

First Thessalonians

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Introduction

In Acts 17: 1-10, we read:

*Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to **Thessalonica**, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. [In this study, all quotes are from the NASV translation. Also, I shall use "he" instead of "he or she" for the sake of convenience.]*

This incident took place in 49 or 50 A.D. on the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul, when he was accompanied by Silas and Timothy. Paul's first missionary journey (with Barnabas) was to the province of Galatia, in what is today south central Turkey. His second missionary journey revisited those believers, then went on to Troas, where he crossed the Aegean Sea to the northern Greek province of Macedonia. There he established a church in the city of Philippi (Acts 16:11ff). After Philippi, the missionary team went about 100 miles (160 kilometers) west to Thessalonica, a city of about 200,000 people in Paul's day.

Early in Paul's ministry, his strategy was to enter a city and visit the synagogue (if they had one, Philippi didn't but Thessalonica did). Being a Jewish male, Paul could stand and speak in any synagogue. But when he told them Jesus was the Messiah, *explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead*, some would believe and the rest would throw him out. Apparently, many of these were proselytes converted to Judaism, or just Greeks and Romans who attended the Jewish synagogues because they liked the Jewish religion better than the polytheism of the Greeks and Romans. Many of these were among the first converts to Christianity.

Concerning Thessalonica, we read: *And some of them [Jews] were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.* Although the exact number is not given, there were *a large number* of new believers in Thessalonica after Paul spent 3 weeks there, *and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.*

Paul and his friends apparently had been staying with a man named Jason. We know nothing else about Jason. But it is reasonable to suppose that either he was already a believer, having been converted from Peter's initial ministry in Jerusalem (Acts 2:7-11), or he was one of these early converts who *were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas.*

When things heated up, as they usually did when Paul began to speak, the new believers hid Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The Jews *formed a mob and set the city in an uproar*. The mob went to Jason's, and when they didn't find the missionaries, they forced Jason to appear before the city authorities. The Jews then publicly accused Jason of (1) harboring criminals who were upsetting the world and (2) violating the decrees of Caesar by declaring Jesus as another king. Apparently, some other believers (but not the missionaries) went with Jason to the authorities and made some sort of deal with them. It says: *And when they [the authorities] had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them*. We don't know what the pledge was. The Greek word simply means *something sufficient, or considerable*. It probably involved some money and possibly a promise to get the missionaries out of town, since all three of them left right after that (Acts 17:10-14).

Paul's strategy and methods are significant here. We learn: *And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas...*

Notice:

- Paul stayed at least three weeks. He stayed until he was forced to leave.
- His method was to reason and explain from the Scripture and give evidence of the resurrection of Christ.
- The converts were not converted by emotion, or religion, but by being persuaded with reason.
- The new believers were not left to themselves but *joined Paul and Silas*.

If Paul was in Thessalonica only three weeks, then he was busy during the week speaking to Gentiles. It seems the Thessalonian church was mostly Gentile. When Paul writes this letter, he says: *you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God* (1:9). These may have been Gentiles attending the synagogue, or those he met through them. But, in the end, it was apparently a mostly Gentile church.

From Thessalonica, Paul, Silas, and Timothy went to Berea, where they had an experience similar to that in Thessalonica. Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea, while Paul went on to Athens (Acts 17:11-14). They rejoined Paul in Athens (Acts 17: 15-16). And from Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:1) because he was concerned for them, probably because of all the opposition they faced while he was there. He says: *For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain* (3:5).

It seems that Silas was then dispatched with a similar mission to Philippi. Meanwhile Paul went on to Corinth where he stayed for a year and a half, living with a couple named Priscilla and Aquila *because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers* (Acts 18:3). Both Timothy and Silas returned to Paul in Corinth, bringing a gift from the Macedonian Churches (who supported Paul on several occasions, see 2 Corinthians 8:1 and Philippians 4:10-18) so that *Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ* (Acts 18:5). It was after Timothy returned and joined Paul in Corinth, with an encouraging report about the Thessalonians, that Paul wrote this letter. It was 51 A.D.

It is clear that Paul was thrilled with the report from Timothy, excited about their spiritual progress, and wanting them to know about his own circumstances. Paul wanted to be sure they were networked together with him and the other believers everywhere. Because of that, the first three chapters tell us a lot about Paul's ministry style, his motivation, and his methods. Chapters 4 and 5 read more like Paul's other shorter epistles, giving exhortations for the Thessalonians. These are new believers. They are

growing and spiritual, but not mature. They have only been believers a short time, and Paul wanted them to be tied closely to himself and his team.

Having said that, it is not the primary reason Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians (or 2 Thessalonians). Paul wrote these letters to tell them about the future. He wrote to warn of false teaching and clarify the truth about the Rapture, the resurrection of the body, and the events leading to the Second Coming of Christ. Every chapter ends with a focus on the future return of Christ.

A Commentary on First Thessalonians

Chapter 1

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

1:1 Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη.

First, we need to notice that this letter is clearly Pauline in authorship. Only a secular liberal out to disprove Christianity would even consider anything else. Paul says he wrote it, it has his signature greeting of *Grace to you and peace*, its style is clearly that of Paul, and he recounts the history of Paul and his colleagues on the second missionary journey.

Also, notice that Paul includes Silvanus (the long form of the name Silas) and Timothy. This indicates not only that they are working as a team but also that Silas and Timothy had returned to Paul from their travels to see the Thessalonians and the other Macedonian believers.

Next, we have a good definition of a local church. The term “local church” is never used in the New Testament, but this is as close as we get to it. Paul writes τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων, *to the church of the Thessalonians*. So the church is believers, all the believers in the city of Thessalonica. A local church, if we choose to use that phrase, is a city church. Paul never tolerated breaking up the believers in a city into more than one church (1 Corinthians 1:11-13; 3: 3-7; Galatians 2:11-14).

There are many problems involved with breaking up a city into independent “local churches.” There is the tendency to follow a human leader, as in the 1 Corinthian references listed above. But there is also the Jim Jones effect where the followers drank the cool aid and died. This would have been avoided if they had been in more than one church, or saw the church as all the believers in a community or region, or a network of believers. Of course, most perversions are not this devastating, but the danger of perversion always exists when we restrict our involvement to only one church. This is the Third John situation, where all the local church was wrong and out of touch with the general Christian community. Many false doctrines and immoral practices have been supported by saying something like: “It’s approved by my local church.”

Also, the word ἐκκλησία is probably best transliterated “ecclesia” (like the word “baptism” and “deacon,” “hallelujah,” and “amen”) rather than translated into the word “church.” This allows the context, rather than our traditional usage of the word, to define it. The word itself is a combination of the word for “called” and “out of” or “from.” So it is any collective group of people called out of the rest of

the people for some reason or cause. In this case, it is those people in the city of Thessalonica called out of all the other people in the city to be believers in Jesus Christ.

