was not in heart but in body; by declaring his earnest desire and endeavour to see them again; and by observing to them the reason he had not and could not come unto them, because Satan hindered him, (^{<S127>}1 Thessalonians 2:17,18) the cause of his being so desirous to see them, was their being his hope, joy, glory, and crown of rejoicing, both now and hereafter, (^{<S129>}1 Thessalonians 2:19,20).

Ver. 1. *For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you,* etc.] The apostle having observed in (^{<S109>}1 Thessalonians 1:9) that those persons to whom the report of the Gospel being preached at Thessalonica, and the success of it there was made, showed everywhere both what manner of entrance he and his fellow ministers had in that place, and the conversion of many souls there; he enlarges upon the latter, and here reassumes the former, and appeals to the Thessalonians themselves, who must know full well, and better than others, what an entrance it was; and which is to be understood not merely of a corporeal entrance into their city and synagogue, but of their coming among them, by the preaching of the Gospel, as the ministers of the word and ambassadors of Christ:

that it was not in vain; it was not a vain show with outward pomp and splendour, as the public entrances of ambassadors into cities usually are; but with great meanness, poverty, reproach, and persecution, having been lately beaten and ill used at Philippi; nor was it with great swelling words of vanity, with the enticing words of man's wisdom, to tickle the ear, please the fancy, and work upon the passions of natural men, in which manner the false teachers came: but the apostle came not with deceit and guile, with flattering words or a cloak of covetousness, or with a view to vain glory and worldly advantage; nor was the message they came with, from the King of kings, a vain, light, empty, and trifling one; but solid and substantial, and of the greatest importance; the doctrine they taught was

not comparable to chaff and wind; it was not corrupt philosophy and vain deceit, the traditions and commandments of men, but sound doctrine, the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ: nor was it fruitless and without effect; the word did not return void and empty; but was powerful and efficacious to the conversion of many souls. Christ was with them both to assist them in their ministry, and to bless it to the salvation of men; nor was their coming to Thessalonica an human scheme, a rash enterprise, engaged in on their own heads, on a slight and empty foundation; but upon good and solid grounds, by divine direction and counsel; (see ~~4416~~ Acts 16:9,10).

Ver. 2. *But even after that we had suffered before*, etc.] Before they came to Thessalonica, which they would not have done, had their ministry been a light and empty one in itself, and unprofitable to others; and especially had this been the case, they would never have rashly engaged in it again, and exposed themselves to fresh sufferings and dangers, as they did:

and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi; being beaten with many stripes, and put into prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, at the instigation of the masters of the damsel that had a spirit of divination, by whom they got much gain, and which Paul dispossessed; (see ~~4416~~ Acts 16:16-24)

we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention: and which still made it more manifestly appear, that the errand they came upon was a matter of importance, and that they did not proceed on a slight foundation: what they spoke was “the Gospel”, salvation by Christ, and not by the works of the law; the pure Gospel, and not a mixed one, free from the mixture of all human doctrines and inventions of men, without any adulteration and inconsistency; the whole of the Gospel, and not a part of it only; they declared the whole counsel of God, and kept back nothing that might be profitable: and this is styled the Gospel of God, to distinguish it from the Gospel of men, or that which the false teachers taught, and which was called the Gospel, though it was not so; and to express the excellency of it, from the author of it, who is God, it being the produce of his wisdom and grace; and from the matter of it, it containing the good will of God to men, setting forth the grace of God in election, redemption, justification, pardon, adoption, regeneration, and glorification, and expressing things relating to the kingdom of God, a meetness for it, and a right unto it; and it being so called shows it to be something divine, a

message sent from God to sinful men; and gives a reason why the apostles were so bold to speak it, because it was not of men, but God. The Syriac version renders it the “Gospel of Christ”; (see ~~<4016>~~Romans 1:16) and it being so, they “were bold to speak it”; or they spoke it both with liberty of mind, the Spirit of God being with them, and with freedom of speech, a door of utterance being opened for them; as also with great courage and intrepidity, notwithstanding what they had suffered before, and the ill treatment they had met with at Philippi; and though they knew that the Gospel they spoke was contrary to the Jews, was a stumblingblock to them, and they had an inveterate prejudice against it; and was foolishness to the Greeks, and was derided by them, and they were sure to meet with reproach and persecution on account of it: yet they boldly and faithfully preached it, fearing not the face of men, nor their revilings: though it was

with much contention; referring to the tumult raised by the baser sort, who, instigated by others, assaulted Jason and the brethren, where the apostles were, (~~<4016>~~Acts 18:5,6) or to the disputes which they had with the unbelieving Jews, who contradicted and blasphemed what they said; or to the division the Gospel made, as through the corruption of nature it makes wherever it comes, between the nearest relations and friends, some being for it, and others against it; or this may be expressive of the zeal with which the apostles preached, who earnestly contended for it, as persons in a combat or agony; they fought the good fight of faith valiantly, they endured hardness as good soldiers of Christ, and gave not way to the enemy, no, not for an hour: and all this was “in our God”; or “by the confidence” of our God, as the Syriac version renders it; trusting in him and relying upon him, being assisted by his grace, and strengthened by his power, and receiving much encouragement from a view of him as a covenant God; faith in God as a covenant God, will make a man bold in his cause; (see ~~<2017>~~Daniel 3:17).

Ver. 3. *For our exhortation*, etc.] Or “consolation”; for the ministry of the Gospel, which is here meant, consists of doctrines full of comfort to distressed minds, such as free justification by the righteousness of Christ, full pardon by his blood, and complete satisfaction by his sacrifice; as well as of exhortations to the exercise of grace and discharge of duty: and this was

not of deceit; or “error”, was not “fallacious”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; it consisted of nothing but truth, it was the word of truth, and

the truth as it is in Jesus; nor did it proceed from any intention to deceive and impose on persons; it was no imposture:

nor of uncleanness; it did not spring from any impure affection for any sin, for popular applause, or worldly interest; nor did the ministers of it connive at uncleanness in others, or practise it themselves, as did the false teachers; but bore their testimony against it, both by word and example, and taught no doctrine that encouraged to it; but, on the contrary, the doctrine which is according to godliness, and which teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts:

nor in guile; as there was no deceitful design in the ministry of the word, nor anything impure and immoral in the matter of it; so there was no artifice used in the dispensing of it; it was plain and simple, without any colour and guile, without the hidden things of dishonesty, without craftiness and handling the word deceitfully; and this is a reason why the apostles preached it with so much freedom and boldness, because there was nothing false, impure, or artful in it.

Ver. 4. *But as we were allowed of God*, etc.] Or, “approved of God”; not that there were any previous fitness and worthiness in them to be ministers of the word; but such was the good will and pleasure of God, that he from all eternity chose and appointed them to this work; and in his own time by his grace called them to it, and by his gifts qualified them for it, who otherwise were unworthy of it, and insufficient for it:

to be put in trust with the Gospel; which is of great worth and value, a rich treasure, and of the last importance; which to be trusted with is a very great honour; and the discharge of such a trust requires great faithfulness, and which the apostles had:

even so we speak; the Gospel as delivered to them, both as to matter and manner; neither taking from it nor adding to it, nor mixing it with anything of their own, nor disguising it with any artifice:

not as pleasing men; to gain favour and affection, esteem, applause, and honour from them; to escape reproach and persecution, and obtain worldly advantages by dropping, concealing, or blending of truths to make them more agreeable to the taste of natural men:

but God, which trieth our hearts; studying to approve themselves to God, whose Gospel was committed to them, from whom they received gifts to

preach it, and to whom they were accountable for all; and who being the searcher of the hearts, and the trier of the reins of the children of men, knows the intentions and designs of men, and the springs of all actions; and sees through all artifices, and from whom nothing can be hidden, and who will, in his own time, bring to light the hidden things of darkness; under a sense of which faithful ministers act, as of sincerity, and as in the sight of an omniscient God.

Ver. 5. *For neither at any time used we flattering words,* etc.] To introduce them into the affections, and gain the esteem and good will of men; they did not in their ministry deliver such things as flattered men with a good opinion of themselves: they did not preach up the purity of human nature, but on the contrary the doctrine of original sin, the imputation of Adam's transgression to his posterity, and the corruption of all human nature; they asserted the universal pollution of it, of all men, and of all the powers and faculties of their souls, that they are all under the power and dominion of sin, are involved in the guilt of it, and are all guilty before God, and liable to everlasting wrath and punishment; and that unless they repented of their sins and believed in Christ, they would perish eternally; thus they dealt roundly and freely with men's consciences, and plainly, openly, and faithfully told them their case as it was: nor did they cry up the power of man's free will, which would have been grateful to Jews and Gentiles; but they declared the reverse, they asserted the weakness and impotency of man, to anything that is spiritually good; and represented him as a weak and strengthless creature, and unable to do anything, even to think a good thought of himself; and ascribed all that a man is, or has, or does, that is good, to the grace and power of God, who works in him both to will and to do: nor did they plead for the sufficiency of man's righteousness to justify him before God, a doctrine very pleasing to human nature; but, on the contrary, they gave out that there was none righteous, no, not one of the sons of Adam, in and of themselves, or by virtue of any righteousness of their own; so far from it that they were full of all unrighteousness, and were not capable of working out a righteousness, or of attaining to the righteousness of the law; that what they did pretend to was not a justifying righteousness, and would give no right and title to eternal glory; and that the righteousness of Christ was the only righteousness, by which a man could be justified from all things, and in which he could be found safe. They did not blend and mix their doctrine to suit with the tastes of different men, but with all sincerity and plainness

preached the truth, as it is in Jesus; they did not connive at the sins of men, cry Peace, Peace, when there was none, or sow pillows under their armholes, or promise them life, though they should not return from their wicked way; but they with great freedom inveighed against the sins of men, and exhorted them to repentance and reformation, as well as to faith in Christ for pardon and righteousness; nor did they wink at the sins of professors, or of one another, the Apostle Paul withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed; and when they praised men for their gifts and graces, and the exercise of them, they took care to ascribe them to the grace of God, and give him the glory, and prevent men from boasting in themselves; in short, they acted the reverse of the false teachers, who had men's persons in admiration because of advantage, and by good words and fair speeches deceived the hearts of the simple; but so did not the apostles of Christ, no, never, not "at any time": when they first came to Thessalonica during their stay there, either in public or in private: and though this was true of any other time and place, yet here must be confined to this, since the apostle appeals to this church for the truth of what he said,

as ye know; for flattering words may be discerned; a flatterer is known by his words; though in general such is the weakness of human nature, that men love to be flattered, though they know they are:

nor a cloak of covetousness; or "an occasion of" it, they did not take the opportunity or advantage by the ministry of the word, to indulge a covetous disposition, or to amass wealth and riches to themselves; or an "excuse" for covetousness, which covetous men are never at a loss to make, always pretending one thing or another to hide and cover their evil; but the apostles made no excuses, nor used any cloak, nor needed any to cover their covetousness, because they had not the thing; they did not pretend one thing and mean another; they did not, as the false apostles did, pretend to serve Christ, preach his Gospel, seek the glory of God and the good of souls, and mean themselves, and design their own worldly advantage; they did not make these a "pretence" for covetousness, they sincerely served Christ, faithfully preached his Gospel, truly sought the glory of God, and were heartily concerned for the good of souls without any mercenary and selfish views; for the truth of which they could appeal to the heart searching and rein-trying God, as the apostle here does, saying,

God is witness; which is properly an oath, a solemn appeal to God; for since covetousness is an internal and secret sin, and may be so coloured and disguised as not easily to be discerned, as flattering words may, the apostle therefore calls God to witness the truth of what he had said.

Ver. 6. *Nor of men sought we glory*, etc.] Honour, esteem, and popular applause; for though there is an honour that is due to the faithful ministers of the word, who are highly to be esteemed for their works' sake, and as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God; and especially there was an honour and glory that belonged to the apostles of Christ as such, who were set in the highest office and place in the church; yet they did not seek after it as the Pharisees and false teachers did, who received honour one of another, and sought not that which comes from God only: but so did not the apostles; they took no steps this way to procure glory and esteem among men, but all the reverse; they preached doctrines which were not of men, nor according to men, nor agreeable to them; and these they delivered in a disagreeable way, not with enticing words of men's wisdom, they did not seek to please men, but spoke and did everything that rendered them mean and despicable in their eyes; so that they looked upon them as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things: nor was this any disappointment to them, for to gain the favour of men was not their end and view; they did not seek for glory neither of the men of the world,

neither of you; the church at Thessalonica, and the inhabitants of that place:

nor yet of others; of other men, and churches elsewhere:

when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ: or “have used authority”, which was given them, though not for destruction, but for edification; put on a magisterial air, and made use of the apostolic rod; appeared with some severity and rigour, and so have commanded awe, respect, and reverence: or “have been in honour”; insisted upon being treated in an honourable way, as the apostles of Christ, his ambassadors, who were sent and came in his name, and represented his person; and therefore to be received as he himself; though the phrase may rather have regard to an honourable maintenance, as in (~~4711~~2 Corinthians 11:9) which as the apostles of Christ they might have required as their due, but they chose rather to relinquish their right, and labour with their own hands, that they might not be chargeable: and so “glory” in the former clause may mean the same, even great and glorious things for themselves, a

maintenance answerable to their high character and office, which they did not seek; but were content with a poor pittance, and such as they could get with their own hand labour; in which sense the phrase, “double honour”, seems to be used in (⁵⁴⁵⁷-1 Timothy 5:17) as appears by the reason given in the next verse.

Ver. 7. *But we were gentle among you*, etc.] Meek and humble, mild and moderate; not using severity, or carrying it in a haughty imperious manner; assuming power and dominion, lording it over God's heritage, and commanding persons to do homage and honour to them, and forcing themselves upon them, and obliging them to maintain them. The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions, instead of “gentle”, read, “little children”; as the word signifies, by adding a letter to it, and expresses much the same as the other, that they were harmless and modest, and disinterested; and sought not themselves neither honour nor wealth, but the real good of others, and were kind and tender, and affectionate to them:

even as a nurse cherisheth her children: or “the children of her own self”; her own children, and so designs a nursing mother, one whose the children are, has bore them as well as nurses them, and therefore has the most tender concern for them; she lays them in her bosom, and hugs them in her arms, and so warms and cherishes them; gives them the breast, bears with their frowardness, condescends to do the meanest things for them; and that without any self-interest, from a pure parental affection for them: and such were the apostles to these Thessalonians; they were their spiritual parents, of whom they travailed in birth, till Christ was formed in them; they used them with the greatest kindness and tenderness; they fed them with the sincere milk of the word; they bore patiently all the slighting and ill treatment they met with; and condescended to men of low estates, and did them all the good offices they could, without any selfish views or sinister ends: a like simile is used by the Jews ^{f5}, who say,

“he that rises in the night to study in the law, the law makes known to him his offences; and not in a way of judgment, but **amak**, as a mother makes known to her son, “with gentle words”:]”

but the ministration of the Gospel is much more gentle.

Ver. 8. *So being affectionately desirous of you*, etc.] Not of theirs but them; not of glory from them, nor a maintenance by them, but of their spiritual and eternal welfare; were as fond of them as a nursing mother is of

her children, who, when absent from them but ever so little a while, longs to see them; (see ^{<S1P7>}1 Thessalonians 2:17) and (^{<S1P1>}1 Thessalonians 3:1,5-8),

we were willing: took the utmost pleasure, delight, and complacency:

to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only; the sincere milk of the word, which they did freely, fully, and for their spiritual good and profit, without any regard to any advantage of their own:

but also our own souls, or “lives”; which is the highest expression and strongest proof of love that can be given; and respect is still had to the similitude of the nursing mother, who may be said to impart her blood, for such it her milk diversified, for the nourishment of her children: and such was the great concern of the apostles for the interest of Christ, the spread of the Gospel, and the good of souls, that their lives were not dear unto them, so that these ends might be answered: because ye were dear unto us; both because they were loved by God, redeemed by Christ, regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, and had the image of Christ stamped upon them; and also because that they were their spiritual children; and as children are dear to their parents, so were these to them, even to such a degree, as that, were there a necessity for it, they could freely have laid down their lives for them.

Ver. 9. *For ye remember brethren, our labour and travail*, etc.] The great pains they took, even to weariness. The Vulgate Latin version renders the last word, “weariness”; and the Arabic version, “anxiety”; and the Ethiopic version, “affliction”; it is to be understood both of corporeal and spiritual labour, working with their hands and preaching the Gospel; this could not but be remembered by them, since it was not a year ago they were with them:

for labouring night and day; at our handicraft, or “at the work of our hands”, as the Syriac version renders it; which they continually attended to, even night and day, when they were not preaching the Gospel, or disputing with the Jews, or praying and conversing with those that believed, or refreshing themselves with food and rest. The apostle's business was making of tents, (see Gill on “^{<48B>}Acts 18:3”),

because we would not be chargeable to any of you; neither to the whole body, nor to any single person; which shows that they did not seek their own ease and worldly interest; and proves what is before asserted, that

they did not use a cloak of covetousness, but chose to forego, and not insist on what they had a right to, lest the Gospel should be hindered or reproached:

we preached unto you the Gospel of God; freely and with great application and diligence; for this is the other part of their labour and travel; for the ministry of the word is a work, and a laborious one, when closely attended to; a preparation for it by prayer, reading, meditation, and much study, are wearisome and fatiguing; and to preach the word in season and out of season, with all longsuffering and doctrine, is very laborious; to which no man is sufficient of himself, and is a work which requires great faithfulness, application, and industry; and is oftentimes made the more heavy through the malice and opposition of enemies, and the weakness of friends.

Ver. 10. *Ye are witnesses, and God also*, etc.] Not so much to what goes before as to what follows after, relating to their holy walk and conversation among them, the more open part of which they were witness of; and for the more secret part God is appealed to, who is acquainted with the springs of actions, as well as with actions themselves:

how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. The Syriac version joins the last clause of the preceding verse with this, and reads the whole thus, “ye are witnesses, and God also, how purely and justly we preached unto you the Gospel of God, and how unblamable we were among all that believed”; referring the former part to the purity and integrity in which they preached the Gospel, and the latter to their unblemished conduct among the saints; but the whole of it refers to their conversation, which was holy, externally holy, arising from internal principles of holiness in their hearts, and free from that impurity and filthiness with which the false teachers were polluted; and confirms what is before said, that their exhortation was not of uncleanness: and it was likewise “just”, they were righteous in the sight of God through the justifying righteousness of Christ, and in consequence of this lived righteously before men, and were injurious to no man's person nor property: and their conversation was also “unblamable”; not that they were, without sin, and so without blame in themselves, or without the commission of sin by them, or that they passed without censure in the world, for they went through honour and dishonour, through good report and bad report, and had all manner of evil spoken of them falsely for Christ's name's sake; but by the grace of God, they had their conversation

among them that believed so, that there was nothing material to be alleged against them, or any just cause of blame to be laid either on their persons or their ministry; and which is mentioned for imitation.