Question:

The phrase *the church of Thessalonica* in 1:1 refers to:

- A. All those who claimed to be believers in the city of Thessalonica.
- B. All those who gathered together as believers in the city of Thessalonica.
- C. All true believers in Thessalonica.
- D. The various house churches in Thessalonica.

Answer:

A is correct. The local church was those claiming to be believers in Jesus Christ in a particular city. B is incorrect because the “gathering” of believers is the word for “synagogue.” Here Paul uses the word for “church” which is “called-out ones,” not “gathered” ones. C is theoretically correct, but it is not who Paul is writing to because he could not know for sure who is a true believer. D is incorrect because we know of no multiple house churches in the city. If there were, we would expect the letter to be read in those churches. But Paul is addressing believers, not gatherings of believers.

1:2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

1:3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

1:4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

1:5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

1:2 Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν μνησίαν ποιούμενοι ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν ἡμῶν, ἀδιαλείπτως

1:3 μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν,

1:4 εἰδότες, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ [τοῦ] θεοῦ, τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν,

1:5 ὅτι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ [ἐν] πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ, καθὼς οἴδατε οἷοι ἐγενήθημεν [ἐν] ὑμῖν δι' ὑμᾶς.

This 4-verse-long sentence is presented in the form of a prayer of thanksgiving. There are two words for prayer in verse 2, both are very common. Εὐχαριστοῦμεν means thanksgiving. It is where we get the word Eucharist, which was the prayer of the bishop for the Lord's Supper in the early centuries of church history. The second word προσευχῶν is the most common word for prayer. When you put this together with the last word of verse 2, ἀδιαλείπτως (*without ceasing*), you have the same two words used in 5:17 *pray without ceasing*.

Verse 3 states Paul's basic virtues of faith, hope and love (see 1 Corinthians 13:13). But here, Paul adds the concept of effort with each one. So, instead of telling them he is proud of them, Paul prays a prayer of thanksgiving for their work of faith, copious (κόπου) work of love, and perseverance (or enduring work) of hope.

In verse 4, he says all that work is evidence of the fact that God both loved them and chose them. So the love (ἀγαπη) of God (here) is not the universal giving of John 3:16, but the selective choosing of

Romans 9:13. (Both passages use the word ἀγάπη for love.) We also see their 100 % free will choice of faith, hope, and love, being paralleled with the 100 % sovereign election (ἐκλογήν) of God.

Question:

In 1:3-4, Paul says he knows God loves them and chose them because of their *labor of love and steadfastness of hope*. That means:

- A. They are saved because of their *labor of love and steadfastness of hope*.
- B. We know they are saved because of their *labor of love and steadfastness of hope*.
- C. We know they will mature because of their *labor of love and steadfastness of hope*.
- D. They are loved by God, whether they are saved or not.

Answer:

B seems to be what Paul is saying in this passage. A is incorrect because salvation does not come by works (Ephesians 2: 8-9; Titus 3:5). C and D are incorrect because the immediate context is about their being chosen by God.

In verse 5, Paul says their gospel (meaning their message of the good news of Christ’s resurrection and its implications—see 1 Corinthians 15:1-11) was not just a verbal sermon. It was, indeed, a verbal message, but it was substantiated by power (probably referring to miracles Paul performed), and the Holy Spirit (the one who supplied the power for those miracles). It was also with a full conviction (that is, a full assurance that the message was completely true, and the power was from God). The last phrase literally says: *knowing what sort we were (or became) among you on account of you*. So Paul appeals to their personal conduct as evidence of the truth of their message.

1:6 *You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,*

1:7 *so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.*

1:6 Καὶ ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου, δεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ μετὰ χαρᾶς πνεύματος αἰίου,

1:7 ὥστε γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς τύπον πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ.

The next sentence describes the discipleship process. The Thessalonians became imitators of the missionaries and, or “that is” (καὶ is the soft, or inclusive “and”), the Lord. They were imitators in the sense that they *received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit*. Then after imitating the apostle’s application of the Word, they became examples, or types (τύπον), to all those who believed in both Greek provinces.

1:8 *For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.*

1:9 *For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,*

1:10 *and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*

1:8 ἀφ’ ὑμῶν γὰρ ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ [ἐν τῇ] Ἀχαΐᾳ, ἀλλ’ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐξελέλυθεν, ὥστε μὴ χρεῖαν ἔχειν ἡμᾶς λαλεῖν τι.

1:9 αὐτοὶ γὰρ περὶ ἡμῶν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὁποῖαν εἴσοδον ἔσχομεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ
1:10 καὶ ἀναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ [τῶν] νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης.

Verse 8 should be the goal of all missions. It is not that the missionaries were no longer needed. Paul and his associates were needed to continue to minister to the Thessalonians, but they were not needed in places where the Thessalonians could go.

Verses 9 and 10 are one sentence, and they form a powerful message. The point is, not only did the converts of the Thessalonians accurately report about the work of Paul's group, but they understood the one-way idea which separates Christianity from all other religions. They didn't just add Jesus to one of their other deities, they *turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God*. They turned to God, who was both living and true, and away from their other beliefs, which were both dead and false. The message of Christianity is not being proclaimed until it is understood as declaring all other religions beliefs to be false.

Question #3:

In 1:9, it says: *you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God*. A good application of that today would be:

- A. Don't worship money or material goods.
- B. Don't practice acupuncture.
- C. Don't use icons.

Answer:

B is correct. Acupuncture is not a medical but a mystical practice connected with eastern pantheistic religions. It represents worship of other gods and is flirting with idolatry. A is incorrect because the idols Paul has in mind here are items of religious worship not material pleasure. C is incorrect because, whatever you believe about icons, they are not worship of another god.

The other significant thing here is Paul's emphasis throughout this letter, especially at the end of each chapter—future prophecy. Here the Thessalonians are to have a heavenly focus and expect Jesus, the Jesus of Nazareth who died on a cross near Jerusalem and was raised from the dead, to come again and deliver His saints from the wrath of the Tribulation period to come, just prior to His Second Coming. This argues strongly for a pretribulation Rapture of the church, since the first description of the Tribulation calls it the wrath of God. When he begins to describe this time of extreme trouble in Revelation 6, John says: *the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?* (Revelation 6:17).

Chapter 2

2:1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,

2:2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

2:1 Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν,

2:2 ἀλλὰ προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες, καθὼς οἶδατε, ἐν Φιλίπποις ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι.

Paul begins what we call Chapter 2 with a statement of success in the midst of opposition, both in Philippi and Thessalonica. He defines success with the words οὐ κενη, *not vain, or not empty, or not worthless*. He then describes his ministry in Philippi as one of suffering and ὑβρισθέντες. This last word means *to boast or insult*. It is similar to the English word “hubris” (*excessive pride, or self confidence*). Paul is saying he was attacked by proud people. By way of contrast, Paul says they came ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα, *boldly*. It’s an aorist, indicative, middle from παρρησια meaning *to speak freely, boldly, or confidently*. So Paul condemns pride but promotes confidence. The difference is that *pride* is value independent from God, and *confidence* is assurance of the message from God. So Paul’s confidence is in God, not in himself apart from God. A good example of this is David facing Goliath. David had confidence and boldness, but he had no pride. He saw the whole thing as being from God, not from himself. After he killed Goliath, David never mentioned it again.

12. The instruction of the Gospel must be with confidence, not pride.

2:3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;

2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

2:5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—

2:6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. [This last phrase is in verse 7 in the Greek text]

2:3 ἡ γὰρ παράκλησις ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας οὐδὲ ἐν δόλῳ,

2:4 ἀλλὰ καθὼς δεδοκιμάσμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, οὕτως λαλοῦμεν, οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωποις ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν.

2:5 Οὔτε γὰρ ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας ἐγενήθημεν, καθὼς οἴδατε, οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας, θεὸς μάρτυς,

2:6 οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν οὔτε ἀφ’ ὑμῶν οὔτε ἀπ’ ἄλλων,

13. Missionaries must be people of personal integrity, defined as the message must be true, the messengers must be pure, and the goal must be to please God, not men.

Here Paul gives another one of his great lists. This time it is how **not** to proclaim the Gospel. He says they spoke without:

- πλάνης, (2:3) *error, or wandering*. It’s where we get the word “planet” (wandering body).
- ἀκαθαρσίας, (2:3) *impurity or uncleanness*.
- δόλῳ, (2:3) *deceit, craft, or guile*.

The next four things seem to be about their motives:

- ἄνθρωποις ἀρέσκοντες, (2:4) *men pleasers or finding approval with men*.
- λόγῳ κολακείας, (2:5) *flattering speech or words which flatter*.
- προφάσει πλεονεξίας (2:5) *pretext for greed, or a motive of covetousness*.
- ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν, (2:6) *seek glory from men*.

These are the things we should look for in false teachers. Very often, not only is their content false but so are their motives. We cannot judge motives, but we can see if our preachers are: speaking error, living in impurity, being deceitful, speaking to please people, greedy, or seeking glory from men.

2:7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.

2:8 *Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.*

2:7 δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι. [This phrase is in verse 6 in the English text] ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα,
2:8 οὕτως ὀμειρόμενοι ὑμῶν εὐδοκοῦμεν μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς, διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε.

In verses 7 and 8, Paul gives us the perfect methods and reasons for doing evangelism. He gives us two methods along with the reason for the action. (1) He says they were νήπιοι, literally, *like an infant*, usually translated *gentle*, as a professional nurse nursing her own children. The reason is the missionaries had a ὀμειρόμενοι, *a fond affection, desire or yearning* for the Thessalonians. (2) He says they gave them both the Gospel and their own lives (ψυχάς, literally *souls*). And the reason for that was the Thessalonians ἐγενήθητε *had become* (it's an aorist, passive, indicative) *very dear to us* (or literally *those we had come to love*). Which indicates that Paul went to them with a ministry from God, not a desire for the Thessalonians. But in the process of evangelizing them, they became very dear to the missionaries.

Question:

In chapter 2 compare the statement in verse 4: *so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts*, with verse 7 which says: *But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children*. What is the balance between not pleasing men, but God, and caring for people like a nurse? Apply this in the area of remarriage after divorce.

- A. We must always please God, but tender care involves allowing remarriage after divorce in some situations.
- B. Tender care involves helping people hurt by divorce without approving remarriage after divorce because that is not pleasing to God.
- C. Tender care and pleasing God come together when some people are living in a divorced situation, which is unbearable, and God would not want them to live like that.

Answer:

B is correct. If in doubt, always err on the side of pleasing God. Never violate God's commands for the sake of pleasing people (see 2:11-12). But sin always creates difficult situations and collateral damage for everyone close to the sinner. The solution is to comfort the afflicted, not encourage them to sin to solve their problems. A and C are incorrect because they encourage disobedience to the Word of God.

14. We begin, or initiate, ministry out of a love for God, not a love for people. Often, we do not even know the people. But we continue the ministry because often the people become very dear to us. A love for people is a poor way to start a ministry. If you start a ministry with a love for people, you'll end up either compromising the Word of God or turning the Gospel into a social works situation. But if a ministry is built on the platform of a love of God and the truth of His Word, then a love for the people keeps the missionaries coming and working hard. Affection for the people turns faith and love into hard work, which is enjoyable. Therefore, we have verse 9.

2:9 *For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*

2:9 Μνημονεύετε γάρ, ἀδελφοί, τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαί τινα ὑμῶν ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

In verse 9 Paul, uses 3 words for “work” to describe their ministry in Thessalonica:

- κόπον, *abundant labor* (it’s from *kopos* where in English we get the word *copious*).
- μόχθον, *labor, trouble, or hardship*.
- ἐργαζόμενοι, from the most common word for *work*, which Paul says they did *night and day*.

So proclaiming the Gospel is work, work which is abundant, full of hardship, and goes on night and day.

2:10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;

2:11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,

2:12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2:10 ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός, ὡς ὀσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν,

2:11 καθάπερ οἶδατε, ὡς ἓνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ

2:12 παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν.

In this sentence, Paul describes the character of the missionary team (with another one of his lists) as devout, upright, and blameless. Then he describes their work as what a good father would do for his own children: *exhorting and encouraging and imploring* them. Notice, in verse 7 Paul says they were like a nursing mother, and in verse 11, he says they were like a father who wants his children to *walk in a manner worthy of ... God*. Then he views salvation from God’s perspective: calling us *into His own kingdom and glory*.

Question:

What is the best way to apply the statement: *God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory* in 2:12?

- A. God calls us into His kingdom and His glory. We should not call Him into our kingdom or to help us with our own glory.
- B. God calls us to take our own personal kingdom and glory and bring it into submission with His kingdom and glory.
- C. God will never help us obtain a kingdom or glory here on earth.

Answer:

A is correct. The salvation God offers us is a call to join His kingdom, not an offer to join ours. B is incorrect because it assumes we can build our own kingdom as long as we are godly about it. The point of this statement is that it’s all about God’s kingdom and not about ours. C is incorrect because God’s roll for us may be to build us a temporary kingdom on earth, as He did with David and Solomon. But we should never seek to build ourselves a kingdom here on earth.