Ver. 11. *As you know*, etc.] This is added to the end of the last verse in the Arabic version, and which begins this verse thus, “as one of you, and as a father comforting his sons, so we”, etc. but for what is said in the former verse, an appeal is made both to God and to the Thessalonians, so that there is no need of adding such a clause there; it properly stands here in connection with what follows,

how we exhorted; to flee from wrath to come, and to Christ for refuge; to look to, and believe in him, as the only Saviour of lost sinners; to perform the duties of religion, and to continue in the faith; to cleave to Christ, and walk on in him as they had received him, and to abide by the truths and ordinances of the Gospel they had embraced:

and comforted; under a sense of sin, with the soul comforting doctrines of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, of full pardon by his blood, and of a plenary satisfaction and atonement by his sacrifice; and under all their afflictions and persecutions for the sake of Christ, with exceeding great and precious promises of the presence, grace, and strength of Christ here, and glory hereafter:

and charged everyone of you; not only publicly, but privately, going from house to house; not in an austere and domineering way, but with the greatest tenderness, and yet faithfulness: even

as a father doth his children; not only in an authoritative, but in an affectionate way, and also with solid wisdom and judgment; for in such a relation, in a Spiritual sense, did the apostle and his fellow ministers stand in to them; (see ^{<4015>}1 Corinthians 4:15) and the substance of the charge is as follows:

Ver. 12. *That ye would walk worthy of God*, etc.] In imitation of him; not of his perfections, which are inimitable, but of his works; and these not of his power and wisdom, but those of kindness and beneficence, and of righteousness and holiness; and in conformity to his revealed will, which is good, perfect, and acceptable; and agreeably to his Gospel, that that may be adorned, and not blasphemed; and particularly, in a manner worthy of the calling wherewith saints are called by him: since it follows,

who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory; which instance of the grace of God carries in it many arguments, and lays many obligations on the persons interested in it, to walk in their lives and conversations worthy of God; which may be taken from the nature of this call, which is not a mere external one by the outward ministry of the word, but an internal and effectual one, by the powerful and efficacious grace of God; it is a call of persons out of darkness into light, and therefore it becomes them to walk as children of the light, and honestly, as in the daytime; and from a state of bondage to sin and Satan, unto liberty, and therefore ought not to walk after the dictates of corrupt nature, nor the suggestions of Satan, but after the Spirit of God, who is a spirit of liberty; and from fellowship with the world, and the men of it, to communion with Christ, and therefore should not walk as other Gentiles do, nor run with them in the same excess of riot; in short, such are called with an holy calling, and to holiness, and have in their effectual calling principles of holiness implanted in them, and therefore should be holy in all manner of conversation: moreover, arguments may be taken from the consideration of him that calls, God, who is a holy Being, and therefore as he that hath called them is holy, so should they be likewise; he is the God of all grace that has called them, and he has called them by his grace, and to special blessings of grace, and that according to his sovereign will and pleasure; and has called them the most unworthy, base, mean, and despicable, and not others, which greatly enhances the obligation to walk worthy of him: to which add, that he that calls is God that dwells on high in heaven, and changes not, and such is his call; hence it is styled the high calling of God, and the heavenly calling, and said to be without repentance; and therefore the saints should live and walk as pilgrims and strangers here, and be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: likewise the consideration of what they are called to should engage them to a becoming walk, being called “to his kingdom”; to the kingdom of grace, which lies in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and which cannot be moved, and where they are kings and priests unto God; and unto a Gospel church state, and to all the privileges and immunities of it; and unto the kingdom of heaven, prepared by God for them from the foundation of the world, their Father’s free gift to them, of which they are born heirs apparent in regeneration, and have both a meetness for it, and a right unto it; and therefore ought to behave suitable to this high honour and dignity which belong unto them: and this latter sense is the rather to be chose, since it follows, “and glory”: or “to his glory”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read; to the glory of

God, to the beholding of the glory of God through Christ, and the glory of Christ himself; and to a participation of that glory which God has provided, and is in the hands of Christ for them, where it is hid, who when he shall appear, they will appear with him in glory; which will be both upon their souls and bodies; and this will be an eternal glory, a glory that fades not away, and not like the glory of this world, which is transient, and soon passes away, but this will abide for ever; and therefore since the saints are called to the obtaining of this, it is a reason why their conversation should be in heaven now, and as becomes God and his Gospel.

Ver. 13. *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing,* etc.] As for their election of God, (^{<small>S100</small>}1 Thessalonians 1:4) so for their effectual calling by his grace, to his kingdom and glory, just now mentioned, as well as for their reception of the word of God as such, hereafter expressed; since their having it and receiving it, and the effectual operation of it in them, were owing to the goodness and grace of God, and therefore required a constant sense of the favour, and thankfulness, without ceasing, for it. The apostle having at large considered the manner of his and his fellow ministers' entrance among them without guile, flattery, covetousness, or any sinister view, and with all simplicity, integrity, labour, diligence, affection, and tenderness, returns to observe the reception their ministry met with, and the influence and effect it had upon them:

because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us; or “the word of hearing of God”, as the Vulgate Latin version from the Greek text literally renders it; that is, the Gospel which was preached by the apostles, and was heard and received by these Thessalonians: and it is called the word of God, because God is the author of it; it comes from him, and is ministered by his authority, and is a part of that written word which is given by his inspiration; and because his grace in choosing, redeeming, justifying, pardoning, adopting, regenerating, and giving eternal life to men, and the declaration of his will concerning saving them by his Son Jesus Christ, are the subject matter of it; and because he owns and blesses it, for the conversion and comfort of his people: and it may be called the word of hearing of God, because coming from him, and containing his will, and preached by his order, and succeeded by his power, hearing comes by it; it is divinely breathed by him; he speaks in it by his ministers, and he is heard of in it by his people; as he was by these believers, who heard his word both externally and internally; and received it into their understandings, so as to know it spiritually and experimentally; into their minds, not merely

notionally, and so as to assent to the truth of it, and give credit to it, but so as to believe in Christ revealed in it; and into their affections, in the love of it, and with joy in the Holy Ghost; they received it gladly, and with meekness and readiness, so that it became the ingrafted word, and brought forth fruit in them: the manner in which they received it follows,

ye received it not as the word of men: which is often fallacious and deceitful, at least dubious and uncertain, and not to be depended on; nor did they receive it as the words of wise men are received, and because it was clothed with the wisdom, eloquence, and oratory of men, for it was destitute of these; nor upon the credit and authority of men, no, not of the apostles themselves:

but as it is in truth the word of God: it appearing to be agreeably to the perfections of his nature, and to the Scriptures of truth, and it bearing his impress and divine authority, they received it with much assurance and certainty, as infallible truth; and which was inviolably to be adhered to, without any alteration, without adding to it or taking from it; and to be had and retained in the greatest esteem and reverence, and never to be departed from: and that they received it in this manner, appears from its operation in them,

which effectually worketh also in you that believe: the Vulgate Latin version reads, “who worketh”; referring it to God, as indeed it may be referred to him, as well as to his word; but the sense is much the same, for God works by and with his word, and his word only effectually works when it comes in power; or is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe; and when it does come with a divine commission and power, it effectually works to the quickening of dead sinners, the enlightening of dark minds, the unstopping of deaf ears, the softening of hard hearts, producing faith which works by love, encouraging hope, delivering from the bondage of sin, Satan, and the law, and comforting and establishing the hearts of the saints under all afflictions, trials, and persecutions.

Ver. 14. *For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God,* etc.]

As of the Lord and of the apostle, (³⁰⁰⁶1 Thessalonians 1:6) so of the churches of God that were before them, who were gathered out of the world by the grace of God; and who were united in the fear of God, and assembled together for his worship, to bear a testimony to his truth and ordinances, and for the glory of his name: these they followed in the faith and order of the Gospel, and “became like” them, as the Syriac and

Ethiopic versions render the word; or “equal” to them, were upon an equal foot with them, as the Arabic; that is, in suffering reproach and persecution for the Gospel, as the latter part of the verse shows; and their bearing these with patience, courage, and constancy, was a proof that the word of God had a place, and wrought effectually in them; otherwise they would never have endured such things as they did, and as other churches did:

which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for besides the church at Jerusalem, there were many churches in Judea and Galilee; (see ^{<443E>}Acts 9:31 ^{<812>}Galatians 1:22) which shows that the primitive churches were not national, but congregational: and these were in Christ Jesus; “in the faith” of Jesus Christ, as the Arabic version renders it; which distinguishes them from the synagogues, or congregations of the Jews, which did not believe in Christ; (see Gill on “^{<510E>}1 Thessalonians 1:1”).

For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen; the inhabitants of Thessalonica, the baser sort of them, who were stirred up by the unbelieving Jews of that place, to make an uproar in the city, and assault the house of Jason, in order to seize upon the apostles; (see ^{<447E>}Acts 17:6).

Even as they have of the Jews; in like manner as the churches of Judea suffered by the Jews their countrymen; (see ^{<448E>}Acts 8:1,3) (^{<512E>}Hebrews 10:32-34).

Ver. 15. *Who both killed the Lord Jesus*, etc.] For though Pilate condemned him to death, and the Roman soldiers executed the sentence, yet it was through the malice and envy of the Jews that he was delivered to him, who brought charges against him, and insisted upon the crucifixion of him; and who are therefore said to have taken him with wicked hands, and crucified and slain him; and to have killed the Prince of life, and to have been the betrayers and murderers of him; and therefore it is no wonder that such persons should persecute the followers of Christ, whether in Judea or elsewhere:

and their own prophets; whom God sent unto them; these they not only mocked and misused, and persecuted, but many of them they put to death, as Isaiah and others; and though this was done by their fathers, yet the present generation were the children of them that killed the prophets; and showed themselves to be of the same principles, and by their practices approved of what they had done: hence our Lord addresses the city of

Jerusalem thus, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets”, (^{<423>}Matthew 23:31,34,37). The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions leave out the phrase “their own”, and so does the Alexandrian copy; but it stands in the Syriac and Arabic versions, and is rightly retained, it having an emphasis in it; these prophets being of their own nation, born among them, and raised up in the midst of them, and sent unto them particularly, and yet were so used; and therefore it need not seem strange that they should treat in an ill manner persons of a lower character, that did not agree with them; the consideration of which serves to support under reproach and persecution; (see ^{<4152>}Matthew 5:12).

And have persecuted us; the apostles of Christ; have drove us out of our own country, and pursued us from place to place, and caused us to flee from one city to another:

and they please not God: though they reckoned themselves his chosen people, the favourites of heaven, and whom God delighted in; but neither their persons nor their actions were pleasing to him, their carnal minds being enmity to him, to his law and to his Gospel; and they in the flesh, or in an unregenerate estate, and without faith in Christ, without which it is impossible to please God, and their actions such as before described:

and are contrary to all men; not only Christians, but Heathens; to all the Gentiles, who are called all men, the nations of the world, the world, and the whole world; they were contrary to these, both in their religious and civil principles, and had an aversion to them, of which the following is a full instance.

Ver. 16. *Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved*, etc.] Speaking or preaching the Gospel is the ordinary means of saving souls, or of acquainting them with the way of salvation, the necessity of it, and of the application of it to them, and with this end and view it is preached: now though the Jews disbelieved the Gospel, and despised the ministry of it, and disavowed any such use and end of it, yet such was their envy at the Gentiles, and their hatred of them, that could they have believed it to be the means of salvation, they would have forbidden the preaching of it to them, as they now did; and it is certain, that even the believing Jews, through ignorance, did at first disapprove of the ministry of the word to the Gentiles; (see ^{<4110>}Acts 11:1-3) such was the aversion of that nation to all others, and which perfectly agrees with their general sentiments, which forbid the explanation of the law to the Gentiles; and

therefore it need not be wondered at, that they should do all that in them lay to hinder the entrance and spread of the Gospel among them, of which take the following proof^{f6}:

“whoever has not the holy name sealed and bound in his flesh (i.e. is not circumcised) *atyrwad hl m hyl a[dwal rysa* “it is forbidden to make known to him a word of the law”, and much less to study in it — and whoever is not circumcised, and they give to him *atyrwad ryzx ta*, “the least thing in the law”, it is as if he destroyed the world, and dealt falsely with the name of God — Hillell and Shammai did not make known to Onkelos a word of the law, until he was circumcised — and the traditions are, that even though a man is circumcised, yet if he does not do the commands of the law, lo, he is as a Gentile in all things, and “it is forbidden to teach him the words of the law”.”

nay, it is a rule with the Jews^{f7}, that

“if a Gentile studies in the law, he is guilty of death:”

and thus were they left in providence, to judicial blindness and hardness of heart,

to fill up their sins alway; the measure of their own and their fathers' iniquities; (see ^{<1232>}Matthew 23:32) a phrase expressive of the abounding of their sins, and of their being under a divine appointment, and of their being limited and restrained by a divine power, and overruled by infinite wisdom, to answer some ends and purposes of God's glory;

for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost: which is to be understood, not of their wrath and fury being come to its highest degree and pitch against the followers of Christ, but of “the wrath of God”, as the Vulgate Latin version and Beza's ancient copy express it; and designs not so much “eternal punishment”, as the Ethiopic version renders the phrase, or everlasting wrath and damnation on the reprobate part of that people, as temporal ruin and destruction, which was now near at hand, and hung over their heads; and therefore is said to be come to them, and which in a little time fell upon their nation and city, and temple, even to the uttermost, to the last degree; and was, as the Arabic version renders it, “wrath consuming”; or “the consummation, and that determined poured upon the desolate”, spoken of in (^{<2022>}Daniel 9:27) and which, as it is come upon them, will remain “unto the end”, as the phrase may also be rendered; unto

the end of the world, until the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, and then God's elect among the Jews shall obtain mercy, and be called, and so all Israel shall be saved, (ⓂRomans 11:25,26).

Ver. 17. *But we, brethren, being taken from you,* etc.] Here more properly should begin the third chapter, in which the apostle having before observed the manner of his entrance among these people, the nature of his ministry, the reception the word of God met with among them, and the powerful effect it had upon them, insomuch that they patiently and cheerfully bore persecution for the sake of it; he excuses his not having been with them again as yet, which he knew was proper and necessary, as he was their apostle and spiritual father; and expresses an affectionate concern at his parting with them in the manner he did, which was not his own choice and voluntary act, but was obliged to it, being hurried away at once, at an unawares in the night, by reason of the uproar made in the city by the baser sort of people, instigated by the unbelieving Jews; so that he and his fellow ministers had not the opportunity of taking their leave of them, as they would have done: hence he says,

we being taken from you; they were, as it were, passive in it; they were forced away on a sudden, they did not go of themselves; the word used is very uncommon and emphatical, and may be literally rendered, “we being orphanized from you”; which represents this parting to be like the separation made by death, between parents and children; when either parents are deprived of their children, or children of their parents, and are left orphans or fatherless; and just in such a destitute and desolate condition were the apostle and his companions in, in their account; nor need it to be wondered at, when they are before compared to a nursing mother and a tender father, as they were to these their spiritual children: and he further observes, that this removal from them, was

for a short time, or “for the time of an hour”; which may either denote the suddenness of it, being as it were at an hour's warning, having no more notice of it than for the space of an hour; or it may express the great affection he and his fellow ministers had for them, insomuch that they could not bear an absence from them, though but for an hour; or it may be said by way of comfort, that this parting was but for a short time, and that in a little while they might hope to see them again; and if not in this life, yet in the future state, when they should meet and never part more, and which would be but in a short time at longest: moreover, this separation was only

in presence; in person, in face, in sight, in body, it was but a corporeal one: not in heart; the apostle's heart was with them, as much as if present; they were always in his mind, and remembered by him, at the throne; he had as it were the images of them continually before him, as parents have of their children when at a distance from them; his heart was after them, and his affections moved strongly towards them: and the effect this distance had on him, and those that were with him, was this, that they

endeavoured the more abundantly, he observes,

to see your face with great desire; it made them but the more desirous of seeing them face to face again, and put them upon attempting with more abundant earnestness and diligence to come and see them.

Ver. 18. *Wherefore we would have come unto you*, etc.] They not only had a will, and purposed in themselves, and entered into some resolutions to come unto them, but endeavoured to put them into execution:

even I Paul: as well as Silas and Timothy; the latter of which had been with them, and the others had as good a will, and especially Paul: and that

once and again: or “once and twice” so the Jews used ^{f8} to speak **ܝ ܝܢܥܘ ܗܢܘܩܐܪ ܡ[ܦ]**, “one time and a second”; that is, several times:

but Satan hindered us. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “hindered me”; by moving the mob which rose at Thessalonica, to go to Berea, and disturb the apostle there; which obliged him, contrary to his will, to go to Athens instead of returning to Thessalonica, as he intended; and when at Athens, from whence also he might purpose to return thither, he was hindered by the disputes the Jews and the Stoics, and Epicurean philosophers, had with him; and after that, might be prevented by the lying in wait of the Jews for him, of which he might be informed; or by disturbances raised in the church, or churches where he was, by the false teachers; which required his stay with them, to oppose and refute error and heresy and to make up differences that arose among true Christians, fomented by Satan and his emissaries; (see ^{ⲀⲚⲚⲔ}Romans 1:13). Satan does all he can to hinder the preaching of the Gospel, the hearing of the word, the profession of religion, and the saints coming together, and having spiritual conversation with each other; being, as his name “Satan” signifies, an enemy to Christ and his interest, and to the souls of men: indeed he can do nothing but by divine permission, nor can he hinder the will of God, and

the execution of that, though he often hinders the will of man, or man from doing his will; he hindered the apostle from doing what he willed and purposed, but he did not hinder the will of God, which was that Paul should be employed in other work elsewhere.

Ver. 19. *For what is our hope, or joy,* etc.] The apostle here gives a reason why they were so concerned at parting with the Thessalonians, and were so desirous of seeing them again, and attempted it so often, cause they were their “hope”; not the foundation of it, which was Christ; nor the thing hoped for, which was eternal life; nor the ground of their hope, which was the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; but they were persons whom they hoped well of, and of whom their hope was steadfast; as of their election of God, of their redemption by Christ, of their effectual calling, of their perseverance in faith and holiness, notwithstanding all reproach and persecution; and of meeting the Lord, and being together with him for ever: and they were also their “joy”; their conversion was a matter of joy to them, because of the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, displayed therein; because of the abundant grace bestowed on these persons; and because that hereby the kingdom of Satan was weakened, and the kingdom of Christ enlarged and his churches increased and beautified; and their own ministry was blessed and confirmed, and their hearts and hands strengthened, and they encouraged to go on in it: and they continued to be their joy, inasmuch as they stood fast in the Lord, walked on in the truth, and had their conversations as became the Gospel of Christ; and they were persuaded would be their joy hereafter, at the second coming of Christ; when they should give up their account of them with joy, and not with grief: and it is added,

or crown of rejoicing; or of “glorying”, or “boasting”; not that they gloried in them, for they gloried not in men, but in the Lord, in his righteousness, riches, wisdom, strength, and grace, in the person, blood, and cross of Christ; but they gloried of them, as trophies of divine grace, as a prey taken out of the hand of the mighty, and as lawful captives delivered from the power of Satan, and of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of Christ. The Alexandrian copy reads, as we render it,

crown of rejoicing: which is but a stronger phrase, to press the joy they had in their conversion and perseverance, in allusion to crowns wore at times of rejoicing, as at marriage feasts, and the like: hence we read^{f9} of the crowns of the bridegrooms, and of the brides, which were forbidden the

use of in the war of Vespasian; the latter were made of gold, in the form of the city of Jerusalem, and from thence called golden cities^{f10}; and the former, some say, were made of salt and sulphur, to put them in mind of the destruction of the Sodomites, for their unnatural lusts^{f11}; others of a salt stone as clear as crystal, or of the stone Bdelium, painted in the colour of sulphur^{f12}; and some were made of myrtles and roses, but in the war of Vespasian only those made of reeds were used^{f13}; these crowns at weddings seem to be the “beautiful crowns” in (~~23:42~~ Ezekiel 23:42) where the Septuagint use the same phrase as here, **στεφανον καυχησεως**, “a crown of rejoicing”, or “glorying”: the Hebrew phrase **trapt trj** [, may be rendered “a crown of glory”, as the phrase here is by the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions; but does not mean the crown of glory, life, righteousness, and immortality, the apostle expected at the hands of Christ another day; nor that his being an instrument of the conversion of these persons was the ground of such an expectation, or was what entitled him to such a crown; since he knew that conversion work was owing to the powerful grace of God, and the crown of eternal life was his free gift; but that it would be an honour to him, and give him abundant joy and pleasure at the coming of Christ, to be encircled with such a number of souls he had been useful to, and who were his spiritual children; just as children's children are the crown of old men, (~~17:6~~ Proverbs 17:6) all this is put by way of question, which strongly affirms,

are not even ye; or “ye also”, as well as others, as the Corinthians and Philippians; (see ~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 1:7 Phi 1:6,7 4:1).