2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

2:13 Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὅτι παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ’ ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐστιν ἀληθῶς λόγον θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

Verse 13 is a declaration of the inspiration of Paul's message. He is continuing in his declaration of his apostleship (2:6), assuring them that the words which he spoke were inspired by God. Of course, we could not say that, but we can teach and quote the words of the apostles as the Word of God. It made a big difference whether the Thessalonians receive it as the word of men or the Word of God. If it is merely the word of men, then it needs only to be taken into consideration as helpful or suggestive advice. Valuable, perhaps, but not directive. But if it is indeed the Word of God, then it is absolute truth, not to be evaluated but to be used as a standard for evaluation.

2:14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,

2:15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men,

2:16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

2:14 ὑμεῖς γὰρ μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε, ἀδελφοί, τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίῳν συμφυλετῶν καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων,

2:15 τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων,

2:16 κωλυόντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν, εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς αμαρτίας πάντοτε. ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος.

Verse 14 declares the connection between all believers. When the Thessalonians became the *ecclesia* of God, they imitated the *ecclesia* of God in Judea, in that they began to spread the Gospel to those around them. From Jerusalem the church became witnesses of Christ in all Judea and in Samaria (Acts 1:8). From Thessalonica, the church became witnesses of Christ in all Macedonia and Achaia (1:7). Both resulted in the spread of the Gospel with persecution.

Verses 15 and 16 list the sins of the Jews in this matter. Today, these verses would be considered very politically incorrect. But, then, they were in Paul's day as well. He says seven very judgmental things about the Jews: (1) they killed the Lord Jesus, (2) they killed the prophets, (3) they drove out the Christian apostles and missionaries, (4) they are not pleasing to God, (5) they are hostile to all men (6), and they hinder the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles. As a result, (7) they brought upon themselves the wrath of God.

Question:

Why was Paul so negative about the Jews in 2:15-16?

- A. Because he did not want the Thessalonians to revert back into Judaism, keeping the Mosaic Law.
- B. Because he hated them for killing Jesus.
- C. Because they were hindering the spread of the Gospel.

Answer:

C is correct. In the context, Paul says they hindered the spread of the Gospel. A is incorrect because that is not mentioned in the context. B is incorrect because it is judging Paul's motives.

These issues led the early church to become very anti-Semitic after the apostles died. But this was not Paul's intent. Paul also showed a love for the Jews, and understood there was a remnant of Jewish believers in his day, like himself, who were part of the church of God. Paul also understood there would be a believing remnant of Jews in the future, who would be return to the favor of God when the church age was over. (See Romans 11:1-6, 18-29. Verses 28 and 29 read: *From the standpoint of the gospel they [the Jews] are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*)

2:17 *But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.*

2:18 *For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us.*

2:19 *For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?*

2:20 *For you are our glory and joy.*

2:17 Ἡμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ' ὑμῶν πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας, προσώπῳ οὐ καρδίᾳ, περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ. 2:18 διότι ἠθελήσαμεν ἔλθειν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἄπαξ καὶ δῖς, καὶ ἐνέκοψεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς.

2:19 τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως — ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς — ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ;

2:20 ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρὰ.

Here, at the end of chapter 2, Paul gives us a significant principle for the discipleship process. It never ends. Paul is always torn between reaching out to others and returning to build up those he has already reached. He never just leaves them behind. He has been taken away from them *for a short while—in person, not in spirit*. It's *προσώπῳ οὐ καρδίᾳ*, literally *in face, not in heart*. The point is, Paul did not define missions as indigenous, where he established a church and moved on, leaving them to carry on without him. He considered himself always a part of their church and thought it an act of Satan when he could not get back to see them.

15. Ideally, ministry never ends. Paul is always torn between reaching out to others and returning to build up those already reached. He never just leaves them behind. He's been taken away from them for a short while, in person but not in spirit. Paul does not define missionary success as indigenous. Indigenous is where a ministry is established, and then the missionary moves on the let's them do the ministry. He considered it an act of Satan when he couldn't get back to them.

Then Paul gives us the reason for his wanting to personally help the Thessalonians grow in Christ. It's a heavenly profit motive. These Thessalonians are part of his reward in heaven. So Paul ends what we call chapter 2, as he did chapter 1, with a focus on future prophecy. This time, the emphasis is on the judgment seat of Christ.

The phrase *ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου, ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ* is literally *before the Lord in His presence*. Although *παρουσία* is often used of the Second Coming of Christ, that is not likely its use here. [Remember, the immediate context rules in determining the meaning.] Paul is not saying we, the church, are judged and receive our rewards at the second Coming of Christ. He is saying we are rewarded before the Lord in His presence.

The church, it seems, is already rewarded and proceeds with Christ from Heaven to earth at His second coming. Just before the Second Coming we read: *It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints* (Revelation 19:8). And during the

Second Coming it says: *And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white after the rapture and before the second coming the believers of this church age are rewarded in the heavenly realm as described here (also described in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, and 2 Corinthians 5:10). and clean, were following Him on white horses (Revelation 19: 14). The likelihood is that sometime.*

Question:

What is the most important point of 2:17-20?

- A. The church is a network of relationships.
- B. Satan will often hinder missionaries from traveling to areas of need.
- C. When we are absent from our Christian friends, we can be with them in spirit.

Answer:

A is correct. All three of these are true statements Paul makes in the context, so the question is only: "Which one is the main idea?" B and C are supportive ideas to the main idea of the church network.

Chapter 3

3:1 Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 3:2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,

3:3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.

3:4 For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

3:1 Διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες εὐδοκήσαμεν καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις μόνοι

3:2 καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον, τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν

3:3 τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις. αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα·

3:4 καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἦμεν, προελέγομεν ὑμῖν ὅτι μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ ἐγένετο καὶ οἶδατε.

The first thing we should notice is that Paul could not endure not knowing how the Thessalonians were coming along in their spiritual growth. The number one concern of anyone ministering to others is their spiritual growth.

16. Ministry means having a continually concern for the spiritual growth of believers.

In verse 2, we learn that Paul's response was to send Timothy. Besides calling him a brother, Paul says he is *συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, a worker together with God, literally: a with-worker (one word) God.* We know we cannot add one bit to what God is doing. This is the error of those who wish to improve the planet. Nor can we help God out with what He is doing. This is the error of those who wish to build the church or spread the Kingdom of God throughout the world. But He does allow us to work with Him while He is doing what He is doing. Specifically, what Timothy was to do was to *στηρίξαι, strengthen, support, or make firm,* and *παρακαλέσαι, beseech, urge, exhort, console, or comfort.* So his first job was to strengthen their faith, probably by teaching. His second job was to encourage them in the

application of their faith, probably by discussing what they had done, and what Paul and his team had done.

Verses 3 and 4 give us another reason for Timothy's trip to see them. Paul did not want the Thessalonians to think Paul's suffering was something unexpected. It was both expected and predicted. The normal expectation for mission work is persecution and suffering for the sake of proclaiming the truth of the Gospel. There is an old saying which goes something like: "If you are not getting shot at, then you are probably not over the target." Paul knew he would get shot at because his message was on target. He did not talk in terms of pleasant platitudes, tolerance, and peace on earth. He preached a gospel of truth, and an exclusive way to God, which declared all other gods false and all other lifestyles sinful. That is what was on target and drew persecution.

3:5 For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

3:6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,

3:7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith;

3:8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.

3:5 διὰ τοῦτο κἀγὼ μηκέτι στέγων ἔπεμψα εἰς τὸ γνῶναι τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν, μή πως ἐπειράσεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν.

3:6 Ἀρτι δὲ ἐλθόντος Τιμοθέου πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀφ' ὑμῶν καὶ εὐαγγελισσαμένου ἡμῖν τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν καὶ ὅτι ἔχετε μνησίαν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε, ἐπιποθοῦντες ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς,

3:7 διὰ τοῦτο παρεκλήθημεν, ἀδελφοί, ἐφ' ὑμῖν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν πίστεως,

3:8 ὅτι νῦν ζῶμεν ἐὰν ὑμεῖς στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ.

Verse 5 reveals the real danger and declares that the danger is real. The danger is Satan and demons. And the danger is real in that the spiritual maturity of the Thessalonians was not a given. It would be a lifelong ongoing battle. As Paul told the Ephesians: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Ephesians 6:12). We cannot simply get people saved and leave them to mature on their own. Even when they are clearly saved and therefore indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as the Thessalonians were, it is possible for them to follow the temptations of the tempter back into the world. And if they did that, there would be no assurance of their salvation (1 John 2:4). In which case the labor of the missionaries would have been *in vain*. So Paul was concerned.

Verse 6 express Paul's relief that they were indeed doing well and growing in Christ. Specifically, Timothy reported they had grown in *faith and love*. And the evidence of both was that they were longing to see Paul again. When there is a longing to see the missionaries, then there is good evidence of spiritual growth. For example, I used to meet regularly with a man who suddenly stopped seeing me. After a time, I learned he was getting a divorce. Now I know why he no longer wanted to see me. A desire for discipleship is an indicator of salvation. Saved people should have a hunger for the Word of God (1 Peter 2:2).

Verses 7 and 8 reveal the heart of the apostle. He was able to endure his suffering if he knew his disciples were standing firm in the Lord.

Whatever comforts us and brings us joy is an indicator of where our heart is.

Question:

In 3:1-8, why was Paul so pleased by the knowledge that the Thessalonians wanted to see him?

- A. Because this meant their faith was not disturbed by Paul's suffering.
- B. Because this meant they would be praying for him in his ministry.
- C. Because this meant they were standing firm in the Lord.

Answer:

C is correct. The main thing Paul wanted to know is if they were standing *firm in the Lord* (verse 8). When he knew they were longing to see him, then he knew they were still following his teaching. Those who are sinning and departing our teaching are not eager to see us. A is incorrect because it is not the main thing Paul wanted to know. B is incorrect because there is nothing about prayer in the context.

3:9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,

3:10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

3:9 τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἣν χαίρομεν δι' ὑμᾶς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν,

3:10 νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ δεόμενοι εἰς τὸ ἰδεῖν ὑμῶν τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν;

In this two-verse-long rhetorical question, Paul makes the point that he wants to καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, *complete what is lacking in your faith*. The NASV translation *complete* is not good here because it sounds like it is possible to bring their faith to some point of being finished or perfected. The word ὑστερήματα is better translated: *to mend, restore, create, or strengthen*. There is another Greek word for completion (τελεος), which is not used here. Paul is talking about an ongoing process of his ministry of discipleship with them, carried out through an ongoing network of relationships with people like he and Timothy, which continually *mend, restore, create, and strengthen* their faith.

3:11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you;

3:12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;

3:13 so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

3:11 Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς κατευθύναι τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς·

3:12 ὑμᾶς δὲ ὁ κύριος πλεονάσαι καὶ περισσεύσαι τῇ ἀγάπῃ εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς,

3:13 εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας ἀμέμπτους ἐν αἰγιωσύνῃ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων τῶν αγίων αὐτοῦ, [ἀμὴν].

Verses 11-13 are a sort of mid-letter benediction where, common to Paul's writing, he starts over in the next chapter.

Verse 12 is a prayer request that they *abound in love for one another*. But then the text reads: καὶ εἰς πάντας, literally *and* (or *even* or *that is*) *unto all*. There is no word here for "people"(NASV) or "men"

(KJV). It is possible that this refers to all people, but it is equally possible that Paul is reiterating his prayer for their love for all of the Thessalonian believers.

Verse 13 not only gives the real goal of all ministry (*that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness*), but that it might be done with an end-times' perspective. For the third time, Paul ends (what we call Chapter 3) with future prophetic events in mind. Here Paul is probably referring to the Second Coming of Christ, after the Tribulation, after the believers of this age have been judged and rewarded. It's the time when Jesus comes *with all His saints* to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, when He will judge those living on the earth and begin His Millennial Kingdom. The word *αγίων* for *saint* is literally *holy ones*, which could be either angels or humans or both (see Mark 8:38). Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians is that God will make each of them into one of the holy ones who will be with Christ at His Second Coming.

Question:

Whether 3:13 refers to the Rapture or the Second Coming of Christ, the goal of all ministry is *that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God*. What does that mean?

- A. God wants our motives to be perfectly in line with His desires.
- B. Christ will make us passionate about serving God.
- C. The goal is to be sinless before God.

Answer:

A is correct. The heart is often a figure for our motives. Blamelessness and holiness are measurements against some standard, and here the standard is *before our God*. So the goal of all ministry is for people to have motives which please God. B is incorrect because *heart* here is a reference to motives not passion. C is partially correct in that sinlessness is a part of holiness. But it does not account for the positive aspect of *hearts without blame*.

Chapter 4

4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.

4:2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

4:1 *Λοιπὸν οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ, καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον.*

4:2 *οἴδατε γὰρ τίνας παραγγελίας ἐδώκαμεν ὑμῖν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.*

The specific request of verse 1 is that they *παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ*, literally: *received from us how you ought to walk and please God*. There is no word for *instruction*, although that is implied. And the NASV (*just as you actually do walk*) is not in the text. The last phrase *ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον*, literally: *that you abound more* (or NASV *that you excel still more*), shows once again the spiritual life to be a constant, continual, ongoing process of development.