In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? to judge the quick and dead, when both they and these should meet him, and stand before him with confidence, being clothed with his righteousness, and clad with robes of immortality and glory.

Ver. 20. *For ye are our glory and joy.*] Or “our joy”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read; this is a repetition, and a confirmation of what is before said; and signifies that these saints were then the glory of the apostles, being the seals of their ministry; and whom they gloried of and rejoiced in, and hoped and believed they would be such, as would be their joy and crown in time to come, and for ever.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS 3

In this chapter the apostle expresses his great love to the Thessalonians, by sending Timothy to them, to establish and comfort them; and declares his satisfaction with the things he brought of them, and concludes the chapter with fervent prayers for them: such was his affection for them, that he chose rather to be left alone at Athens, and send Timothy to them, though so very dear and useful to him, as his characters show, to the end that they might be established and comforted, (^{<STRB>}1 Thessalonians 3:2) and not be shaken with the afflictions the apostles met with, seeing these were no other than what God had appointed them to; and besides, they had been apprized of them before hand by the apostle, (^{<STRB>}1 Thessalonians 3:3,4) but however, lest Satan should get an advantage of them, the apostle could not be easy without sending to know how things stood with them, (^{<STRB>}1 Thessalonians 3:5) next he proceeds to give an account of the success of this mission, and the satisfaction it gave him and his fellow ministers to hear of their faith and charity, their remembrance of them, and desire to see them, (^{<STRB>}1 Thessalonians 3:6) which comforted them under their afflictions, made them lively and cheerful, filled them with joy and thankfulness, and put them upon praying to God to see their face, and perfect what was lacking in their faith, (^{<STRB>}1 Thessalonians 3:7-10) and then follow the petitions themselves, which are made both to God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that their way might be directed to them, that they might increase and abound in love to one another, and to all men, as they did to them, and that God would establish them in holiness in his sight, at the coming of Christ, (^{<STRB>}1 Thessalonians 3:11-13).

Ver 1. *Wherefore when we could no longer forbear*, etc.] Or “bear”, as the word properly signifies; or “bear that”, as the Ethiopic version reads; that is, “that desire”, as the Arabic version renders it; that ardent and longing desire of seeing them again, expressed in the latter part of the preceding chapter; which was as fire in their bones, and was retained with great pain and uneasiness; but now they could hold it no longer, and like Jeremiah, (^{<STRB>}Jeremiah 20:9) were weary with forbearing, and could not stay; or it

was like a burden, which they stood up under as long as they could, even Paul, Silas, and Timothy, but now it became insupportable:

we thought it good to be left at Athens alone: that is, Paul and Silas, or Paul only, speaking of himself in the plural number; for he seems to have been alone at Athens, at least at last; he considering everything, thought it most fit and advisable when at Athens, where he waited for Silas and Timothy, having ordered them to come thither to him from Berea, (^{<4174>}Acts 17:14,15) either to send orders to Berea for Timothy to go from thence to Thessalonica, to know the state of affairs there, and Silas elsewhere; or if they came to him to Athens, of which Luke gives no account, he immediately dispatched Timothy to Thessalonica, and Silas to some other part of Macedonia, for from thence they came to him at Corinth, (^{<4185>}Acts 18:5) such was his desire of knowing how things were at Thessalonica, that he chose rather to be left alone at Athens, disputing with the unbelieving Jews, and Heathen philosophers of the Epicurean and Stoic sects, sustaining all their scoffs and jeers alone; and was content to be without his useful companions, Silas and Timothy, who might have been assisting to him at Athens, in hope of hearing of his dear friends at Thessalonica.

Ver. 2. *And sent Timotheus our brother,* etc.] In a spiritual relation, having the same heavenly Father, and belonging to the same Jerusalem, which is free, and the mother of us all; of the same household and in the same relation to Christ, the firstborn among many brethren; or their brother in the ministry, who was employed in the same business, and did the same work they did; or he is so called, on account of that strict and intimate friendship which subsisted between them, by virtue of which they stuck as close as brethren, or closer to one another than brethren usually do:

and minister of God; of his making, and not man's; of his calling and sending, and of his blessing and succeeding; and who was a minister of the things of God, of the mysteries of God, of the truths of his Gospel; and who ministered according to the ability God gave him, and was faithful to him:

and our fellow labourer in the Gospel of Christ; he was a labourer, and not a loiterer in the Lord's vineyard; one that laboured in the word and doctrine, that studied to show himself a workman, that gave himself wholly to meditation, reading, exhortation, and doctrine, and preached the word in season and out of season and was a fellow labourer with him who laboured more abundantly than any of the apostles; and not in the law, but in the

Gospel, even in the Gospel of Christ, of which he is the sum and substance, author and preacher. The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions leave out these words, and so do Beza's ancient copy and the Alexandrian manuscript, "and our fellow labourers", reading the latter part of the clause in connection with the former thus, "a minister of God in the Gospel of Christ", as the former of these versions, "in the doctrine of Christ", as the latter. These characters are given of Timothy, partly to show what honour was done the Thessalonians, in sending such a messenger to them; and partly that they might receive him with the greater respect, and treat him according to his character, office, and dignity; and chiefly to observe to them the apostle's great affection for them, in parting with so dear and useful a minister for their good and advantage, as follows:

to establish you; which though the work of God, it is usually done by the ministry of the word; and then is the end of the Gospel ministration answered to the churches, when they are established by it; for notwithstanding the saints are in a stable condition, as in the arms of love, and in the hands of Christ, and in the covenant of grace, and upon the rock of ages, and in a state of regeneration, justification, and adoption, from whence they can never fall totally and finally; yet they are often very unstable in their hearts and frames, in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, and in their adherence to the cause and interest, Gospel and ordinances of Christ, through the prevalence of corruption, the temptations of Satan, and the reproaches and persecutions of men: and these Thessalonians were young converts, and just planted together as a church; and at their first setting out, sustained a considerable shock of afflictions, which made the apostle concerned for their establishment in the faith which they had received:

and to comfort you concerning your faith. This is another end of the Gospel ministry, to comfort afflicted minds, and distressed consciences; it is the will of God that his people should be spoke comfortably to; the doctrines of the Gospel are calculated for that purpose, and the ministers of it should be Barnabases, sons of consolation. These saints might be in some doubt about the grace of faith, whether it was right or not, or about the doctrine of faith they had received; and therefore Timothy is sent to comfort them under their afflictions, which might have created these doubts, and to remove them, by showing them that their faith was like precious faith with the apostles; and that the doctrine of faith they embraced was the faith once delivered to the saints, and was the true faith

of Christ: the words will bear to be rendered, “to exhort you concerning your faith”, as the Vulgate Latin version renders them; that is, to exhort you to continue in the faith, to stand fast in it, in the exercise of the grace of faith, and in the doctrine of faith, and in the profession of both. The Syriac version renders it, “to ask”, or inquire of you concerning your faith, being willing to know how it stood, since they left them, as in (^{SMH}1 Thessalonians 3:5).

Ver. 3. *That no man should be moved by these afflictions*, etc.] Which the apostle endured for the sake of preaching the Gospel among them, and which he feared might be a means of troubling their minds, of shaking their faith, and moving them from the hope of the Gospel; for though none of these things moved him, who was an old soldier of Christ, and used to hardness, and an apostle of Christ; yet these were young converts, and not used to such things, and therefore might be staggered at them, and be offended, as stony ground hearers are; and though the apostle hoped better things of them, yet was he concerned for them, that no one among them might be unhinged by them, or succumb under them:

for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto; by the immutable decree of God: afflictions, as to their nature, measure, and duration, are appointed for the people of God, and they are appointed for them; this is the case of all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, and especially of Gospel ministers; of which these saints had been apprized by the apostle, and therefore was nothing new, unheard of, and unexpected, or to be looked upon as a strange thing; and seeing this was the appointment of heaven, and the will of God, they should be patiently endured, and quietly submitted to.

Ver. 4. *For, verily, when we were with you*, etc.] In presence, in person, as they then were in heart and affection; when they were first among them, and preached the Gospel to them:

we told you before; before it came to pass;

that we should suffer tribulation: which they might say by virtue of Christ's prediction to all his disciples, that they should have tribulation in the world; and upon its being the common case of God's people, and the usual way through which they enter the kingdom; and the Apostle Paul might foretell this, upon the discovery that was made to him how many things he should suffer for the sake of Christ, and which therefore he always, and in every

place expected; and he might have a particular revelation of the disturbance and opposition he was to meet with at Thessalonica:

even as it came to pass, and ye know; referring to the tumult and uproar in (~~417B~~ Acts 17:5-10), and which should be considered so far from being a discouragement, that it was a great confirmation of the truth of their mission and ministry; nor could it be so surprising to them as it might have been had they had no previous taste of it.

Ver. 5. *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear*, etc.] Or “bear” the above vehement desire of seeing them, or of hearing from them. Here the apostle speaks in the singular number, and seems to intimate, as if what was said before of the like kind is to be understood singly of him; for these words are a repetition and summary of the foregoing, with some diversity:

I sent to know your faith; how it stood, whether it was staggering through these afflictions, or firm; whether it was weak or strong, what was wanting in it; and whether it grew and increased. The Arabic version adds, “and charity”; for of this, as well as of faith, Timothy brought an account, as appears from the following verse.

Lest by some means the tempter; Satan, so called from his common and constant employ in tempting men to sin; (see ~~404B~~ Matthew 4:3)

have tempted you with success, and got an advantage over them, improving these afflictions to such a purpose as to move them from the hope of the Gospel, and relinquish the profession of it; for otherwise there was no question to be made but he had tempted them, or solicited them to it; for none of the saints are free from his temptations; the apostle himself was not, nor indeed our Lord Jesus Christ: but the apostle's fears were, lest he should so have tempted them as to have gained upon them, and have persuaded them to have turned their backs upon the Gospel, and not expose their name and credit, and hazard the toss of worldly substance, and even life itself, for the sake of it.

And our labour be in vain: in preaching the Gospel among them; not with respect to God, to whom the word never returns void and empty; nor with regard to the apostles, whose judgment was with the Lord, and their work with their God, who will of his own grace reward them; but with respect to the Thessalonians, to whom, should Satan gain his point, it would be of no use and service, for which the concern was. The Ethiopic version reads, “and your labour be in vain”: in receiving the apostles, embracing and

professing the Gospel, and suffering for it; (see ~~ROM~~ Galatians 3:4) but the common reading is best, and agrees with what the apostle elsewhere says, (~~ROM~~ Galatians 4:11 Phi 2:16).

Ver. 6. *But now when Timotheus came from you unto us*, etc.] At Corinth, as appears from (~~ACTS~~ Acts 18:5) which shows that this epistle was not written from Athens, as the subscription to it asserts, but from Corinth; for as soon as ever Timothy came from Thessalonica, to the apostle at Corinth, and made the report to him, he immediately sent them this epistle which is here suggested: “but, now”, etc. just now; “lately”, as the Syriac version renders it, a very little while ago, Timothy was just come:

and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity; of their faith, the grace of faith, that it was of the right kind; as far as could be judged, it was the faith of God's elect, like precious faith with theirs; an unfeigned one, strong and lively, operative and growing: or of the doctrine of faith, as received and embraced by them; as that they were greatly led, and had much light into it, and had, for the time, made considerable proficiency in it; that they held it fast, and stood fast in it, and contended for it, notwithstanding all the afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions which they either saw in the apostles, or endured themselves for the sake of it; and likewise of the profession of both the grace and doctrine of faith, which they held fast, and without wavering, and that in a pure conscience, which was good news indeed. Timothy also brought an account of their “charity”, or love, which faith works by; these two graces are always found together; they are wrought in the soul by one, and the same hand, and at the same time; where the one is, the other is; and as the one flourishes and increases, so does the other. And by this grace is meant love to God, to Christ, to his truths, ordinances, ways, and worship, and to one another, and even to all men; and which was without dissimulation, in sincerity, in deed, and in truth, and was constant and fervent: and this was not the whole of the report, for it follows,

and that ye have a remembrance of us always they bore in memory the persons of the apostles; and when they made mention of their names, it was with the greatest respect and reverence; nor were they forgetful hearers of the word, but remembered with great affection and pleasure the truths, the doctrines, and exhortations they delivered to them, so as to put them in practice, and longed for another visit from them, to have their memories refreshed by them:

desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you, they had an equal desire to see their spiritual fathers, as they had to see their spiritual children. Now such a report as this concerning their steady faith in Christ, their fervent love to one another, and their affectionate regard to the ministers of the word, was a sort of a Gospel, as the word used signifies; or it was good news and glad tidings to the apostle, and those that were with him.

Ver. 7. *Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over, you*, etc.] Or “in you”, as the Vulgate Latin version; or “from you”, as the Arabic; or “by you”, as the Syriac; or “for you”, as the Ethiopic; that is, on account of them, either by what they had heard was in them, or had heard from them. This gave abundant consolation

in all our affliction and distress: which they met with at Corinth, where the apostle laboured with his own hands, and ministered to his own, and the necessities of others, and was greatly opposed, reproached, and persecuted; (see ^{<418B>}Acts 18:3,6,9,10,12), but the news of the good estate and condition the Thessalonians were in, was a great relief and comfort to him, particularly their faith:

by your faith: by the report of it, that it grew exceedingly, and that they walked in the truth; (see ^{<618B>}1 John 5:4). The Alexandrian copy reads, “in all your distress and affliction, and by your faith.”

Ver. 8. *For now we live*, etc.] Before they were dead men, lifeless, disconsolate, dispirited, carrying about with them the dying of the Lord Jesus, and death working in them, and they, as it were, under the sentence of that, being killed all the day long for Christ's sake; but now, upon this news, in the midst of all their sore trials and troubles, their spirits revived, and they became alive and cheerful; (see ^{<1922B>}Psalms 22:26 ^{<2518B>}Isaiah 55:3), it was like life from the dead unto them:

if ye stand fast in the Lord: or “our Lord”, as the Syriac and Ethiopic versions read; that is, “in the faith of the Lord”, as the Arabic version renders it: they were in the Lord secretly by electing grace, and openly by regenerating grace, and they abode in him; and by persevering grace, they were rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith of him, of his person, office, and grace; they were steady in the exercise of grace upon him, and stood fast in the liberty wherewith he had made them free, and continued steadfastly in the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel; for the “if” here is not expressive of doubting, but of reasoning, “seeing ye stand

fast in the Lord”; of which they were assured by Timothy: and this gave them fresh spirit and life amidst the deaths in which they often were.

Ver. 9. *For what thanks can we render to God again or you,* etc.] They had given thanks to God for them before, for their faith, love, and patience; (see ^{<SOME>}1 Thessalonians 1:2,3) and now having received a further account of them, they looked upon themselves bound to give fresh thanks to God for them, for the increase of their faith and love, and for their perseverance, as they did; (see ^{<SOME>}2 Thessalonians 1:3 2:13) since these are gifts of God's grace; but they knew not where to begin, what to render, and when to end: the phrase is much like that in (^{<B62>}Psalm 116:12) “what shall I render unto the Lord”, etc.

for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God: the joy they had was all joy, perfect and complete in its kind; (see ^{<SOME>}James 1:2) and it was not for themselves, on their own account, because of any worldly interest or advantage they had therein, but for the sake of these Thessalonians, whose spiritual welfare they rejoiced at: nor was their joy of a carnal nature, but spiritual; it was a joy in the Holy Ghost, and which was hearty and sincere: it was “before God our” God, their covenant God and Father; it was in his sight and presence, who sees and knows all things, all actions, and the principles of them. Though this last clause, “before our God”, is in the Syriac version, placed at the beginning of the next verse, according to which, it refers, not to thanks or joy before God, but to prayer before him.

Ver. 10. *Night and day praying exceedingly,* etc.] This good news, not only comforted their hearts, and revived their spirits, and filled them with joy and thankfulness, but also sent them to the throne of grace to pray without ceasing, continually, night and day, and as often as they went thither, and that with great fervency and earnestness, in a multitude of petitions; or, as the Arabic version renders it, “with prayers exceeding a multitude”; with innumerable requests:

that we might see your face: once more, and converse face to face:

and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? in the grace of faith; for though they remembered their work of faith with pleasure, and had had good tidings of it very lately, and were thankful that it grew exceedingly as it did, yet they knew it was not perfect, there was unbelief attending them: and though it is God's work to increase faith, as well as to produce it, yet,

as the ministry of the word is the means of the first planting of it, so it also is of the increase of it. This may likewise be understood of the doctrine of faith, which though they had received in the love of it, and had made considerable progress in their knowledge of it; yet they knew but in part, and needed to be taught the way of God, and truths of the Gospel more perfectly; and the ministry of the word is for the perfecting of the saints in the knowledge of the Son of God, and of other truths; wherefore the apostle desired greatly to see them, that he might be an instrument of instructing them, more perfectly in the knowledge of divine things; and in this, and in the following epistle, he does particularly instruct them about the rise and fall of antichrist, the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, articles of faith in which they seemed to have been deficient: but now, though these saints had deficiencies in their faith, yet they were not what the Jews call ^{f14} *hnma yrswj m*, “such as are deficient in faith”, or want faith entirely, a phrase somewhat like this which is here used.

Ver. 11. *Now God himself, and our Father*, etc.] The Oriental versions leave out the copulative “and”, and read, “God himself, our Father” the first person in the Trinity, who is God himself, truly and properly so; and who is a God that hears prayer; and who is omnipotent, and able to do more than the saints can ask or think; and omniscient, and knows their persons and cases, and what is proper for them, and how and when to help and supply them; and he is also the God of all grace, the author and giver of it, and who is able to make it abound, and increase it, and so a very proper object of prayer: and who is likewise the Father of Christ, and of all the saints, not only by creation, in which sense he is the Father of all men, but by adopting grace; and which is mentioned to encourage freedom and boldness in prayer, which children may use with a father, and to raise an expectation of succeeding and receiving an answer; for if earthly parents hear their children, and give good things to them, how much more will not our heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit, and all other good gifts, unto his children? And this shows that the apostle prayed to God in the manner Christ directed, (^{<4119>}Matthew 6:9)

and our Lord Jesus Christ: who is equally the object of prayer with God his Father and ours; who is sometimes distinctly prayed unto, as in (^{<4175>}Acts 7:59) and often in conjunction with his Father, as in all those places in the epistles, where grace and peace are wished for from them both; (see ^{<4007>}Romans 1:7), and sometimes he is set before the Father, as in (^{<5116>}2 Thessalonians 2:16) to show the entire equality between them, and

that he is equally addressed as he, being truly and properly God, who knows all things, and is the Almighty, and whose grace is sufficient for us, and therefore rightly applied unto, as here: the petition put up to them both is, that they would

direct our way unto you: a journey is not to be taken without the will of God, without seeking to know it, without submission to it, and dependence on it; nor is there any prosperous one, but by it; (see ^{<504B>}James 4:13-15 ^{<501D>}Romans 1:10). Men may devise their own ways, but God directs their goings; especially a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord, and particularly ministers; who, as they are often directed to subjects and matter, in a very providential way, so to places, and are ordered both where and when to go; (see ^{<440B>}Acts 16:6,7,9,10). The apostle was aware, that there were obstacles in his way of coming to Thessalonica, for he had attempted it once and again, but Satan, and his emissaries, hindered; and therefore he desires that God and Christ would remove them out of the way, and make his way straight and plain, as the word signifies, that he might once more see their faces.