The operative word in verse 2 is *παραγγελίας* (NASV *commandments*). The Louw and Nida lexicon says this word is: *an announcement as to what must be done—order, instruction, command*. Actually,

this is not the common word for command but the word for *angel* or *messenger* combined with the word *according to* or *from*. It assumes instruction coming as if from an angel or special messenger. So Paul is not referring to the commands of the Mosaic Law or the Ten Commandments but the instruction of the apostles for the church. But the word also carries the force of a commandment in the sense that the apostolic instruction was not optional. Its specific precepts were to be kept as commands for the church age.

Question:

What is the best interpretation of 4:1-2?

- A. I should keep the commandments given in the Bible.
- B. Christians should keep the commandments given to the church in the New Testament.
- C. The Thessalonians should keep the commandments given to them by the Apostle Paul.

Answer:

C is correct. A and B are incorrect because they are applications, not interpretations. Of those, B is a correct application.

*4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;
4:4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,
4:5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;
4:6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.
4:7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.
4:8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*

4:3 Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ αγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας,
4:4 εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν αγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ,
4:5 μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν,
4:6 τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, διότι ἕκδικος κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων, καθὼς καὶ προείπαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ διεμαρτυράμεθα.
4:7 οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ ἀλλ' ἐν αγιασμῷ.
4:8 τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἀθετῶν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν τὸν [καὶ] διδόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς.

Verse 3 begins this paragraph with another one of the many warnings in the Bible about *fornication* (πορνείας). Louw and Nida define this word as: *to engage in sexual immorality of any kind, often with the implication of prostitution — to engage in illicit sex, to commit fornication, sexual immorality, fornication, prostitution*. It is also the word used to categorize homosexuality (Jude 7). So it is a general word for any improper sex, but it is the primary word for fornication. [In English, we get the word *pornography* from this word.] The attitude of the apostle toward this is given in his word ἀπέχεσθαι *to restrain from, to not do, to avoid doing, to keep from doing* (Louw and Nida).

In verses 4-8, Paul gives five reasons why all believers should stay completely away from πορνείας

1. In order to possess your own body in holiness and honor. So it is a matter of doing what is best for your own body (verse 4).
2. Because the ἐπιθυμίας, *passion* or *desire*, which unbelievers consider normal, good, and healthy (as depicted today in, say, movies and novels) is characteristic of those *who do not know God* (verse 5).

3. Because it transgresses and defrauds another person. Paul uses the word *brother*, which would be one man committing some kind of sexual immorality against another man (such as committing adultery with his wife). But I assume from the general nature of the context Paul is using the word of anyone you involved in πορνείας. For example, when you commit fornication with your girlfriend, you defraud and transgress your girlfriend (verse 6).
4. Because the Lord is the avenger against anyone who violates another with sexual immorality (verse 6). Sex is always presented in the Bible surrounded by warnings and condemnations. The idea that “God has created sex, so it’s basically good” overlooks the fact that everything God created is perverted by the Fall of Adam and Eve. God will judge the perversions.
5. Because sexual immorality is contrary to what God has called us to be. It is a rejection of God, who gives us the Holy Spirit. This is probably why we see so much demon activity connected with sexual perversions (verses 7-8).

Question:

The best application of the warnings about immorality in 4:1-8 would be:

- A. It would be best if all marriages were arranged by parents, because self-arranged marriages are all based on romance which leads to, or comes from, looking to lust.
- B. Romance is always sex-oriented, so it has no place outside of marriage.
- C. Courtship (romance leading to marriage) is biblical, but dating (romance for it’s own sake) is not.

Answer:

C is correct. This passage does not discuss the subject of romance before marriage, so we have to try to get into the mind of Paul and consider the Bible in general to answer it. Since Paul is against any sexual immorality and dating for the sake of dating is only to satisfy sexual urges, it would seem that it should be avoided. Courtship, however, is dating for the sake of finding a wife and the Song of Solomon would seem to say romance (which includes sexual attraction) is a part of it. A is incorrect because it leaves no room for legitimate romance as a basis for marriage. There is nothing wrong with parent-arranged marriages, but they should not be because all romance is immoral. B is incorrect. Although romance is sex-oriented, it is not illegitimate when it does not involve fornication and it is leading toward marriage.

4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

4:10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,

4:9 Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους,

4:10 καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε αὐτὸ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς [τοὺς] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ. Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον

In verses 9 and 10, Paul moves to one of his favorite subjects: φιλαδελφίας, *the love of the brethren*. Here, he defines it with the words τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους, *the love of one another*. So ἀγαπή is used to define φιλεῶ, establishing a strong connection between the two most basic Greek words for love. Paul considers this something θεοδίδακτο, *God taught*. It is something which is built into believers at salvation by God. So, for example, when you run into a believer while traveling, one who you have never met before, you have an immediate fellowship which is *God taught*. But, like all virtues, it can be perverted, hardened, and must be developed.

Verse 10 is very significant in describing φιλαδελφίας, Paul commends them for practicing it *in all Macedonia*. In other words, it was not just a love of Thessalonian believers, nor even a prioritizing of those believers. It was a love of the brothers in Philippi and Berea, and anywhere else they went and led people to Christ. The point is: Christianity is not ever to be a one-church or one- organization thing. When fellowship is confined to one organization, it results in stagnation or perversion. For example, if those who died drinking poison Cool Aid in the Jim Jones massacre had belonged to, and extended their realm of fellowship to, even two groups instead of just one, it is likely that the tragedy would not have happened.

Question:

From 4:9-10 what would Paul be most opposed to?

- A. Local church membership.
- B. Attending a mega church
- C. Being on the finance committee of a local church.

Answer:

A is correct. Local church membership tends to say I am not a member of another church. But Paul commends the Thessalonians for loving the brethren in all the churches equally. Local church membership tends to exclude participation with believers outside “your” church. B and C are incorrect because neither exclude participation in other local churches as much as membership.

4:11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,

4:12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

4:11 καὶ φιλοτιμείσθαι ἡσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, καθὼς ὑμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν,,

4:12 ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρείαν ἔχητε.

Verse 11 gives three commands for every day living:

- ἡσυχάζειν, *remain quiet, or be at rest.*
- πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια *do, or accomplish what is your own.*
- ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, *work with your own hands.*

The idea of the first command is to be at rest with your surroundings. Be active and upsetting with respect to the gospel message, not when it comes to your neighbors, society, politics or other things of this world. The second command is about accomplishing something business wise. Do your own job well. The third idea is to work with your own hands in the sense that Paul did when he made tents. Provide some product or service which will benefit the community where you live.