Ver. 12. *And the Lord make you to increase,* etc.] That is, the Lord the Spirit; so that the object of prayer, addressed by the apostle, is Father, Son, and Spirit, as in (^{<600B>}Revelation 1:4,5). The Alexandrian copy reads "God". The Spirit is God, equally with the Father and the Son, and so a fit object of prayer with them, which otherwise he would not be. The request is, that he would cause these saints to increase in number, as the first churches greatly did: and in the gifts of the Spirit, which he divides to men severally as he will; and in his graces, as in faith, in hope, in holiness, in humility, in knowledge, in spiritual joy and strength, an increase in all which is from him:

and abound in love one towards another; for though they were taught of God to love one another, and did do so, and the apostle had had good tidings of their love; yet it was not perfect, there was room for a further exercise of it, by serving each other by it, in things spiritual and temporal; and he had his request, for it did abound in everyone of them towards each other, (^{<500B>}2 Thessalonians 1:3)

and towards all men; the men of the world, who were without, were not members of the church, nor professors of the Christian religion, but enemies to that, and to Christ, and to them; and yet they were to love them

as men, and pray for them, and do them all the good that lay in their power:

even as we do towards you; for the love of the apostle, and those with him, abounded more and more towards these saints, and was so far from being weakened, that it was increased by their absence from them; and they were more abundantly desirous of seeing them, and were even quite impatient until they sent to them, and heard of them.

Ver. 13. *To the end he may stablish your hearts*, etc.] Which are very unstable and inconstant in their frames, and in the exercise of grace, and have need to be established in the love of God, against the fears of men, the frowns of the world, the temptations of Satan, and in, and with the doctrines of grace; (see Gill on “^{STR}1 Thessalonians 3:2”),

unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father. There is no holiness in men naturally; what is in them without the grace of God is only a show; true holiness is from the Spirit of God; and this is a stable thing in itself, and can never be removed or taken away; but the acts of it, through the prevalence of corruption, the force of Satan's temptations, and the snares of the world, are fickle and inconstant; and the saints need to be established in the discharge of duty, as well as in the exercise of grace: and whereas the apostle prays, that they might be “unblamable in holiness”, the Alexandrian copy reads, “in righteousness” so one of Stephens's; it must be observed, that no man is perfectly holy in this life; no man is without sin in himself, or lives without the commission of it; holiness in the best is imperfect; no man, as yet, is in himself sanctified wholly; there is no unblamable holiness but in Christ; and in him the saints are without spot and blemish, who is their sanctification and their righteousness; but in themselves they are full of spots and stains; yet through the grace of God their hearts may be so established with principles of holiness, and they may be so assisted in the acts of it daily, as to give no just cause of blame to men, and so to behave as to approve themselves “before God”, who sees the heart, and knows from what principles all actions flow: and this the apostle desires may be at the coming of our Lord Jesus; or unto the coming of him, as in (^{STR}1 Thessalonians 5:23) Either at death, when he comes into his garden, and gathers his lilies, and takes his to himself to be for ever with him; or at the day of judgment, when he comes to judge the quick and dead; and which coming of his is certain, and will be quickly and suddenly, and with great glory and power: and, as it is here added,

with all his saints; meaning either his holy angels, or rather the souls of his people, whom he will bring with him, and will raise their dead bodies, and reunite them to their souls, when they shall be for ever with him; and then shall they be unblamable in holiness, both in soul and body, and shall be presented by him, first to himself, and then to his Father, faultless, and without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions add, “Amen”; and so does Beza's ancient copy, and the Alexandrian manuscript.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS 4

In this chapter the apostle proceeds to exhort in general to the performance of good works, particularly to purity of life, to brotherly love, to quietness, diligence, and industry in the several callings of life, and not to mourn in an excessive and immoderate manner for deceased friends; which leads him to say some things concerning the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead. The general exhortation to holiness is in (~~SO00~~1 Thessalonians 4:1-3) which is pressed in a way of entreaty for the sake of Christ; and the duties urged to were the commandments of Christ, and which the apostles had given them, and they had received, and were well acquainted with; and besides, a walk according to these commands was well pleasing to God, and sanctification in general was his will: and in particular the apostle exhorts to abstain from fornication, and all uncleanness; since it is a dishonouring the body of man; acting the part of the ignorant Gentiles that know not God; a defrauding another man, as is uncleanness with another man's wife; the vengeance of God will light on such; it is contrary to that calling with which the saints are called, that being to holiness, and not uncleanness; and to despise this exhortation, is casting contempt, not upon man, but God himself, (~~SO04~~1 Thessalonians 4:4-8). Brotherly love is the next thing exhorted to, which seemed needless to write about, since, in regeneration, these saints were taught to exercise it, and had exercised it towards all the brethren throughout Macedonia, though it was necessary to exhort them to abound more and more in it, (~~SO09~~1 Thessalonians 4:9,10) and to study peace and quietness, and be industrious in their business, that so they might live an honest life among their carnal neighbours, and not be in want of anything from them, (~~SO11~~1 Thessalonians 4:11,12) and whereas some of them had lost some of their dear friends and relations by death, and were ready to exceed due bounds in their sorrow for them, he dehorts from such immoderate sorrow, as being like that of those that had no hope of a resurrection from the dead; whereas, seeing it was an article of their faith, that Christ was risen from the dead, they might assure themselves that those that sleep in him shall be brought along with him when he shall appear a second time, (~~SO13~~1

Thessalonians 4:13,14) which will not be prevented by those that are alive when Christ comes; for as they will be changed, the dead in Christ will be raised at his coming; which coming of his will be in person, from heaven, with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and trump of God; and then both shall be caught up together to meet him in the air, and be for ever with him; and therefore they had no need to sorrow as others, since they should meet again, and never part more, and with which words they should comfort one another under their present loss, (~~1~~¹ Thessalonians 4:15-18).

Ver. 1. *Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren,* etc.] Or request of you in the most kind and tender manner, from real and hearty love and affection for you, and with a view to your good, and the glory of God:

and exhort you: or beseech and entreat you. The apostle does not lay his commands upon them as he might have done, and sometimes does, but endeavours to work upon them by way of entreaty, and which he doubtless thought the most effectual method to win upon them, and gain them; for some minds are more easily wrought upon by entreaty than by authority: and this he does in the most moving and powerful manner, even

by the Lord Jesus; or “in the Lord Jesus”; in his name and stead, as personating him, and as though he did beseech and entreat them by him, and his fellow ministers; or for his sake, intimating, that if they had any regard to him, any value for his name, if that had any weight with them, or they had any concern for his honour and interest, then he begs their attention to the following exhortation; or by the Lord Jesus, by all that is in him, or done for them by him; in whom they were chosen, by whom they were redeemed, in whom they were made new creatures, to whose image they were to be conformed, whose followers they professed to be, whose Gospel they embraced, and by whose name they were called.

That as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God. The walk of believers is twofold, either internal or external. Their internal walk is by faith, which is the going out of the soul by faith to Christ for every supply of grace. Their external walk is not as it was before conversion, according to the course of this world, or as other Gentiles walk, but in a holy religious life and conversation; and this requires spiritual life, strength and direction from Christ; for neither dead men, nor, if alive, yet weak, can walk; nor is it in a spiritual man, that walketh to direct his steps; and such a walk also denotes continuance, in well doing, and a progression or going on in it, and supposes ways to walk in. Christ,

he is the chief and principal way, and there are other paths which regard him, or relate and lead unto him; as the way of truth, the path of ordinances, and of religious worship, both public and private, and the ways of righteousness, holiness, and good works: the manner in which saints are to walk is as Christ himself walked, after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, according to the rule of the word, which is the standard of faith and practice, with prudence, wisdom, circumspection, and worthy of God, and of that calling wherein they are called: and of such a walk there is a necessity; it “ought”, it must be both on the account of God, it being his will, and for his glory, and the contrary would show great ingratitude to him; and on the account of the saints themselves, to adorn them, and their profession, and preserve them from shame and disgrace, to show their faith, and demonstrate their calling and election to others; and likewise on account of others, partly for the winning of some, by recommending in this way the Gospel to them, and partly for the bringing of others to shame and silence, who falsely accuse their good conversation. Now when the apostle, and those that were with him, were at Thessalonica, they gave these saints directions and instructions about their walk and conversation, to order it in such a manner as might “please God”; which is not to be understood of rendering their persons acceptable to God hereby, for the saints' acceptance with God is only in Christ the beloved; nor of their gaining the love and favour of God by such means, for the love of God is from everlasting, and is free, and sovereign, and does not arise from, or depend upon the holiness and obedience of men; or of making peace with God by such a walk, for peace is only made by the blood of Christ; but of doing those things, and in such a way God approves of: unregenerate men cannot please God, nor anything they do, because they are destitute of the Spirit of God, and are without Christ, and his grace and have not faith in him, without which it is impossible to please God; but what a believer does in faith, from a principle of love, in the name and strength of Christ, and to the glory of God, is approved of by God, and is acceptable to him through Christ, and for his sake; and there are many things of this kind, as prayer, praise, acts of beneficence to the poor, and indeed every good work and holy action: and inasmuch as they had been thus taught and instructed how to behave and conduct in their outward walk and conversation, they are entreated and exhorted to go on and abound in the work of the Lord:

so ye would abound more and more: that is, be more and more in the exercise of every grace, and in the discharge of every duty, making

advances in holiness of life, and perfecting it in the fear of God. Beza's ancient copy, and another manuscript, as also the Alexandrian copy, and some others, add between the preceding, and this last clause, "as ye also walk"; and so the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions seem to have read; commending them for their present and past walk and conversation, in order to persuade and encourage them to go forward.

Ver. 2. *For ye know what commandments we gave you*, etc.] When among them; such as those of faith and love, the ordinances of the Gospel, baptism, and the Lord's supper, and all such as relate to the worship and service of God, to the discipline of Christ's house, to their behaviour one towards another, and their conduct in the world: and which were delivered to them, not as from themselves, and by their own authority, but

by the Lord Jesus; in his name, and by his authority, and as ordered by him; for their commission ran to teach men all things, whatsoever Christ commanded: now since they knew what these commandments were, and whose they were, and the obligation they lay under to regard them, the apostle makes use of it as a reason or argument to engage them to obedience to them; for he that knows his Lord's will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, (~~12:47~~ Luke 12:47).

Ver. 3. *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification*, etc.] Which is another reason to enforce the above exhortation. "Sanctification" is internal or external. Internal sanctification is the work of the Spirit of God, and is a principle of spiritual life in the soul, a divine and spiritual light in the understanding, a flexion of the will to the will of God, and a settlement of the affections on divine things, and is an implantation of every grace in the heart. External sanctification arises from this, and lies in holiness of life and conversation; and is what is chiefly designed, as appears both by what goes before, and follows after: and this is "the will of God"; the will of his purpose and decree; for in the same decree that he wills the salvation of any by Jesus Christ, he also wills their sanctification in heart and life, and here and hereafter: and this is his approving will, or what is well pleasing in his sight, being agreeable to his nature, and divine perfections, particularly his holiness, in which he is glorious; and it is his will of command, and what he requires in his law, which is holy, just, and good, and perfectly agrees with the sound doctrine of the Gospel, and the revelation of his will in both.

That ye should abstain from fornication: which is particularly mentioned, abstinence from it being a branch of external holiness; and because that this sin was common among the Gentiles, and not esteemed a sin by them; as also to observe to these Christians, that as simple fornication was not to be allowed of, much less other acts of uncleanness, as adultery, incest, sodomy, and the like, which were iniquities that greatly prevailed among the Heathens. The Syriac version renders it, “from all fornication”; on this subject the apostle enlarges in some following verses.

Ver. 4. *That everyone of you should know how to possess his vessel*, etc.] By which may be meant, either a man's wife, or his body, and it is not very easy to determine which, for the Jews call both by this name. Sometimes they call ^{f15} a woman $\mu\iota\ \text{wq}$, which the gloss says is a “vessel” unfinished. It is reported ^{f16}, that when R. Eleazar died, Rabbenu Hakkadosh would have married his widow, and she would not, because she was $\text{h}\check{\text{c}}\text{w}\text{d}\text{q}\ \text{I}\ \check{\text{c}}\ \text{y}\text{l}\ \text{k}$, “a vessel of holiness”, greater than he. Moreover, it is said ^{f17}, that

“he that forces (a young woman) must drink $\text{wxyx}\ [\text{b}$, “in his own vessel” how drink in his own vessel? though she be lame, though she be blind, and though she is stricken with ulcers.”

The commentators ^{f18} on the passage add,

“in the vessel which he has chosen; that is to say, whether he will or not, he must marry her;”

(see ^{<105>}Proverbs 5:15). And again, they sometimes call a man's wife his tent: hence that saying ^{f19},

“ $\text{wt}\check{\text{c}}\text{a}\ \text{al}\ \text{a}\ \text{wl}\ \text{ha}\ \text{`ya}$ “there is no tent but his wife”, as it is said, (^{<100>}Deuteronomy 5:30), go, say to them, get you into your tents again.”

And certain it is, that the woman is called the “weaker vessel” in (^{<107>}1 Peter 3:7), between which passage and this there seems to be some agreement. The same metaphor of a “vessel” is made use of in both; and as there, honour to be given to the weaker vessel, so here, a man's vessel is to be possessed in honour; and as there, husbands are to dwell with their wives according to knowledge so here, knowledge is required to a man's possessing his vessel aright. Now for a man to possess his vessel in this sense, is to enjoy his wife, and to use that power he has over her in a

becoming manner; (see ^{<4004>}1 Corinthians 7:4), and which is here directed to “in sanctification and honour”; that is, in a chaste and honourable way; for marriage is honourable when the bed is kept undefiled; and which may be defiled, not only by taking another into it, and which is not possessing the wife in sanctification and honour, it is the reverse, for it is a breaking through the rules of chastity and honour; but it may even be defiled with a man's own wife, by using her in an unnatural way, or by any unlawful copulation with her; for so to do is to use her in an unholy, unchaste, wicked, and dishonourable manner; whereas possessing of her according to the order and course of nature, is by the Jews, in agreement with the apostle, called ^{f20}, **wmx [çdqm**, “a man's sanctifying himself”, and is chaste, and honourable. And it may be observed, that the Jews use the same phrase concerning conjugal embraces as the apostle does here. One of their canons runs thus ^{f21}:

“though a man's wife is free for him at all times, it is fit and proper for a disciple of a wise man to use himself **hçwdqb**, “in”, or “to sanctification”.”

When these things are observed, this sense of the words will not appear so despicable as it is thought by some. The body is indeed called a “vessel”; (see ^{<4042>}2 Corinthians 4:7), because in it the soul is contained, and the soul makes use of it, and its members, as instruments, for the performance of various actions; and, with Jewish writers, we read of **wpwg yl k**, “the vessel of his body” ^{f22}; so then, for a man to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, is to keep under his body and bring it into subjection, and preserve it in purity and chastity; as the eyes from unchaste looks, the tongue from unchaste words, and the other members from unchaste actions; and to use it in an honourable way, not in fornication, adultery, and sodomy; for, by fornication, a man sins against his own body; and by adultery he gets a wound, and a dishonour, and a reproach that will not be wiped away; and by sodomy, and such like unnatural lusts, men dishonour their own bodies between themselves: particularly by “his vessel”, as Gataker thinks, may be meant the “membrum virile”, or the genital parts, which, by an euphemism, may be so called; (see ^{<4215>}1 Samuel 21:5)

Ver. 5. *Not in the lust of concupiscence*, etc.] Or “passion of lust”; for the mere gratifying and indulging of that; for a man so to possess his vessel, is to cherish the sin of concupiscence, the first motions of sin in the heart, by

which a man is drawn away, and enticed; to blow up the flame of lust, and to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof:

even as the Gentiles which know not God; for, though they knew him, or might know him with a natural knowledge, by the light and works of nature, yet they knew him not savingly and spiritually, as he is revealed in the word, of which they were destitute; or as the God of all grace, and the God and Father of Christ, or as he is in Christ: and though by the light of nature they might know there was a God, yet they knew not who that God was; nor did they act up to that light and knowledge they had; they did not glorify him as God, by ascribing to him what was his due; nor were they thankful for the mercies they received from him; nor did they fear, love, worship, and serve him; nor did they like to retain him in their knowledge, and therefore were given up to judicial blindness and hardness, to a reprobate mind, and to vile affections, and so did things very inconvenient, unnatural, and dishonourable. Wherefore, for a man to use either his wife or his body in any unchaste and dishonourable manner, for the gratifying of his lusts, is to act an Heathenish part; a like argument, dissuading from things unlawful, is used in (^{<4162>}Matthew 6:32 20:25,26 ^{<4048>}Galatians 4:8,9).

Ver. 6. *That no man go beyond, and defraud his brother in any matter*, etc.] Or “in this matter”, as the Syriac version. This is commonly understood of transgressing the bounds of justice and equity between men and men; and of cheating and defrauding in trade and business, by increasing or lessening the value and prices of goods by the buyer and seller, by not keeping to the bargain, contract, covenant, or sample, by false weights and measures, and by taking the advantage of the weakness and ignorance of men; all which is aggravated by dealing thus with a brother; (see ^{<4168>}1 Corinthians 6:8) and this hint is thought the rather necessary, since Thessalonica was a place of great trade and business. But the matter, or business referred to, is not trade, but the subject of chastity or uncleanness the apostle is speaking of, both before and after; and the phrases used either design the act of adultery, coveting a brother's wife, and lying with her, and so a defrauding and wronging of him by defiling his bed; or rather sodomitical practices, an unnatural lust and desire in men after men, and copulation with them; for **υπερβαινειν**, rendered, “go beyond”, answers to **l [ab**, “to go upon”, or “lie with”, so often used in Jewish writings for lying with women, men, and beasts, in an unlawful way. Thus, for instance ^{f23},

“these are to be burned, **hça I [abh**, “he that lies with a woman”, and her daughter, etc.”

And again ^{f24},

“these are to be beaten, **I [abh**, “he that lies with” his sister, or his father's sister, etc.”

And the word **πλεονεκτειν**, translated “defraud”, signifies a greedy, insatiable, and unnatural lust and desire after a man, a brother, or the committing of sodomitical practices with greediness: (see ~~4049~~ Ephesians 4:19) which abominable iniquities are dissuaded from by the following reasons,

because that the Lord is the avenger of all such; or “with respect to all these things”, as the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions render it; or “for all these things”, as the Arabic and Ethiopic versions; as fornication, adultery, lasciviousness, and all sorts of abominable uncleanness. The person that commits these things the Lord avenges, either in this life, by the hand of the civil magistrate, who is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that does evil; or by a violent death, as in the case of Zimri and Cozbi, and twenty four thousand more at the same time; or by some awful judgment from heaven, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah; or in the world to come; for the law of God is made and lies against such persons; these living and dying in such sins God will judge, to whom vengeance belongs; these shall not inherit the kingdom of God, but have their part and portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

As we have also forewarned you and testified; not by a former epistle, as if this was the second to them, and what follows the first, as Grotius thought; but they did this when they were in person with them, knowing that these abominable vices greatly prevailed in their city; therefore they bore their testimony against them, and exposed the evil of them, and warned them of the danger by them, so that they could not now plead ignorance. The Ethiopic version reads in the first person singular, “as I have before said unto you, and testified to you”.

Ver. 7. *For God hath not called us*, etc.] The Syriac version reads “you”. This is another reason to enforce the above exhortations, and to caution them against the above unclean practices, taken from the end of the effectual calling by the efficacious grace of God, which is not

unto uncleanness of any sort, as before specified. This they had lived in before their calling, and were now called from it into communion with Christ, who loves righteousness, and hates iniquity; and by the Gospel, which teaches to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to forsake all impurity, both of flesh and spirit:

but this call is

unto holiness of life and conversation in general, and to chastity in thought, look, word, and actions in particular; for God that calls is holy, and therefore those who are called ought to be so; the calling with which they are called is an holy calling, principles of grace and holiness are wrought in their souls, when they are called; and the end of their calling is to live soberly, righteously, and godly; and then, and then only, do they walk worthy of that calling wherewith they are called, and of God who has, by his grace, called them to his kingdom and glory.

Ver. 8. *He therefore that despiseth*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin adds, “these things”; these exhortations now delivered, the commandments given by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the will of God above declared; he that rejects these things with contempt, takes no notice of them, and acts not according to them,

despiseth not man; not men only, the apostles of Christ, and ministers of the Gospel; for, by despising these exhortations, they themselves were despised, though not alone: but God; Father, Son, and Spirit; God the Father, whose will was their sanctification, even to abstain from fornication, and every act of uncleanness, which, if not attended to, was a despising of him; and the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom, and for whose sake they were entreated and exhorted, and in whose name, and by whose authority the apostle gave them these commandments; wherefore to slight them, was to slight Jesus Christ himself; and, by the way, this is a proof of the true and proper deity of Christ. Moreover, such despisers also, in some sense, do despite unto the spirit of grace, by whom the apostles spake, or who spoke in them these things, as follows,

who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit; as he did to the prophets of the Old Testament, and therefore what they said was equally by divine inspiration of God; and hence despising them, was despising the Spirit of God that spake by them. The Syriac and Arabic versions read, “who hath given unto you his Holy Spirit”; and so all Stephens's copies; which

furnishes out a fresh reason or argument, dissuading from uncleanness, since God had given them his “Spirit” to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, so that they were not ignorant of the things warned against; and he had given them his Spirit as an “holy” Spirit, as a Spirit of sanctification, to begin and carry on that work in them, to which uncleanness was very opposite; and he had given his Spirit unto, or “into” them, to dwell in them, as in his temple, and therefore should be careful not to defile it; and to cause them to walk in his statutes, and to assist them to keep his judgments, and do them, and as an earnest of their inheritance, and a sealer of them up unto the day of redemption; wherefore it became them not to grieve him by an impure life; and they were laid under obligations to live in the Spirit, and to walk after him, and not after the flesh.

Ver. 9. *But as touching brotherly love*, etc.] Another branch of sanctification; which is distinct from love to God and Christ, though it always accompanies it, and from love to all mankind; and is what is peculiar to brethren in a spiritual relation, and ought to be universal, fervent, and sincere, and as Christ has loved them: concerning which the following things are said,

ye need not that I write unto you. The Vulgate Latin version reads, “we have no need to write unto you”; and so some copies. It seems that it was needful to write unto them about other things, as to refresh their memories with the instructions they had given them, when with them, how they should walk and please God; and to put them in mind of the commandments given them by Christ, and that their sanctification was the will of God; and particularly it was necessary to write unto them about chastity, and purity of life, whether in or out of the conjugal state; but as for brotherly love, there was no immediate absolute necessity to write about that, either about the nature of it, or to describe the objects of it, or point out instances of it, or to exhort to it in a pressing manner: the reason is,

for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; not merely by the light of nature, which teaches men to be kind, courteous, affable, and beneficent; nor by the law of Moses, which obliges men to love their neighbours as themselves; nor only doctrinally by the ministry of the Gospel, which frequently inculcates the exercise of this grace as a matter of great importance and consequence; nor only by the new commandment,

and example of Christ; but by the Spirit of God internally in regeneration, who, according to the tenor of the new covenant, writes this law of love, and of Christ, upon the heart; and this being written upon the hearts of the Thessalonians, by the finger of the Spirit of God, whereby they were dearly directed, and powerfully taught to exercise this grace, and discharge this duty, and under the influence of the same spirit did exercise it, it was unnecessary for the apostle to write about it, and press them to it.

Ver. 10. *And indeed ye do it towards all the brethren*, etc.] Whether high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, greater or lesser believers, and whether related in the bonds of nature or not; they exercised this grace of love without respect of persons, to all, and not only to all the brethren in the particular community at Thessalonica, but

which are in all Macedonia; throughout the whole country, particularly at Philippi and Berea, and other places:

but we beseech you, brethren. The Alexandrian copy reads, “beloved brethren”; and the Syriac version, “I beseech you, my brethren: that ye increase more and more”; in showing love to the brethren; which may be done both by administering to them in things temporal, by assisting them in distress, by sympathizing with them, and by giving them counsel and advice; and in things spiritual, by bearing their burdens, forbearing with them, and forgiving them; by admonishing them in love, by stirring them up to love and good works, by praying with them and for them, and by instructing and building them up in their most holy faith; and this increase, and abounding in the exercise of this grace, may respect not only the more frequent and fervent use of it, but also the larger extent of it to other objects; as not only to all the brethren in their own church, and to all that were in Macedonia, to which it did extend, but likewise to all the brethren in other parts of the world, and which are more distant and remote; and even to the poor saints at Jerusalem in particular; and accordingly we find that their love did abound unto them; (see ⁴⁵²⁵Romans 15:25-27 ⁴⁰⁰¹2 Corinthians 8:1,2), this shows, that though brotherly love was much practised by these saints, yet it was not perfect; nor is any grace perfect as to degrees; nor is any saint perfect in the discharge of duty in this life.

Ver. 11. *And that ye study to be quiet*, etc.] To live peaceably in their own families, and to give no disturbance to other families, by talebearing, whispering, and backbiting; to behave with quietness in the neighbourhood, town, or city, they dwell in, and to seek the peace thereof; and to lead a

quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, in the commonwealth, and under the government to which they belong; and not to create and encourage factions, divisions, animosities, and contentions, in their own church, or in any of the churches of Christ; and it becomes saints to make this their study, to be very solicitous for it, to strive for it, and pursue after it: the word used signifies to be ambitious of it, as what is a man's glory and honour, to emulate and strive to outdo each other, as who shall have the honour of being the quietest person, and the most peaceable member in the community:

and to do your own business: or private business, or what is proper and peculiar to a man's self; to abide every man in his own calling wherein he is called, and attend the business of it, and not thrust himself into other families, and officiously take upon him, under a pretence of zeal, affection, and friendship, to inspect, direct, or manage the business of others: in short, he should not meddle with other people's business, but mind his own: and this is what the Jews call *ba Erd*, “the way of the earth”, or the business of life:

“there are four things, (they say ^{f25}) in which a man should employ himself continually, with all his might, and these are they, the law, and good works, and prayer, and the business of life;”

upon which the gloss has this note by way of explanation,

“if a man is an artificer (let him attend) to his art; if a merchant to his merchandise, and if he is a soldier to war;”

and which may serve to illustrate the apostle's sense:

and to work with your own hands; the reason of this is, because there were some among them, who would not work at all; (see ~~<471>~~ 2 Thessalonians 3:11) and by this instruction it appears, that the members of this church, in common, were such as were brought up to handicraft trades and businesses, and were poor and mean; and this was the general case of the primitive churches: it pleased God to choose and call the poor of this world, to whom the Gospel was preached, and they received it; few of the rulers among the Jews believed in Christ, and not many mighty, rich, or noble among the Gentiles were called; some there were, and in this church there were some of the chief women of the city, (~~<470>~~ Acts 17:4), and though these and others of the better sort, as well as ministers of the

Gospel among them, who laboured in the word and doctrine, were not obliged by this to perform manual work and labour, yet were not exempted from all concern in the exhortation; it being proper and necessary, that all sorts of persons be employed in one sort of business or another, and to use diligence and application in it: the apostle's view being chiefly to inveigh against sloth and idleness, and to exhort to labour and industry as the most effectual method to preserve peace and quietness, and to keep persons from being troublesome and hurtful, in families, churches, and commonwealths: the reasons enforcing this follow in this and the next verse,

as we commanded you; and the command of an apostle carries weight and authority with it, and ought to be obeyed; yea, they not only strictly enjoined a diligent application to business, but set them an example themselves, (see ^{<310>}1 Thessalonians 2:9 ^{<311>}2 Thessalonians 3:7,8).

Ver. 12. *That ye may walk honestly*, etc.] Decently, in good credit and reputation, providing things honest in the sight of all men, for themselves and families, and honestly paying every man his own; on which account it became them to mind their own business, and work at their trades; otherwise their walk and conversation would be scandalous, and not honest and honourable:

toward them that are without: the men of the world, who were without the church; (see ^{<462>}1 Corinthians 5:12) profane sinners, unconverted Gentiles, that were without Christ and hope, and God in the world, and were aliens and strangers; and yet care should be taken that no occasion be given to such to reproach the name of God, the ways of Christ, and the doctrines of the Gospel:

and that ye may have lack of nothing; but have wherewith to supply the necessaries of life, and give to them also that stand in need, which is more blessed and honourable than to receive; or might not need any such instruction and exhortation, or any reproof for sloth and idleness; or not stand in need of “any man”, as the Syriac version renders it; of the help and assistance of any, of any of those that are without, which would be dishonourable; or of them that are within, of the church, which might be burdensome. The Vulgate Latin version renders it, “that ye may not desire anything of anyone”; as the slothful man covets greedily all the day long what is another's, and this desire kills him, (^{<312>}Proverbs 21:25,26) he covets an evil covetousness, and craves in a scandalous way the bread of

others; when it would be more honourable for him to work with quietness, and eat his own bread got by honest labour, and not be beholden to another.

Ver. 13. *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,* etc.] As they seem to have been, about the state of the pious dead, the rule and measure of mourning for them, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the future happiness of the saints; wherefore the apostle judged it necessary to write to them upon these subjects: the Alexandrian copy and others, the Complutensian edition, the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, “we would not have you to be ignorant”, etc.

concerning them which are asleep; that is, dead: it was in common use among the Eastern nations, when they spoke of their dead, to say they were asleep. This way of speaking is used frequently both in the Old and the New Testament; (see ^{<100>}1 Kings 2:10 11:43 ^{<200>}Daniel 12:2 ^{<300>}John 11:11) (^{<400>}1 Corinthians 15:20) and very often with the Targumists; so the Targum on (^{<500>}Ecclesiastes 3:4) “a time to weep”, paraphrases it,

“a time to weep **abykç I** [, “over them that are asleep”:]”

and in (^{<600>}Ecclesiastes 4:2).

“I praised **abykç ty**, “those that are asleep”,”

the dead: the reason of this way of speaking was, because there is a likeness between sleep and death; in both there is no exercise of the senses, and persons are at rest, and both rise again; and they are common to all men, and proper and peculiar to the body only. The apostle designs such persons among the Thessalonians, who either died a natural death, or were removed by violence, through the rage and fury of their persecutors, for whom their surviving friends were pressed with overmuch sorrow, which is here cautioned against:

that ye sorrow not, even as others that have no hope; the apostle's view is not to encourage and establish a stoical apathy, a stupid indolence, and a brutal insensibility, which are contrary to the make of human nature, to the practice of the saints, and even of Christ and his apostles, and our apostle himself; but to forbid excessive and immoderate sorrow, and all the extravagant forms of it the Gentiles ran into; who having no notion of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, had no hope of ever seeing their

friends more, but looked upon them as entirely lost, as no longer in being, and never more to be met with, seen, and enjoyed; this drove them to extravagant actions, furious transports, and downright madness; as to throw off their clothes, pluck off their hair, tear their flesh, cut themselves, and make baldness between their eyes for the dead; (see ⁽⁶¹⁴⁾Deuteronomy 14:1) practices forbidden the Jews, and which very ill become Christians, that believe the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead: the words are to be understood not of other Christians, who have no hope of the eternal welfare of their deceased friends; not but that the sorrow of those who have a good hope of the future Well being of their dear relatives, must and ought to be greatly different from that of others, who have no hope at all: it is observed by the Jews ^{f26} on those words in (⁽⁶¹³⁾Genesis 23:2) and “Abraham came to mourn for Sarah”, etc. that

“it is not said to weep for Sarah, but to mourn for her; “for such a woman as this, it is not fit to weep”, after her soul is joined in the bundle of life, but to mourn for her, and do her great honour at her funeral; though because it is not possible that a man should not weep for his dead, it is said at the end, “and to weep for her”.”

but here the words are to be understood of the other Gentiles that were in a state of nature and unregeneracy, who had no knowledge of the resurrection of the dead, or and hope of a future state, and of enjoying their friends in it: they are called *οι λοιποι*, “the rest”; and the Syriac version renders it, “other men”.

Ver. 14. *For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again*, etc.] As every Christian does, for both the death and resurrection of Christ are fundamental articles of faith; nothing is more certain or more comfortable, and more firmly to be believed, than that Christ died for the sins of his people, and rose again for their justification; on these depend the present peace, joy, and comfort of the saints, and their everlasting salvation and happiness: and no less certain and comfortable, and as surely to be believed, is what follows,

even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. The saints that are dead are not only represented as asleep, as before, but as “asleep in Jesus”; to distinguish them from the other dead, the wicked; for the phrase of sleeping in death is promiscuously used of good and bad, though most commonly applied to good men: and so say the Jews ^{f27},

“we used to speak of just men, not as dead, but as sleeping; saying, afterwards such an one fell asleep, signifying that the death of the righteous is nothing else than a sleep.”

To represent death as a sleep makes it very easy and familiar; but it is more so, when it is considered as sleeping in Jesus, in the arms of Jesus; and such as are asleep in him must needs be at rest, and in safety: some join the phrase “in”, or “by Jesus”, with the word bring, and read the passage thus, “them that are asleep, by Jesus will God bring with him”; intimating, that God will raise up the dead bodies of the saints by Christ, as God-man and Mediator; and through him will bring them to eternal glory, and save them by him, as he has determined: others render the words, “them which sleep through”, or “by Jesus”; or die for his sake, and so restrain them to the martyrs; who they suppose only will have part in the first resurrection, and whom God will bring with Jesus at his second coming; but the coming of Christ will be “with all his saints”; (see ¹ Thessalonians 3:13) wherefore they are best rendered, “them that sleep in Jesus”; that is, “in the faith of Jesus”, as the Arabic version renders it: not in the lively exercise of faith on Christ, for this is not the case of all the saints at death; some of them are in the dark, and go from hence under a cloud, and yet go safe, and may be said to die, or sleep, in Jesus, and will be brought with him; but who have the principle, and hold the doctrine of faith, are, and live and die, true believers; who die interested in Christ, in union with him, being chosen and blessed, and preserved in him from everlasting, and effectually called by his grace in time, and brought to believe in him; these, both their souls and bodies, are united to Christ, and are his care and charge; and which union remains in death, and by virtue of it the bodies of the saints will be raised at the last day: so that there may be the strongest assurance, that such will God bring with him; either God the Father will bring them with his Son, or Jehovah the Son will bring them with himself; he will raise them from the dead, and unite them to their souls, or spirits, he will bring with him; the consideration of which may serve greatly to mitigate and abate sorrow for deceased friends.

Ver. 15. *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord*, etc.] The apostle having something new and extraordinary to deliver, concerning the coming of Christ, the first resurrection, or the resurrection of the saints, the change of the living saints, and the rapture both of the raised and living in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, expresses himself in this manner; either in allusion to the prophets of old, to whom the word of the Lord is said to

come, and who usually introduced their prophecies with a “Thus saith the Lord”; or in distinction from his own private sense, sentiment, and opinion of things; signifying, that what he was about to say, was not a fancy and conjecture of his own, the fruit and produce of his own brain, but what he could assert upon a sure foundation, upon the best and greatest authority, even the word of the Lord; and has respect either to some particular word of Christ, as some think, such as (~~418D~~ Matthew 24:30,31 ~~418E~~ John 5:28,29) or rather to a particular and peculiar revelation, and special instruction in these things, he had immediately from Christ; and it may be when he was caught up into the third heaven himself, and had an experience in himself of somewhat of that which both the living and raised saints shall feel, when they are caught up together in the clouds; since the change of the living saints, at the time of the resurrection of the dead, is a mystery which seems to have been first made known unto, and discovered by the Apostle Paul; (see ~~415D~~ 1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

That we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord: not that the apostle thought that he and the saints then in the flesh should live and continue till the second coming of Christ; for he did not imagine that the coming of Christ was so near, as is manifest from (~~310D~~ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3) though the Thessalonians might take him in this sense, which he there corrects; but he speaks of himself and others in the first person plural, by way of instance and example, for illustration sake; that supposing he and others should be then in being, the following would be the case: and moreover, he might use such a way of speaking with great propriety of other saints, and even of those unborn, and that will be on the spot when Christ shall come a second time; since all the saints make up one body, one family, one church and general assembly; so that the apostle might truly and justly say, “we which are alive”; that is, as many of our body, of our family, of our church or society, that shall be living at the coming of Christ; and he might choose the rather to speak in this form, person, and tense, to awaken the care, circumspection, diligence, and watchfulness of the saints, since it could not be known how soon the Lord would come: however, from hence it appears, that there will be saints alive at Christ's second coming; he will have a seed to serve him till he comes again; he always had in the worst of times, and will have, and that even in the last days, in the days of the son of man, which are said to be like those of Noah and of Lot: and these are said to “remain”, or to be “left”, these will be a remnant, the residue and remainder of the election of grace, and will be such as have

escaped the fury of antichrist and his followers, or of the persecutors of the saints: now these

shall not prevent them that are asleep; that is, that are dead, so the Ethiopic version; the reason why the dead are so called, see in the note on the preceding verses: the sense is, either they “shall not come up to them that are asleep, or dead”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions render the words; they shall not come into the state of the dead, they shall undergo a change equivalent to death, but not death itself; (see ~~1~~1 Corinthians 15:51,52) or rather they “shall not go before” them; they shall not get the start of them, and be in the arms of Jesus, and enjoy his presence when he comes, before the dead in Christ, which might be thought, but this will not be the case; for the dead saints will rise before the living ones are changed, and both will be caught up together to meet the Lord, as is said in the following verses; so that the one shall not come or go before the other, or come at, or into the enjoyment of Christ first, but both together.