Verse 12 gives two reasons for the three commands of verse 11. They are to:

- περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω, *walk honestly with outsiders, and*
- μηδενὸς χρείαν ἔχητε, *not have need.*

The general idea is to not be a financial problem in your community. Be honest in your business dealing with unbelievers and do not be lazy or negligent so that you are a burden or a problem in your city.

Question:

What is the best interpretation of 4:11-12?

- A. Christians should work with their own hands and provide useful goods or services for the community.
- B. The Thessalonians were not to be lazy.
- C. In order to behave properly before outsiders, we should work quietly and lead a quiet life.

Answer:

B is correct. This is a good general summary of what Paul is saying. A and C are incorrect because they are applications not interpretations.

4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

4:13 Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπησθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα.

4:14 εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ.

4:15 Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας·

4:16 ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον,

4:17 ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἔσόμεθα.

4:18 Ὡστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις.

This paragraph is the primary description of what has come to be called the Rapture of the church (the other major passages are John 14:1-3, and 1 Corinthians 15:50ff). We shall consider it verse by verse.

In verse 13, Paul tells them he does not want them to be ἀγνοεῖν, *ignorant*, about those who have previously died in Christ. In other words, it is important to be informed about future prophecy and what happens to the dead and the facts about the resurrection from the dead. Many ignore this subject today, but Paul sees it as crucial for their mental perspective as believers. Their understanding about what happens to the dead and what will happen to them, whether they die or are Raptured, is necessary for proper spiritual growth.

Verse 14 tells the Thessalonians something they already knew: *that Jesus died and rose again*. Then Paul tells them something they didn't know—*God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus*. So, those who have died will actually return with Christ for this event, but neither they nor He will actually come all the way to the earth (verse 17).

Verse 15 tells us that those who are still living when this event occurs will not receive their resurrected body before those who have died (1 Corinthians 15:50ff). The dead will *precede* the living in the matter of the resurrection.

Verses 16 and 17 describe the procedure for this.

- First, *the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God.*
- Second, *the dead in Christ will rise first*, (that is, they will receive their resurrected bodies).
- Third, *we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*
- Fourth, *we shall always be with the Lord.*

We do not know who hears the shout, the voice, and the trumpet. Presumably it is just the believers, and possibly only those who have already died and are coming with Christ at the Rapture. They will raise first. But they are already with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8), and the dead are already in some recognizable bodily form (Matthew 17:3; Luke 16:19-31).

These believers who have died, and are in the heavenlies in some bodily form, have not yet received the resurrected body which will be theirs for all eternity. Concerning that body, Paul says: *For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "death is swallowed up in victory ..."* (1 Corinthians 15:53-54). So as an old Christian saying goes: "If you believe in Jesus, this life is as bad as it gets. If you do not believe in Jesus, this life is as good as it gets." The problem we face daily is the mortality of our bodies. We are physically mortals. For this we envy the angels because they are immortals. But this new body changes all that. At the time of the Rapture, we of this church or grace age will *put on immortality*. Then, finally, for us believers, *death is swallowed up in victory*.

We should also notice that the movement for believers is very different from the Second Coming of Christ. At the Rapture, we go up to meet Christ in the clouds, and from there to be with Christ in the air. At the Second Coming, the believers living through the Tribulation period don't go anywhere but await the judgment of Christ after He comes to earth (Matthew 25).

The descriptive words for this event we call *the Rapture* come from the phrase in verse 16 ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς, *at once (or at the same time) together with Him*. The word *rapture* comes from the Medieval Latin word *raptura* meaning *to seize or carry off*. It may not be the best word for this event. It is not a biblical word or even a Greek word. Nonetheless, it is the word normally used to label this event, so we are stuck with it.

Question:

Which passages describe the same event as 4:13-18?

- A. Matthew 24:40-41
- B. 1 Corinthians 15:50-57
- C. John 14:1-3
- D. Revelation 19:11-15
- E. 2 Thessalonians 2:8
- F. Zechariah 14:4

Answer:

B and C are correct since they describe the Rapture or what will happen at the Rapture. The other passages refer to the Second Coming of Christ after the Tribulation.

Also notice, after this event *we shall always be with the Lord*. And this information was to *comfort one another*, unlike the Second Coming of Christ, which is an event of judgment and horror for those living on the earth. It could be argued that the Second Coming is not a horror for believers, but the trumpet gathers them from the various parts of the earth to a judgment on the earth, not to meet the Lord in the air (Matthew 24:29-31).

Chapter 5

5:1 *Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.*

5:1 Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι.

Paul begins Chapter 5 with the words: Περὶ δε, *But concerning*. This indicates Paul is continuing the subject of the previous chapter, but changing to a different area within that subject.

Next, he uses the two most common Greek words for *time*. Paul is not referring to two different kinds of time. The point is to make it clear he is referring to end times prophecy. Apparently, the reason they need no instruction about it is because Paul taught on the subject when he was there. This tells us that end times prophecy was part of Paul's initial instruction of new believers, possibly even part of his evangelistic teaching.

By way of application, very early in a person's Christian walk he should be taught eschatology. **Eschatology** is the study of last things (from the Greek word ἐσχάτος, eschatos, for *last*). It is simply a more precise way to denote the study of future prophecy and future resurrections and judgments. This will tend to orient a new believer to heaven instead of earth, and that will govern how he views the spiritual life.

5:2 *For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.*

5:2 αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται.

Verse 2 introduces a subject which is taught in both testaments, and apparently, also taught to the Thessalonians when Paul was with them: ἡμέρα κυρίου, (*the*) **Day of the Lord**.

Ryrie says:

Three facets of the Day of the Lord, are discernable: (1) the historical, that is, God's intervention in the affairs of Israel (Zeph. 1:14-18; Joel 1:15) and heathen nations (Isa. 13:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3); (2) the illustrative, whereby an historical incident represents a partial fulfillment of the eschatological Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-11; Isa. 13:6-13); (3) the eschatological. This eschatological "day" includes the time of the Great Tribulation (Isa. 2:12-19; 4:1), the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:30-32), and the Millennium (Isa. 4:2; 12; 19:23-25; Jer. 30:7-9) ["Ryrie Study Bible," p. 1392].

Here, Paul is using *the Day of the Lord* in the third sense Ryrie has listed. So here *the Day of the Lord* is that time when God intervenes in history in order to bring about specific judgments. For us (and the

Thessalonians), there only remains the last, or eschatological, *Day of the Lord*. This time of God's future intervention will begin with the start of the Great Tribulation, continue through the Second Coming of Christ, and extend through the millennial reign of Christ on earth, to the destruction of this earth.