Ver. 16. *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven*, etc.] Not by proxy, or by representatives; not by the ministry of angels, as on Mount Sinai; nor by the ministers of the word, as under the Gospel dispensation; nor by his spirit, and the discovery of his love and grace, in which sense he descends in a spiritual manner, and visits his people; but in person, in his human nature, in soul and body; in like manner as he went up to heaven will he descend from thence, so as to be visible, to be seen and heard of all: he will come down from the third heaven, whither he was carried up, into which he was received, and where he is retained until the time of the restitution of all things, and from whence the saints expect him: and this descent will be

with a shout; the word here used is observed by many to signify such a noise or shout as is made either by mariners, when they pull and row together; and shout to direct and encourage one another; or to an army with the general at the head of it, when about to undertake some considerable action, to enter on a battle, and make the onset; Christ will now appear as the King of kings, and Lord of lords, as the Judge of the whole earth, attended with the host, or armies of heaven, and the shout of a king will be among them: perhaps the same is intended, as by the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunderings upon the coming of Christ, the destruction of antichrist, and the marriage

of the Lamb, in (^{<6600>}Revelation 19:1,6,7,14,15). The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions render it, “in”, or “with command”; and the Arabic version, “with his own government”, or “authority”; that is, he shall descend, either by the command of his Father, as man and Mediator, having authority from him, as the son of man, to execute judgment; or with his commanding power and authority over the mighty angels, that shall descend with him: it follows,

with the voice of the archangel; so Michael is called, in (^{<6600>}Jude 1:9) with which compare (^{<6607>}Revelation 12:7) and who perhaps is no other than Christ himself, who is the head of all principality and power; and the sense be, that Christ shall descend from heaven with a voice, or shall then utter such a voice, as will show him to be the archangel; or as the Syriac version renders it, “the head”, or “prince of angels”; and which whether, it will be an articulate voice, such as was expressed at the grave of Lazarus; or a violent clap of thunder, which is the voice of God; or the exertion of the power of Christ, is not certain: it is added,

and with the trump of God; called “the last trump”, (^{<4652>}1 Corinthians 15:52) because none will be blown after it, and may be the same with the seventh trumpet, (^{<6615>}Revelation 11:15) and here the trump of God, because blown by his order; or by Christ himself, who is God, and so be the same with the voice of the archangel; and these figurative expressions are used, to set forth the grandeur and magnificence in which Christ will come; not in that low, mean, and humble form in which he first came, but with great glory, and marks of honour and respect; with angels shouting, trumpets blowing, and saints rejoicing. This is said in allusion to the trumpet which was heard on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law, and of which the Jews say ^{f28}, that it *aytym aj am*, “quicken the dead”; for they have a notion, that, when the Israelites first heard the voice of the Lord, they died; but upon hearing it the second time, they returned to life ^{f29}: and they suppose also in the time, to come, at the resurrection of the dead, a trumpet will be blown, which will quicken the dead ^{f30}, and the day of judgment ^{f31}; and this is reckoned by them as one of the signs of the Messiah's coming ^{f32}:

“Michael shall shout with a great shout, and the graves of the dead shall be opened at Jerusalem, and the holy blessed God will restore the dead to life, and Messiah the son of David shall come,” etc.

And the dead in Christ shall rise first; the same with those that are asleep in Jesus, (~~3044~~ 1 Thessalonians 4:14) not only the martyrs that died for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; nor merely those who die in the lively exercise of faith in Christ; but all that die interested in him, and in union with him: and these shall “rise”, in consequence of their being his; being given to him, made his care and charge, and engaged for by him, and in virtue of their union to him; and shall rise to an entire conformity to his glorious body, and in order to enjoy eternal life and glory with him: and these will rise “first”, before the wicked, which is the first resurrection, (~~6115~~ Revelation 20:5,6) even a thousand years before them; the righteous will rise in the morning of the resurrection, and so will have the dominion in the morning, (~~1994~~ Psalm 49:14) even at the beginning of the thousand years, as soon as Christ will come; but the wicked will not rise till the evening of that day, or till the close of the thousand years: and this agrees with the notions of the Jews, who thought that some will rise before others;

“Wheresoever thou findest the dead, take them and bury them, and I will give thee the first place in my resurrection.” (2 Esdras 2:23)

Having mentioned those words in (~~1380~~ Psalm 116:9) “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living”, it is asked ^{f33},

“is there no land of the living but Tyre and its neighbours, and Caesarea, and its neighbours, where is cheapness and fulness? says R. Simeon ben Lekish, in the name of Bar Kaphra, the land in which the dead live, **hl yj t**, “first”, in the days of the Messiah:”

and on the same place elsewhere ^{f34} they observe, that

“our Rabbins say two things, or give two reasons, why the fathers loved to be buried in the land of Israel, because the dead in the land of Israel **hl yj t μyyj**, “live”, or “rise first”, in the days of the Messiah, and shall enjoy the years of the Messiah:”

and in another place ^{f35} they take notice of what is written in (~~2369~~ Isaiah 26:19) “and the earth shall cast out the dead”: says R. Jochanan,

“the dead which are in the land (i.e. of Israel), they shall “live first”; as it is said, “thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise”: these are they that are without the land; “awake

and sing ye that dwell in the dust”, these are they that die in the wilderness:”

and again ^{f36},

“as it is said, ^{<2406>}*Isaiah 40:26* “that bringeth out their host by numbers”, come see, it is said, all that die in the land of Israel [at ymdqb ^wmwqy](#), “shall rise first”, because the holy blessed God shall awake them, and raise them, according to (^{<2369>}*Isaiah 26:19*).”

Once more they say ^{f37},

“they that study in the law as they ought, these are they that shall “rise first” to everlasting life, as it is said (^{<2712>}*Daniel 12:2*), “and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life”, etc. and these are for everlasting life, because they study in everlasting life, which is the law:”

to which may be added the following passage ^{f38},

“they that are worthy to be buried in the land of Israel, shall “be raised first” — and they shall be raised and quickened before the rest of the children of the world, who draw the waters of the law; and they draw, because they study to draw out of the waters of the law; and they are strengthened by the tree of life, and they shall go out “first”, because the tree of life is the cause why they shall “rise first”.”

they sometimes endeavour to fix the time, how long they will rise before the rest ^{f39};

““many of those that sleep”, etc. these are the righteous that shall “go before” others in life, and how many years shall they go before them? R. Judah says, two hundred and ten years; R. Isaac says, two hundred and fourteen; according to others, the righteous shall go (or be raised) a year before the rest of men; says R. Nachman, it will be according to the computation (of time) that the carcass has been in the dust; R. Jose replies, if so, there will be many resurrections.”

These instances may suffice to show, that the Jews had a notion of some persons rising before others, to which the apostle may have some reference; though his sense is not only this, but also that the dead in Christ

shall rise before the living saints are changed, and taken up to be with Christ, and so shall not go before to him; which illustrates and proves what he had before asserted.

Ver. 17. *Then we which are alive and remain*, etc.] (see Gill on “~~1~~ Thessalonians 4:15”).

shall be caught up; suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and with force and power; by the power of Christ, and by the ministry and means of the holy angels; and to which rapture will contribute, the agility which the bodies both of the raised and changed saints will have: and this rapture of the living saints will be

together with them; with the dead in Christ, that will then be raised; so that the one will not come before the other, or the one be sooner with Christ than the other; but the one being raised and the other changed, they will be joined in one company and general assembly, and be caught up together:

in the clouds; the same clouds perhaps in which Christ will come, will be let down to take them up; these will be the chariots, in which they will be carried up to him; and thus, as at our Lord's ascension a cloud received him, and in it he was carried up out of the sight of men, so at this time will all the saints ride up in the clouds of heaven:

to meet the Lord in the air; whither he will descend, and will then clear the regions of the air of Satan, and his posse of devils, which now rove about there, watching all opportunities, and taking all advantages to do mischief on earth; these shall then fall like lightning from heaven, and be bound and shut up in the bottomless pit, till the thousand years are ended: here Christ will stop, and will be visible to all, and as easily discerned by all, good and bad, as the body of the sun at noonday; as yet he will not descend on earth, because it is not fit to receive him; but when that and its works are burnt up, and it is purged and purified by fire, and become a new earth, he will descend upon it, and dwell with his saints in it: and this suggests another reason why he will stay in the air, and his saints shall meet him there, and whom he will take up with him into the third heaven, till the general conflagration and burning of the world is over, and to preserve them from it; and then shall all the elect of God descend from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, and he with them, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men; (see ~~6200~~ Revelation 21:1-3). The resurrection by the

Mahometans is called **hl l a aql** ^{f40}, “a meeting of God”, or a going to meet God:

and so shall we ever be with the Lord; now the saints are with him at times, and have communion with him, but not always; but then they shall be ever with him; wherever he is; first in the air, where they shall meet him; then in the third heaven, where they shall go up with him; then on earth, where they shall descend and reign with him a thousand years; and then in the ultimate glory to all eternity: and this will be the issue and accomplishment of the counsel and covenant of grace, of the sufferings and death of Christ, and of his preparations and prayers.

Ver. 18. *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*] Or doctrines; as that the saints, when they die, do not cease to be, but are asleep, and asleep in Jesus; that their souls are with him, and their bodies sleep in his arms, and are his care; that these will be as soon with Christ, as the saints that will be alive when he comes; that the coming of Christ will be with great power and glory; that the righteous will rise first in the morning of the resurrection, and before the living saints are changed, and are with Christ; that they will both be taken up together to meet him; and that they shall all be with him, and that for ever, and never part more; than which nothing can yield more true and solid comfort, under all the trials and troubles of this life, under all diseases and distempers of body, under all afflictions and persecutions for Christ's sake, under the loss of near and dear relations, and in a view of death and eternity: some copies read, “with these words of the spirit”; and so the Arabic version, “with these spiritual words”: for such they are, being the word of God, as in (^{<SM5>}1 Thessalonians 4:15).

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS 5

In this chapter the apostle discourses concerning the suddenness of Christ's coming, and the necessity of sobriety and watchfulness, and being on our guard with respect unto it, and then proceeds to exhort to several duties of religion, and closes the epistle with prayers for the saints, salutations of them, advice unto them, and with his usual benediction. Having spoken of the coming of Christ in the preceding chapter, the apostle signifies he had no need to write of the time and season of it; since it was a well known thing that it would be sudden, and at an unawares, like the coming of a thief in the night, and the travail of a woman with child, though certain and inevitable; and would bring sure destruction on wicked men, unthought of by them, (~~5:1~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) but such was the state and condition of the saints, being not in the night of nature's darkness and unregeneracy, but enlightened by the spirit of God, that they were not ignorant of these things, nor liable to be surprised unawares hereby, (~~5:4~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:4,5), however, in consideration of their being in the light, and not in darkness, it became them to behave accordingly, and not indulge themselves in sleep and sloth, but be watchful and sober, and on their guard, having on their spiritual armour, (~~5:6~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8) and the rather, since they were not appointed to the wrath they deserved, but to salvation by Christ; whose end in dying for them was, that they might live together with him, and therefore should exhort and comfort, and edify one another, (~~5:9~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11) and then follow various exhortations, some, which respect their ministers, their knowledge of them, love to them, and esteem for them, on account of their dignity, office, work, and usefulness, (~~5:12~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13) others, which concern themselves and one another, as church members, (~~5:13~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:13,14) others, which regard also them that are without, (~~5:14~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:14,15) and others which relate to joy and thanksgiving, to prayer and praise; to the gifts of the spirit, and the ministry of the word; and to a trial and examination of what is good, and an abiding by it, and an abstinence from all evil, and every appearance of it, (~~5:16~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22) and the whole is concluded with prayers for them, for their perfect sanctification,

and entire preservation to the coming of Christ; which were put up in faith, grounded upon the faithfulness of God who had called them to grace and glory, (^{<1873>}1 Thessalonians 5:23,24) and with a request to them to pray for him, and other ministers of the Gospel, and to salute all the brethren, (^{<1875>}1 Thessalonians 5:25,26) and with a charge to read this letter to them all, (^{<1877>}1 Thessalonians 5:27) and with his usual benediction, (^{<1878>}1 Thessalonians 5:28).

Ver. 1. *But of the times and the seasons, brethren,* etc.] Of the coming of Christ, his “appointed time” and “his day”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; of the resurrection of the dead in Christ first, and of the rapture of all the saints in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, things treated of in the preceding chapter: and which might excite a curiosity to know the times and seasons of them; as in what year they would come to pass; in what season of the year, whether winter or summer; in what month, and on what day of the month; and whether in the night season, or in the daytime; and in what hour, whether at midnight, cockcrowing, morning, or noonday: to repress which the apostle observes,

ye have no need that I write unto you; to write to them concerning the things themselves was necessary and useful, to stir up and encourage their faith, hope, and expectation of them; to allay their grief for departed friends, and to comfort one another under the various trials and exercises of life; but to write to them about the time of these things would be trifling and unnecessary, would be an idle speculation, and an indulging a vain curiosity; and, besides, was impracticable: for of that day and hour knows no man; the times and seasons the Father hath put in his own power; for these things are equally true of Christ's second coming, as of the kingdom of Christ coming with power and glory, and of the destruction of Jerusalem, (^{<1883>}Matthew 24:36 ^{<1886>}Acts 1:6,7). The Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions read, “ye have no need that we write unto you”; the reason follows;

Ver. 2. *For yourselves know perfectly,* etc.] With great exactness and accuracy, with great clearness and perspicuity, as a certain truth, which was made plain and evident to them, and about which there could be no question; and which perfect knowledge they had, either from the words of Christ, (^{<1892>}Matthew 24:42-44), or from the ministration of the apostle and his fellow labourers, when among them:

that the day of the Lord; of the Lord Jesus, when he will show himself to be King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the Judge of the whole earth; and which is sometimes styled the day of the Son of man, and the day of God, for Christ will appear then most gloriously, both in his divine and human nature; the day of redemption, that is, of the body from the grave, and from corruption and mortality; and the last day in which will be the resurrection of the dead, and the day of judgment, in which Christ will come to judge the quick and dead: and which

so cometh as a thief in the night; at an unawares, and the Lord himself in that day will so come, (^{<40B>}Revelation 3:3 16:1) respect is had not to the character of the thief, nor to the end of his coming; but to the manner of it, in the dark, indiscernibly, suddenly, and when not thought of and looked for; and such will be the coming of Christ, it will be sudden, and unknown before hand, and when least thought of and expected: and since the Thessalonians knew this full well, it was needless for the apostle to write about the time and season of it; which they were sensible of, could no more be known and fixed, than the coming of a thief into anyone of their houses.

Ver. 3. *For when they shall say*, etc.] Or men shall say, that is, wicked and ungodly men, persons in a state of unregeneracy:

peace and safety; when they shall sing a requiem, to themselves, promise themselves much ease and peace for years to come, and imagine their persons and property to be very secure from enemies and oppressors, and shall flatter themselves with much and long temporal happiness:

then sudden destruction cometh upon them; as on the men of the old world in the times of Noah, and on the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Lot; for as these, will be the days of the Son of man, as at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, so at the last day; (see ^{<40B>}Luke 17:26-30) and as was the destruction of literal Babylon, so of Babylon in a mystical sense, or antichrist and his followers: and which will be

as travail upon a woman with child; whose anguish and pains are very sharp, the cause of which is within herself, and which come suddenly upon her, and are unavoidable; and so the metaphor expresses the sharpness and severity of the destruction of the wicked, thus the calamities on the Jewish nation are expressed by a word which signifies the sorrows, pangs, and birth throes of a woman in travail, (^{<40B>}Matthew 24:8), and likewise that the cause of it is from themselves, their own sins and transgressions; and

also the suddenness of it, which will come upon them in the midst of all their mirth, jollity, and security; and moreover, the inevitableness of it, it will certainly come at the full and appointed time, though that is not known:

and they shall not escape; the righteous judgment of God, the wrath of the Lamb, or falling into his hands; to escape is impossible, rocks, hills, and mountains will not cover and hide them; before the judgment seat of Christ they must stand, and into everlasting punishment must they go.

Ver. 4. *But ye, brethren, are not in darkness*, etc.] In a state of unregeneracy, which is a state of darkness, blindness, and ignorance, and which is the condition of all men by nature; they are born in darkness, and are brought up in it, and willingly, walk in it; they are covered with it, as the earth was covered with darkness in its first creation; and dwell in it, as the Egyptians did for some days, in thick darkness, darkness which might be felt; their understandings are darkened with respect to the true knowledge of God, the nature of sin, the way of salvation by Christ, the work of the spirit of God upon the soul, and the necessity of it, the Scriptures of truth, and the mysteries of the Gospel; and which is the case of God's elect themselves, while unregenerate: but now these persons were called out of darkness, turned from it, and delivered from the power of it; and therefore knew that the day of the Lord comes as above described, by the metaphors of a thief in the night, and a woman with child, and needed not to be informed about that matter: or

that that day should overtake you as a thief; or seize and lay hold upon you as a thief who comes in the dark, and lays hold upon a person suddenly; but these saints were not in the dark, but in the light, and so could see when the day of the Lord came; and would not be surprised with it, as a man is seized with terror and fright, when laid hold on by a thief; since they would be, or at least should be on their watch, and be looking out for, and hasting to the coming of the day of God.

Ver. 5. *Ye are all children of light*, etc.] Or enlightened persons, whose understandings were enlightened by the spirit of God, to see their lost state by nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the insufficiency of their righteousness to justify them before God, the fulness, suitableness, and excellency of Christ's righteousness, the way of salvation by Christ, and that it is all of grace from first to last; to understand in some measure the Scriptures of truth, and the mysteries of the Gospel; to have knowledge of

some things that are yet to be done on earth, as the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles, the conversion of the Jews, the destruction of antichrist, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the change of living saints, and the rapture of both up into the air to meet Christ, the burning of the world, and the new heavens and new earth, where Christ and his saints will dwell; as also to have some glimpse of the heavenly glory, of the unseen joys, and invisible realities of the other world: and this the apostle says of them all, in a judgment of charity, as being under a profession of the grace of God, and in a church state, and nothing appearing against them why such a character did not belong to them:

and the children of the day; of the Gospel day, in distinction from the night of Jewish darkness; and of the day of grace which was come upon their souls, in opposition to the night of ignorance and infidelity, which was past; and of the everlasting day of glory, being heirs of, and having a right unto, and a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light:

we are not of the night, nor of darkness; that is not the children of darkness, as the Syriac and Arabic versions read; and the former changes the person, and reads, “ye are not the children of the night”, etc. of the night of the legal dispensation, or of Gentile ignorance; or of a state of natural darkness, in unregeneracy and was no need to write unto them concerning the time and season of Christ's coming, and lays a foundation for the following exhortations.

Ver. 6. *Therefore let us not sleep as do others* etc.] As the rest of the Gentiles, as unconverted persons, who are in a state of darkness, and are children of the night; let us not act that part they do, or be like them; which professors of religion too much are, when they indulge themselves in carnal lusts and pleasures, and are careless and thoughtless about the coming of the day of the Lord; and get into a stupid, drowsy, and slumbering frame of spirit; when grace lies dormant as if it was not, and they grow backward to, and slothful in the discharge of duty, and content themselves with the bare externals of religion; and become lukewarm and indifferent with respect to the truths and ordinance of the Gospel, the cause of God, the interest of religion, and glory of Christ; and are unconcerned about sins of omission or commission: and are willing to continue in such a position, being displeased at every admonition and exhortation given them to awake; but this is very unbecoming children of the light, and of the day:

but let us watch; over ourselves, our hearts, thoughts, affections, words and actions; and over others, our fellow Christians, that they give not into bad principles and evil practices; and against sin, and all appearance of it; against the temptations of Satan, the snares of the world, and the errors of wicked men, who lie in wait to deceive; and in the word and ordinances, and particularly in prayer, both unto it, in it, and after it; and for the second coming of Christ, with faith, affection, and patience; and the rather, because of the uncertainty of the time of it;

and be sober; not only in body, abstaining from excessive eating and drinking, using this world, and the good things of it, so as not to abuse them, or ourselves with them; but also in mind, that the heart be overcharged with the cares of this world; for men may be inebriated with the world, as well as with wine; and the one is as prejudicial to the soul as the other is to the body; for an immoderate care for, and pursuit after the world, chokes the word, makes it unfruitful, and runs persons into divers snares and temptations, and hurtful lusts. The Arabic version renders it, “let us repent”; and the Ethiopic version, “let us understand”; as intending the sobriety of the mind, repentance being an after thought of the mind, a serious reflection on past actions with sorrow and concern; and thinking soberly, and not more highly than a man ought to think of himself, his gifts, his attainments and abilities, in opposition to pride, vanity, and self-conceit, is very becoming; and shows a true and well informed understanding and judgment, and that a man is really sober and himself.

Ver. 7. *For they that sleep, sleep in the night*, etc.] The night is the usual season for sleep, and sleep is only for such who are in darkness, and are children of the night; and not proper to be indulged by such who are children of the day, and of the light:

and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night; drunkenness is a work of darkness, and therefore men given to excessive drinking love darkness rather than light, and choose the night for their purpose. To be drunk at noon is so shameful and scandalous, that men who love the sin, and indulge themselves in it, take the night season for it; and equally shameful it is, that enlightened persons should be inebriated, either with the cares of this life, or with an over weening opinion of themselves.

Ver. 8. *But let us, who are of the day, be sober*, etc.] As in body, so in mind; let us cast off the works of darkness, and have no fellowship with them; since the day of grace has passed upon us, the darkness is gone, and

the true light shines, let us walk as children of the light, living soberly, righteously, and godly:

putting on the breastplate of faith and love; this is the coat of mail, (^{Q175}1 Samuel 17:5,38) which was made of iron or brass; and the Ethiopic version here calls it, “the iron coat.” The allusion seems to be to the high priest's breastplate of judgment, in which were put the Thummim and Urim, which signify perfections and lights; faith may answer to the former, and love to the latter: these two graces go together, faith works by love, and love always accompanies faith; as there can be no true faith where there is no love, so there is no true love where faith is wanting: “faith” is a considerable part of the Christian soldier's breastplate, and answers the end of a breastplate, it being that grace which preserves the vitals of religion, and keeps all warm and comfortable within; and secures the peace and joy of the saints, as it has to do with Christ and his righteousness; wherefore this breastplate is called “the breastplate of righteousness”, (^{Q164}Ephesians 6:14), it fortifies the soul, and preserves it from Satan's temptations, from his fiery darts entering, and doing the mischief they would; it defends the heart against the errors of the wicked, for a man that believes has a witness in himself to the truths of the Gospel, and therefore cannot be easily moved from them; and strengthens a man against the carnal reasonings of the mind, for faith in the promises of God surmounts all the difficulties that reason objects to the fulfilling of them; and secures from the fears of death, the terrors of the law, and dread of the wrath of God: and love is the other part of the breast plate; love to God and Christ is a means of keeping the believer sound both in faith and practice; for a soul that truly loves God and Christ cannot give in to principles that depreciate the grace of God, and derogate from the glory and dignity of the person and office of Christ, or the work of the Spirit; and such love the ordinances and commands of Christ, and hate every false way of worship, or invention of men; and love to the saints is the bond of perfectness, knits them together, preserves unity and peace, and fortifies against the common enemy:

and for an helmet, the hope of salvation; the helmet is that part of armour which covers the head, and was made of brass, (^{Q175}1 Samuel 17:5,38) and used to be anointed with oil, that it might shine the brighter, last the longer, and more easily repel blows; to which this grace of the Spirit, hope of salvation by Christ, is fitly compared: for by “salvation” is meant salvation by Christ, spiritual salvation, and that as complete in heaven; and hope is a grace wrought in the soul by the spirit of God, which has for its foundation

Christ and his righteousness, and for its object the heavenly glory; it covers the head in the day of battle, and preserves from being overcome by sin and Satan, when one that is destitute of it says there is no hope, and we will walk every man after the imagination of his own evil heart; it erects the head in time of difficulty, amidst tribulation and afflictions; it defends it from fears of divine wrath which is revealed from heaven, and sometimes in appearance seems to hang over it; and it preserves from Satan's temptations, and being carried away with the error of the wicked, from the hope of the Gospel: and thus a Christian clothed and armed with these graces, faith, hope, and love, should be so far from indulging himself in sin and sloth, that he ought always to be sober and watchful, and prepared to meet the enemy in the gate; and be ready, always waiting for his Lord's coming.

Ver. 9. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath*, etc.] To destruction and ruin, the effect of wrath; though there are some that are vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, of old ordained to condemnation, and who are reserved for the day of evil; but there are others who are equally children of wrath, as deserving of the wrath of God in themselves as others, who are not appointed to it; which is an instance of wonderful and distinguishing grace to them:

but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; salvation is alone by Christ, he alone has wrought it out; it is in him, and in no other; he was appointed to this work, was called and sent, and came to do it, and has done it; and God's elect, who were chosen in him, are appointed in the counsel and purpose of God, to obtain, possess, and enjoy this salvation; and which, as this appointment may be known, as it was by these Thessalonians; the Gospel having come to them, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as it is an encouragement to faith and hope, so it excites to sobriety and watchfulness, and the discharge of every duty. The doctrine of predestination does not lead to despair, but encourages the hope of salvation; and it is no licentious doctrine, for election to salvation by Christ is through sanctification of the Spirit, and unto holiness; and good works are the fruits of it, and are what God has foreordained his people should walk in.

Ver. 10. *Who died for us*, etc.] The elect of God, who are not appointed to wrath, but to salvation by Christ, on which account he died for them; not

merely as a martyr to confirm his doctrine, or only by way of example, but as a surety, in the room and stead of his people; as a sacrifice for their sins, to make atonement for them, and save them from them; so that his death lays a solid foundation for hope of salvation by him:

that whether we wake or sleep: which phrases are to be understood, not in the same sense in which they are used in the context; as if the sense was, whether a man indulges himself in sin, and gives way to sleep and sloth, and carnal security, or whether he is awake and on his watch and guard, he shall through the death of Christ have eternal life secured to him; not but that there is a truth in this, that eternal life and salvation by Christ, as it does not depend on our watchfulness, so it shall not be hindered by the sleepy, drowsy frame of spirit, the children of God sometimes fall into: but rather natural sleep and waking are intended; and the meaning is, that those for whom Christ died are always safe, sleeping or waking, whatever they are about and employed in, and in whatsoever situation and condition they are in this world; though it may be best of all to interpret the words, of life and death; and they may have a particular regard to the state of the saints at Christ's second coming, when some will be awake, or alive, and others will be asleep in Christ, or dead; and it matters not which they are, whether living or dead; (see ⁴⁵¹⁷Romans 14:7-9) for the end of Christ's dying for them, and which will be answered in one as well as in another, is, that

we should live together with him: Christ died for his people, who were dead in trespasses and sins, that they might live spiritually a life of sanctification from him, and a life of justification on him, and by him; and that they might live a life of communion with him; and that they might live eternally with him, in soul and body, in heaven, and reign with him there, and partake of his glory; and this all the saints will, whether they be found dead or alive at his coming; for the dead will immediately arise, those that sleep in the dust will awake at once, and they that are alive will be changed, and both will be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and be for ever with him: now the consideration of the death of Christ, and this end of it, which will certainly be answered, serves greatly to encourage hope of salvation by him, and faith in him, and an earnest expectation of his second coming.

Ver. 11. *Wherefore comfort yourselves together*, etc.] Either with the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the thoughts of being for ever with him, and one another, and so may be a

repetition of the advice in (~~ROMS~~ 1 Thessalonians 4:18) or with this consideration, that they were not in a state of darkness, ignorance, and infidelity, but were children of the light, and of the day, being called out of darkness into marvellous light, and should enjoy the light of life; and with the doctrine of predestination, they being appointed not to that wrath they were deserving of, but to be possessed of salvation by Jesus Christ, of which they could never fail, since the purpose of God according to election always stands sure, not upon the foot of works, but upon his own sovereign and unchangeable grace; or with the doctrine of Christ's sufferings and death, in their room and stead, whereby the law was fulfilled, justice satisfied, their sins atoned for, pardon procured, an everlasting righteousness brought in, and their salvation fully accomplished, things the apostle had spoken of in the context: the words will bear to be rendered, "exhort one another"; that is, not to sleep, as do others, or indulge themselves in sin and sloth; but to be sober, and upon their watch and guard, and in a posture of defence against the enemy; to put on the whole armour of God, and particularly the plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation:

and edify one another; by praying together, conversing with each other about the doctrines of the Gospel, and the dealings of God with their souls; abstaining from all corrupt communication, which has a tendency to hurt each other's principles or practices, or to stir up wrath and contention; attending only to those things which are for the use of edifying, whereby their souls might be more and more built upon Christ, and their most holy faith; and be a rising edifice, and grow up unto an holy temple in the Lord, and for an habitation of God through the Spirit:

even as also ye do; which is said in their commendation, and not through flattery, but to encourage them to go on in this way; and from whence it may be observed, that mutual consolation, exhortation, and edification, are things the saints should be stirred up to frequently, even though they are regarded by them, and much more then should these be pressed upon them who are careless and negligent of them.

Ver. 12. *And we beseech you, brethren*, etc.] Not in a natural or civil, but spiritual relation; and what follows relating to the ministers of the word, the apostle addresses this church on their behalf, not in an imperious and authoritative manner, but by way of entreaty, with great humility and strong affection:

know them that labour among you; who were not non-residents, but were upon the spot with them; and where indeed should pastors be, but with their flocks? and husbandmen and vinedressers, but in their fields and vineyards? and stewards, but in the families where they are placed? and parents, but with their children? nor were they loiterers in the vineyard, or slothful servants, and idle shepherds, but labourers; who laboured in the word and doctrine; gave up themselves to meditation, reading, and prayer; laboured hard in private, to find out the meaning of the word of God; and studied to show themselves workmen, that need not be ashamed; and preached the word in season and out of season; faithfully dispensed all ordinances, and diligently performed the duties of their office; and were willing to spend and be spent, for the glory of Christ, and the good of souls, and earnestly contended for the faith of the Gospel; and all this they did, as among them, so for them, for their spiritual good and welfare: some render the words, “in you”; they laboured in teaching, instructing, and admonishing them; they laboured to enlighten their understandings, to inform their judgments, to raise their affections, and to bring their wills to a resignation to the will of God; to refresh their memories with Gospel truths; to strengthen their faith, encourage their hope, and draw out their love to God and Christ, and the brethren: and what the apostle directs them to, as their duty towards these persons, is to “know” them; that is, not to learn their names, and know their persons, who they were; for they could not but know them in this sense, since they dwelt and laboured among them, and were continually employed in instructing them; but that they would make themselves known to them, and converse freely and familiarly with them, that so they might know the state of their souls, and be better able to speak a word in season to them; and that they would take notice of them, show respect to them, and an affection for them; acknowledge them as their pastors, and account of them as stewards of the mysteries of God, and own them as ministers of Christ; and reckon them as blessings to them, and acknowledge the same with thankfulness; and obey them, and submit unto them in the ministry of the word and ordinances, and to their counsel and advice, so far as is agreeable to the word of God: the Arabic version renders it, “that ye may know the dignity of them that labour among you”; and so conduct and behave towards them accordingly:

and are over you in the Lord; are set in the highest place in the church, and bear the highest office there; have the presidency and government in it, and go before the saints, and guide and direct them in matters both of doctrine

and practice, being ensamples to the flock; the Syriac version renders it, “and stand before you”; ministering unto you in holy things, being servants to you for Jesus' sake: and this “in the Lord”; or by the Lord; for they did not take this honour to themselves, nor were they appointed by men, but they were made able ministers of the word by God; received their gifts qualifying them for this work from Christ, and were placed as overseers of the church by the Holy Ghost: and it was only in things pertaining to the Lord that they were over them; not in things civil, which distinguishes them from civil magistrates; nor in things secular and worldly, they had nothing to do in their families, to preside there, or with their worldly concerns, only in the church of Christ, and in things pertaining to their spiritual welfare; and though they were over them, yet under Christ, and in subjection to him, as their Lord and King; governing not in an arbitrary and tyrannical way, lording it over God's heritage, usurping a dominion over the faith of men, coining new doctrines, and making new laws; but according to the word of God, and laws of Christ, in the fear of the Lord, and with a view to the glory of God, and in love to souls: hence the Arabic version renders it, in the love of the Lord; the phrase, “in the Lord”, is omitted in the Syriac version:

and admonish you; or instruct you, put into your minds good and wholesome things, and put you in mind of the doctrines of the Gospel, of the duties of religion, of former experiences; and give warning of sin and danger, and reprove and rebuke with faithfulness; and as the case requires, either in public or private, and with sharpness or tenderness.

Ver. 13. *And to esteem them very highly*, etc.] Or, as the Ethiopic version renders it, “honour them abundantly”; for such are worthy of double honour, and to be had in reputation; they should be honourably thought of, and be high in the affections of the saints, who should esteem them better than themselves, or others in the community; and should be spoke well of, and their characters vindicated from the reproach and obloquy of others; and should be spoke respectfully to, and be honourably done by; should be provided for with an honourable maintenance, which is part of the double honour due to them in (~~5457~~ 1 Timothy 5:17,18) and this should be

in love; not in fear, nor in hypocrisy and dissimulation; not in word and in tongue only, but from the heart and real affection: the Syriac version renders it, “that they be esteemed by you with more abundant love”; with an increasing love, or with greater love than is shown to the brethren in

common, or to private members: and that for their works' sake; for the sake of the work of the ministry, which is a good work as well as honourable; is beneficial to the souls of men, and is for the glory of God, being diligently and faithfully performed by them; on which account they are to be valued, and not for an empty title without labour.

And be at peace among yourselves. The Vulgate Latin version reads, “with them”; and so the Syriac version, connecting the former clause with this, “for their works' sake have peace with them”; that is, with the ministers of the word; do not disagree with them upon every trivial occasion, or make them offenders for a word; keep up a good understanding, and cultivate love and friendship with them; “embrace them with brotherly love”, as the Ethiopic version renders the words, understanding them also as relating to ministers; a difference with them is of bad consequence, and must render their ministry greatly useless and unprofitable to those who differ with them, as well as render them very uncomfortable and unfit for it. The Arabic version renders it, “in yourselves”; as referring to internal peace in their own souls, which they should be concerned for; and which only is attained to, enjoyed, and preserved, by looking to the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ: or else it may regard peace among themselves, and with one another as brethren, and as members of the same church; which as it is for their credit and reputation without doors, and for their comfort, delight, and pleasure within, in their church state and fellowship, so it tends to make the ministers of the Gospel more easy and comfortable in their work: thus the words, considered in this sense, have still a relation to them.

Ver. 14. *Now we exhort you, brethren,* etc.] This is said either to the ministers of the word that laboured among them, presided over them, and admonished them; and the rather, because some of these things here directed to are pressed upon the members of the church in (^{<u>11</u>} Thessalonians 5:11) and which otherwise must make a repetition here; or to the members in conjunction with their pastors:

warn them that are unruly; or disorderly, idle persons, working not at all, busying themselves with other men's matters, and living upon the church's stock, reprove them for their sloth, exhort them to work with their own hands, to do their own business, and with quietness eat their own bread; or such who keep not their places in the church, but are like soldiers that go out of their rank, desert their companies, and fly from their colours, or stand aside, rebuke these, and exhort them to fill up their places, to abide

by the church, and the ordinances of Christ; or such who are contentious and quarrelsome, turbulent, headstrong, and unruly, that cause and foment animosities and divisions, check them, admonish them, lay them under censure, for such a custom and practice is not to be allowed of in the churches of Christ.

Comfort the feebleminded: such as are not able to bear the loss of near and dear relations; are ready to stagger under the cross, and at the reproaches and persecutions of the world; and are almost overset with the temptations of Satan; and are borne down and discouraged with the corruptions of their hearts, speak a comfortable word to them, encourage them with the doctrines of grace, and the promises of the Gospel.

Support the weak; who are weak in faith and knowledge, strengthen them, hold them up; or as the Syriac version renders it, “take the burden of the weak” and carry it, bear their infirmities, as directed in (~~4510~~ Romans 15:1),

be patient towards all men; towards the unruly, the feebleminded, and the weak as well as to believers; give place to wrath, and leave vengeance to him to whom it belongs; exercise longsuffering and forbearance with fellow creatures and fellow Christians.

Ver. 15. *See that none render evil for evil unto any man,* etc.] Not an ill word for an ill word, railing for railing, nor an ill action for an ill action; no, not to any man whatever, not to an enemy, a persecutor, a profane person, as well as not to a brother, a believer in Christ; and this the saints should not only be careful of, and guard against in themselves, but should watch over one another, and see to it, that no such practice is found in each other.

But ever follow that which is good; honestly, morally, pleasantly, and profitably good; even every good work, which is according to the will of God, is done in faith, from love, and to the glory of God; and particularly acts of beneficence and liberality to the poor; and which are not to be once, or now and then done, but to be followed and pursued after, and that always;

both among yourselves, and to all men; not only to the household of faith, though to them especially, and in the first place, but to all other men, as opportunity offers, even to our enemies, and them that persecute us, and spitefully use us; do good to their bodies, and to their souls, as much as in you lies, by feeding and clothing the one, and by praying for, advising, and instructing the other.

Ver. 16. *Rejoice evermore.*] Not in a carnal, but in a spiritual way, with joy in the Holy Ghost; and which arises from a view of pardon by the blood of Christ, of justification by his righteousness, and atonement by his sacrifice; not in themselves, as the wicked man rejoices in his wickedness, and the hypocrite and formalist in his profession of religion, and the reputation he gains by it; and the Pharisee and legalist in his morality, civility, negative holiness, and obedience to the rituals of the law; for such rejoice in their boastings, and all such rejoicing is evil; but in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the greatness, fitness, fulness, and glory of his person, in his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, in what he is in himself, and is made unto his people, and in what he has done, and is still doing for them, and particularly in the salvation he has wrought out; and not in the things of this life, and the attainments of it, either of body, or of mind, or of estate, as in strength, wisdom, or riches; but in things spiritual, that our names are written in heaven, and we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and called by his grace, and shall be glorified together with him; and not only in prosperity, but in adversity, since all things work together for good, and afflictions serve for the exercise of grace; and especially, since to suffer reproach and persecution for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel, is a great honour, and the Spirit of God, and of glory, rests on such, and great will be their reward in heaven: and there is always reason, and ever a firm ground and foundation for rejoicing with believers, let their circumstances or their frames be what they will; since God, their covenant God, is unchangeable, and his love to them is from everlasting to everlasting invariably the same; the covenant of grace, which is ordered in all things, and sure, is firm and immovable; and Jesus, the Mediator of it, is the same today, yesterday, and for ever.

Ver. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*] Not that saints should be always on their knees, or ever lifting up their hands, and vocally calling upon God; this is not required of them, and would clash with, and break in upon other parts of religious worship, and the duties of civil life, which are to be attended to, as well as this, and besides would be impracticable; for however willing a spiritual man might be to be engaged in this work always, yet the flesh is weak, and would not be able to bear it; and it requires food and drink, sleep and rest, for its refreshment and support; for all which there must be time allowed, as well as for other actions of animal life, and the business of a man's calling. But the meaning is, that believers should be daily, and often found in the performance of this duty; for as their wants daily return upon

them, and they are called to fresh service, and further trials and exercises, they have need of more grace, strength, and assistance, and therefore should daily pray for it; and besides certain times both in the closet, and in the family, in which they should attend the throne of grace, there is such a thing as mental prayer, praying in the heart, private ejaculations of the soul, which may be sent up to heaven, while a man is engaged in the affairs of life. The Ethiopic version renders the words, “pray frequently”; do not leave off praying, or cease from it through the prevalence of sin, the temptations of Satan, or through discouragement, because an answer is not immediately had, or through carelessness and negligence, but continue in it, and be often at it; (see ^{ⲉⲛⲓ}Luke 18:1-8). These words are opposed to the practice of such, who either pray not at all, or, having used it, have left it off, or who only pray in a time of trouble and distress, and bear hard on those who think they should not pray but when under the influences of the Spirit, and when his graces are in a lively exercise: the reason for this rule of praying with frequency and constancy is, because the saints are always needy, they are always in want of mercies of one kind or another, and therefore should continually go to the throne of grace, and there ask for grace and mercy to help them in time of need.

Ver. 18. *In everything give thanks*, etc.] That is, to God the Father, in the name of Christ; (see ^{ⲉⲛⲓ}Ephesians 5:20) thanks are to be given to him for all things, as the Ethiopic version renders it; for all temporal good things; for our beings, the preservation of them; for food and raiment, and all the mercies of life; for the means of grace, the word and ordinances, and the ministers of the Gospel; for spiritual blessings, for electing, redeeming, regenerating, adopting, pardoning, justifying, and persevering grace: for a meetness for heaven, a right unto it, and a good hope of it; and especially for Jesus Christ, for such an husband, such an head, such a surety and Saviour, and advocate with the Father, as he is; and for life, peace, joy, comfort, righteousness, and salvation in him: and thanks should be given to God in every circumstance of life; in adversity, as Job did; when not in so comfortable and agreeable a frame of soul as to be wished for, since it might be worse, and is not black despair; even under the temptations of Satan, since they might be greater and heavier, and since the grace of God is sufficient to bear up under them, and deliver out of them, and since there is such a sympathizing high priest and Saviour; and in afflictions of every kind, since they are all for good, temporal, or spiritual, or eternal.

For this is the will of God; which may refer either to all that is said from (^{<51>}1 Thessalonians 5:11) to this passage, or particularly to this of giving thanks; which is the revealed and declared will of God, is a part of that good, perfect, and acceptable will of his, and what is well pleasing in his sight, and grateful to him; (see ^{<68>}Psalm 69:30,31) and is

in Christ Jesus concerning you; either declared in and by him, who has made known the whole of the will of God, and so the Arabic version, “which he wills of you by Jesus Christ”; or which is exemplified in Christ, who for, and in all things, gave thanks to God, and had his will resigned to his in every circumstance of life; or, which being done, is acceptable to God through Christ. The Alexandrian copy reads, “for this is the will of God towards you in Christ Jesus”; that is, with respect to you who are in Christ secretly by election, and openly by the effectual calling; and who, of all men in the world, have reason to be thankful for everything, and in every circumstance.

Ver. 19. *Quench not the spirit.*] By which is meant, not the person of the Spirit, but either the graces of the spirit, which may be compared to light, and fire, and heat, to which the allusion is in the text; such as faith, which is a light in the soul, a seeing of the Son, and an evidence of things not seen; and love, which gives a vehement flame, which many waters cannot quench; and zeal, which is the boiling up of love, the fervency of it; and spiritual knowledge, which is also light, and of an increasing nature, and are all graces of the spirit: and though these cannot be totally extinguished, and utterly put out and lost, yet they may be greatly damped; the light of faith may become dim; and the flame of love be abated, and that wax cold; the heat of zeal may pass into lukewarmness, and an indifference of spirit; and the light of knowledge seem to decline instead of increasing; and all through indulging some sin or sins, by keeping ill company, and by neglecting the ordinances of God, prayer, preaching, and other institutions of the Gospel; wherefore such an exhortation is necessary to quicken saints, and stir them up to the use of those means, whereby those graces are cherished and preserved in their lively exercise; though rather the gifts of the Spirit are intended. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, bestowed on the apostles at the day of Pentecost, are represented under the symbol of fire, to which perhaps the apostle may here have respect; and the more ordinary gifts of the Spirit are such as are to be stirred up, as coals of fire are stirred up, in order that they may burn, and shine the brighter, and give both light and heat, (^{<50>}2 Timothy 1:6) and which may be said to be

quenched, when they are neglected, and lie by as useless; when they are wrapped up in a napkin, or hid in the earth; or when men are restrained from the use of them; or when the use of them is not attended to, or is brought into contempt, and the exercise of them rendered useless and unprofitable, as much as in them lies. And even private persons may quench the Spirit of God, his gifts of light and knowledge, when they hold the truth in unrighteousness, imprison it, and conceal it, and do not publicly profess it as they ought.

Ver. 20. *Despise not prophesyings.*] Or “prophecies”; the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ, concerning his person, office, and work, his obedience, sufferings, and death, his resurrection from the dead, ascension and session at God's right hand; for though all these are fulfilled, yet they have still their usefulness; for by comparing these with facts, the perfections of God, his omniscience, truth, faithfulness, wisdom, etc. are demonstrated, the authority of the Scriptures established, the truths of the Gospel illustrated and confirmed, and faith strengthened; and besides, there are many prophecies which regard things to be done, and yet to be done under the Gospel dispensation, and therefore should not be set at nought, but highly valued and esteemed: also the predictions of Christ concerning his own sufferings and death, and resurrection from the dead, and what would befall his disciples afterwards, with many things relating to the destruction of Jerusalem, his second coming, and the end of the world, these should be had in great esteem; nor should what the apostles foretold concerning the rise of antichrist, the man of sin, and the apostasy of the latter days, and the whole book of the Revelations, which is no other than a prophecy of the state of the church, from the times of the apostles to the end of the world, be treated with neglect and contempt, but should be seriously considered, and diligently searched and inquired into. Yea, the prophecies of private men, such as Agabus, and others, in the apostle's time, and in later ages, are not to be slighted; though instances of this kind are rare in our times, and things of this nature should not be precipitantly, and without care, given into: but rather prophesyings here intend the explanation of Scripture, and the preaching of the word, and particularly by persons who had not the gift of tongues, and therefore men were apt to despise them; (see ^{463B}1 Corinthians 13:2 14:1,3-5,24,31). Just as in our days, if persons have not had a liberal education, and do not understand Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, though they have ministerial gifts, and are capable of explaining the word

to edification and comfort, yet are set at nought and rejected, which should not be.

Ver. 21. *Prove all things*, etc.] That are said by the prophets, all the doctrines which they deliver; hear them, though they have not the gift of tongues, and all desirable advantages; do not reject them on that account, and refuse to hear them, for so, many useful men may be laid aside, and the Spirit of God in them be quenched; try their gifts, and attend to their doctrines, yet do not implicitly believe everything they say, but examine them according to the word of God the test and standard of truth; search the Scriptures, whether the things they say are true or not. Not openly erroneous persons, and known heretics, are to be heard and attended on, but the ministers of the word, or such who are said to have a gift of prophesying; these should make use of it, and the church should try and judge their gift, and accordingly encourage or discourage; and also their doctrines, and if false reject them, and if true receive them.

Hold fast that which is good; honest, pleasant, profitable, and agreeable to sound doctrine, to the analogy of faith, and the Scriptures of truth, and is useful and edifying, instructive both as to principle and practice; such should be held fast, that no man take it away; and be retained, though a majority may be against it, for the multitude is not always on the side of truth; and though it may be rejected by men of learning and wealth, as Christ and his doctrines were rejected by the Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the people; and though it may be reproached as a novel, upstart notion, or a licentious one, since these were charges against the doctrine of Christ, and his apostles; and though it may be attended with affliction and persecution, yet none of these things should move from it, or cause to let it go.

Ver. 22. *Abstain from all appearance of evil*.] Of doctrinal evil. Not only open error and heresy are to be avoided, but what has any show of it, or looks like it, or carries in it a suspicion of it, or may be an occasion thereof, or lead unto it; wherefore all new words and phrases of this kind should be shunned, and the form of sound words held fast; and so of all practical evil, not only from sin itself, and all sorts of sin, lesser or greater, as the ^{f41} Jews have a saying,

“take care of a light as of a heavy commandment,”

that is, take care of committing a lesser, as a greater sin, and from the first motions of sin; but from every occasion of it, and what leads unto it, and has the appearance of it, or may be suspected of others to be sin, and so give offence, and be a matter of scandal. The Jews have a saying very agreeable to this ^{f42},

“remove thyself afar off (or abstain) from filthiness, and from everything, **wl hmwdh**, “that is like unto it”.”

Ver. 23. *And the very God of peace*, etc.] Or “the God of peace himself”. The apostle follows his exhortations with prayer to God, knowing the weakness and impotency of the saints to receive them, and act according to them, and his own insufficiency to impress their minds with them; and that unless the Lord opened their ears to discipline, and sealed instruction to them, they would be useless and in vain: wherefore he applies to the throne of grace, and addresses God as “the God of peace”; so called, because of the concern he has in peace and reconciliation made by the blood of Christ, and because he is the giver of peace of conscience, and the author of peace, concord, and unity among the saints, and of all happiness and prosperity, both in this world, and in that which is to come; (see Gill on “^{<5153>}Romans 15:33”). And the apostle might choose to address God under this character, partly to encourage boldness, freedom, and intrepidity at the throne of grace, and partly to raise hope, expectation, and faith of having his requests answered, since God is not an angry God, nor is fury in him, but the God of peace: and the petitions he puts up for the Thessalonians are as follow: and first, that God would

sanctify you wholly; or “all of you”, as the Arabic version; or “all of you perfectly”, as the Syriac version. These persons were sanctified by the Spirit of God, but not perfectly; the Gospel was come to them in power, and had wrought effectually in them, and they were turned from idols to serve the living God, and had true faith, hope, and love, implanted in them, and which they were enabled to exercise in a very comfortable and commendable manner; but yet this work of grace and sanctification begun in them was far from being perfect, nor is it in the best of saints. There is something lacking in the faith of the greatest believer, love often waxes cold, and hope is not lively at all times, and knowledge is but in part; sin dwells in all; the saints are poor and needy, their wants continually return upon them, and they need daily supplies; the most holy and knowing among them disclaim perfection in themselves, though desirous of it. Their

sanctification in Christ is perfect, but not in themselves; there is indeed a perfection of parts in internal sanctification, every grace is implanted, there is not one wanting; the new creature, or new man, has all its parts, though these are not come to their full growth; there is not a perfection of degrees, and this is what the apostle prays for; for sanctification is a progressive, gradual work, it is like seed cast into the earth, which springs up, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, and is as light, which shines more and more to the perfect day. Sanctified persons are first as newborn babes, and then they grow up to be young men, and at last become fathers in Christ; and this work being begun, is carried on, and will be performed, fulfilled, and made perfect: and it is God's work to do it; he begins, and he carries it on, and he will finish it; and therefore the apostle prays to him to do it; this is his first petition: the second follows,

and I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. A like division of man is made by the Jews: says one of their writers ^{f43}

“a man cannot know God, unless he knows **wpwgw wtmçnw wçpn**,
“his soul, his breath, or his spirit, and his body”.”

Says ^{f44} R. Isaac,

“worthy are the righteous in this world, and in the world to come, for lo, they are all holy; their body is holy, their soul is holy, their spirit, and their breath is holy”

(See Gill on “^{<8042>}Hebrews 4:12”). Some by “spirit” understand the graces and gifts of the Spirit in a regenerate man; and by “the soul”, the soul as regenerated, and as it is the seat and subject of these graces; and by the body, the habitation of the soul, which is influenced by the grace that is last; and this is a sense not to be despised. Others by “the spirit” understand the rational and immortal soul of man, often called a spirit, as in (^{<1137>}Ecclesiastes 12:7) and by the soul, the animal and sensitive soul, which man has in common with brutes; (see ^{<1021>}Ecclesiastes 3:21) and by the “body”, the outward frame of flesh and blood, and bones; but rather “spirit” and “soul” design the same immaterial, immortal, and rational soul of man, considered in its different powers and faculties. The “spirit” may intend the understanding, (^{<8318>}Job 32:8) which is the principal, leading, and governing faculty of the soul; and which being enlightened by the Spirit of God, a man knows himself, Christ Jesus, and the things of the Spirit, the

truths of the Gospel, and receives and values them. The “soul” may include the will and affections, which are influenced by the understanding; and in a regenerate man the will is brought to a resignation to the will of God, and the affections are set upon divine things, and the body is the instrument of performing religious and spiritual exercises: and these the apostle prays may be

preserved blameless; not that he thought they could be kept from sinning entirely in thought, word, or deed; but that they might be preserved in purity and chastity from the gross enormities of life, and be kept from a total and final falling away, the work of grace be at last completed on the soul and spirit, and the body be raised in incorruption, and glory; and both at the coming of Christ be presented faultless, and without blame, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, first to himself, and then to his Father.

Ver. 24. *Faithful is he that calleth you*, etc.] Into the fellowship of his Son, and to his kingdom and glory, and who continues to do so, not only externally by his word, but internally by his Spirit and grace.

Who also will do it. Two things the apostle mentions as the ground of confidence that the above petition, would be heard and answered; that is, that God would wholly sanctify them, and preserve the whole of them blameless to the coming of Christ; and they are the faithfulness of God, and the effectual calling of his saints. God is faithful to his word, his covenant and promises; he has promised to sanctify and cleanse his people from all their sins, and to preserve them safe to his kingdom and glory; agreeably the Arabic version renders this last clause, “and will execute his promise”: and the effectual calling is a sure pledge of glorification; whom God calls he justifies and glorifies; as sure as he gives grace, he will give glory; and whom he calls to his eternal glory, he will make perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle. The Complutensian edition reads, “who also will make your hope firm”; that is, with respect to the above things.

Ver. 25. *Brethren, pray for us.*] Which is added with great beauty and propriety, after the apostle had so earnestly and affectionately prayed for them; and this is directed, not to the pastors of the church only, but to all the members of it, whom the apostle styles “brethren” in a spiritual relation, as he often does; and of whom he requests, that they would pray for him, and the rest of his fellow ministers and labourers in the word, that God would more and more qualify and fit them for their work, assist in private studies and meditations, give them freedom of thought, liberty of

expression, and a door of utterance, and follow their ministrations with a divine blessing and success, and deliver them out of the hands of unreasonable men; (see Gill on “^{<5838>}Hebrews 13:18”).

Ver. 26. *Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.*] In opposition, to an unchaste and hypocritical one. His meaning is, that they would salute the members of the church in his name, and give his Christian love and affections to them. And his view is to recommend to them brotherly love to each other, and to stir them up to the mutual exercise of it more and more.

Ver. 27. *I charge you by the Lord,* etc.] Or “I adjure by the Lord”; by the Lord Jesus: it is in the form of an oath, and a very solemn one; and shows that oaths may be used on certain and solemn occasions:

that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren; to all the members of the church, who are called “holy”, because they were sanctified or set apart by God the Father in election; and were sanctified by the blood of Christ, or their sins were expiated, or atoned for by the sacrifice of Christ in redemption; and were sanctified or made holy by the Spirit of God in regeneration; and were enabled by the grace of God to live holy lives and conversations. Now this epistle being directed only to some of the principal members of the church, it may be to one or more of their elders; lest he or they should be tempted on any account to conceal it, the apostle in a very solemn manner adjures, that it be read publicly to the whole church whom it concerned, that all might hear, and learn, and receive some advantage from it; from whence we may learn, as is observed by many interpreters, that the sacred Scriptures, neither one part nor another, nor the whole of them, are to be kept from private Christians, but may be read, and heard, and used by all.

Ver. 28. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Amen.*] This is the apostle's usual salutation in all his epistles, and the token of the genuineness of them, (^{<5817>}2 Thessalonians 3:17,18). (See Gill on “^{<5611>}Romans 16:20”), (see Gill on “^{<4652>}1 Corinthians 15:23”), (see Gill on “^{<4734>}2 Corinthians 13:14”).

The subscription to this epistle is not genuine, which runs thus, “The first Epistle unto the Thessalonians was written from Athens”; whereas it appears from (^{<5800>}1 Thessalonians 3:1,6) compared with (^{<4800>}Acts 18:1,5) that it was written from Corinth, and not from Athens; nor are these last words, “from Athens”, in Beza's Claromontane copy; though they stand in

the Syriac and Arabic versions of the London Polygot Bible, which add, “and sent by Timothy”, and in the Alexandrian copy, and Complutensian edition.

FOOTNOTES

- Ft1** -- Nat. Hist. 50:4. c. 10.
- Ft2** -- Ptolom. 50:3. c. 13.
- Ft3** -- Strabe, 50:7.
- Ft4** -- Gutherlothus de mysteriis Deor. Cabirorum, c. 15. p. 94, 95. Jul. Firmicus. de errore prof. relig. p. 18.
- Ft5** -- Zohar in Leviticus fol. 10. 2.
- Ft6** -- Zohar in Leviticus fol. 30. 2, 3.
- Ft7** -- T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 59. 1. Maimon. Hilchot Melachim, c. 10. sect. 9.
- Ft8** -- Maimon. in Hilch. Chobel, c. 5. sect. 10.
- Ft9** -- Misna Sota. c. 9. sect. 14.
- Ft10** -- Maimon. in Misna Sota, & in Sabbat, c. 6. sect. 1.
- Ft11** -- Ez Hechaim M. S. apud Wagenseil in Sota ib.
- Ft12** -- Bartenora in Misna Sota, c. 9. sect. 14.
- Ft13** -- T. Bab. Sota, fol. 49. 2.
- Ft14** -- Maimon. Hilch. Mechira, c. 7. sect. 8, 9.
- Ft15** -- T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol 22. 2.
- Ft16** -- Juchasin, fol. 48. 2. Shalshelth Hakkabala, fol. 23. 1.
- Ft17** -- Misna Cetubot, c. 3. sect. 4, 5.
- Ft18** -- Jarchi & Bartenora in ib.
- Ft19** -- T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 7. 2. & 15. 2.
- Ft20** -- Maimon. in Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 7. sect. 4.
- Ft21** -- Maimon. Hilch Deyot, c. 5. sect. 4.

- Ft22 -- Caphtor, fol. 57. 2.
- Ft23 -- Misna Sanhedrim, c. 9. sect. 1.
- Ft24 -- Misna Maccot, c. 3. sect. 1.
- Ft25 -- T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 32. 2.
- Ft26 -- Tzeror Hamnaor, fol. 23. 4.
- Ft27 -- Shebet Juda, p. 294. Ed. Gent.
- Ft28 -- Targum Jon. in ~~Exodus~~ Exodus 20:18.
- Ft29 -- Kettoreth Hassamamim in ib.
- Ft30 -- Mechilta in ib. & Abarbinel, Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 11. 4.
- Ft31 -- Zohar in Leviticus fol. 42. 2. 4.
- Ft32 -- Abkath Rocel, p. 138. Ed. Huls.
- Ft33 -- T. Hieros. Kilaim, fol. 32. 3. & Cetubot, fol. 35. 2. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 74. fol. 65. 1.
- Ft34 -- Bereshit Rabba, sect. 96. fol. 83. 4. & 84. 1. & Shemot Rabba, sect. 32. fol. 135. 2.
- Ft35 -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 68. 4.
- Ft36 -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 79. 3.
- Ft37 -- Ib. fol. 100. 3.
- Ft38 -- Ib. fol. 103. 1.
- Ft39 -- Ib. fol. 83. 1.
- Ft40 -- Alkoran, Surat. 6. 5:31. p. 113. Ed. Hinckelman.
- Ft41 -- Pirke Abot, c. 2. sect. 1.
- Ft42 -- Apud Drusium in loc.
- Ft43 -- Aben Ezra in ~~Exodus~~ Exodus 31:18.
- Ft44 -- Zohar in Leviticus fol. 29. 2.