It will take the world by surprise because the Antichrist will be promising peace and offering a prosperous wealthy system of material opulence (Revelation 18). After taking over a ten-nation European/Roman western empire (Daniel 2:41-45; 7:19-27; Revelation 17:12-18), the Antichrist will make peace with the world and finally offer a peace treaty to Israel (Daniel 9:27). The signing of this peace treaty with Israel will begin the clock ticking on the 7-year Great Tribulation, the beginning of the Day of the Lord. But because the church has been taken away in the Rapture (which Paul has just described in the last chapter), there will be no general awareness of the biblical teaching so *the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night*.

Question:

The *day of the Lord* begins with:

- A. The rapture.
- B. The tribulation.
- C. The Second Coming of Christ.

Answer:

B is correct. The *day of the Lord* begins with the 7-year Tribulation period. A is incorrect because the Rapture is before the *day of the Lord*. C is incorrect because the *day of the Lord* is already going on at the Second Coming of Christ.

5:3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

5:3 ὅταν λέγωσιν εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, τότε αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὄλεθρος ὡσπερ ἡ ὥδιν τῆ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν.

Verse 3 gives two of the appealing promises of the Antichrist's Babylon, *Peace and safety*. They are the people of the secular godless world who believe in the evolution of man to a better and higher state of being through technology (Isaiah 2:12-17). They are living longer, more informed, materially comforted, practicing immorality without the consequences of their sin (like fornication, homosexuality, pride, and greed), seemingly erased by technology and social maneuvering (like the acceptance of abortion, homosexual marriages, cures for sexually transmitted diseases and the tolerance of all religion). Everything is going along beautifully for the godless world. Referring to the Antichrist's Babylon, John writes: *For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality* (Revelation 18:3).

So all they need is *Peace and safety*. And the Antichrist will offer that by way of a treaty which will include the 666 mark of the beast on their hand or forehead in order to participate in the global financial network (Revelation 13:16-18). This will be a promise of what the world has sought for throughout the centuries, and the secular liberals have said is possible by human effort. It will be world peace and prosperity without moral restrictions.

Also, this world peace and prosperity, in the midst of unprecedented global immorality, will not end gradually. It will not slowly fall apart, like empires of the past. Paul says: *destruction will come upon*

them suddenly. John writes: *in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire* (Revelation 18:8). This is the beginning of the Day of the Lord, the Great Tribulation of which Jesus said: *For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will* (Matthew 24:21).

*5:4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;
5:5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;
5:6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.*

*5:4 ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτῃ καταλάβῃ·
5:5 πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας. Οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτός οὐδὲ σκότους·
5:6 ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς οἱ λοιποὶ ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν.*

The point of verses 4-6 is, most of the world is living in darkness. Darkness is ignorance and sin. And the ignorance is concerning the revelation of God. But the Thessalonians, because they are believers of this age, are not among those who will be overtaken by the Day of the Lord like a thief. The reason they will not be overcome is not because they will figure it out and prepare for it. There is no way to prepare for the wrath of the Tribulation. The Thessalonians, and all believers of this age, will not be overtaken by the Great Tribulation because they will be Raptured out of the world before it happens.

In verse 6, Paul says, not only are the Thessalonian believers not appointed to wrath, they are able to see it coming. True believers have a conviction of the Holy Spirit which allows them to discern the movements in the society around them toward darkness (ignorance of the Word of God and sin) and away from light (the Word of God). Believers can discern this because they are not of the darkness. Those who participate in the darkness are like the frog in the slowly boiling pot who cannot discern the oncoming heat.

Verse 6 also has three interesting commands:

1. *καθεύδωμεν*, this is the word for “sleep,” in the sense of go to bed and rest. What is interesting is that this is not the word for sleep used as a metaphor for death in 4:13 and 15 (*κοιμῶω*, *koimao* from which English gets the word “coma”). The command here, also a metaphor, is to not be unaware of where the world is going morally.
2. *γρηγορῶμεν*, to be alert or awake. This is in contrast to the first word, but it implies more than not sleeping. It means to have your senses sharp and sensitive to what is happening.
3. *νήφωμεν*. Thayer says this word means: “*to be calm and collected in spirit; to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect*: 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8... *unto (the offering of) prayer*, 1 Peter 4:7.” This word is also used for the opposite of drunkenness as in verses 7-8. So Paul does not call for things like political action, or public outrage, but a contemplative awareness to keep the believers from following the darkness of the world.

Question:

In 5:4-6, Paul says concerning the day of the Lord: *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief... let us be alert and sober.* Why did they need to be alert and sober?

- A. Because the Day of the Lord might start at any time.
- B. Because they were to be aware of the prophetic times as they unfolded.
- C. So the believers alive at that time would not be overtaken *like a thief*.

Answer:

B is correct. The alertness was so they would be aware of biblical prophecy so they could discern the signs of the times as they occurred. A is incorrect because the Day of the Lord could not begin until the

Antichrist is revealed first (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). C is incorrect because Paul is addressing what these Thessalonians should be doing.

5:7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.

5:8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

5:7 Οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν καὶ οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν·
5:8 ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας·

Verse 7 reiterates the idea already made both for emphasis and to introduce verse 8. There is, however, a general point here. We are not night people, we are day people, in the sense that what we do and say is truth not lies. Our message is open to examination not private experiences, available for everyone to look at, not a private cult. What we say is a rational look at reality, not something just understood by drunk people at night.

Verse 8 repeats this word νήφωμεν (*sober*, sub-point #3 of verse 6 above). Then Paul gives the reason for this soberness in the midst of a continually darker world. It is the basic Christian attributes of faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Here he also mixes in some of what he would later describe to the Ephesians as *the full armor of God* (Ephesians 6:13-17). The point is, when we are armed with faith, hope, and love, we do not need to rant and rave or call for people to be involved socially or politically. Faith in the truth of the Word of God, hope in an eternal future with God in a resurrected body, and a love for other believers is a foundation which will keep us alert to the moral decay around us and allow us to discern what is creeping into the church around us.

5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

5:10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

5:9 ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

5:10 τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορώμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν.

5:11 Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἰς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε.

Verse 9 is one of the greatest assurances that the church will not go through the Tribulation. Paul says God has not ἔθετο, *destined us for ὀργὴν, wrath*. The word ἔθετο is an aorist, middle, from τιθημι, a common word meaning: *to be made, appointed, or assigned*. So, an amplified translation might be *God Himself has once for all made us [believers] in such a way that we are not appointed to wrath*. Wrath being the angry judgment of God to be poured out on the earth, in order to satisfy the violation of His holiness. But Revelation 6, the first chapter describing the Tribulation period, is called the wrath of God (Revelation 6:16-17).

Some argue that Revelation 6 is an overview of the whole 7-year Tribulation, and the wrath isn't until the end of the chapter. This would allow for a Rapture in the later parts of the Tribulation or after it, just prior to, or as part of, the Second Coming. Possibly. But Revelation chapters 4 and 5 lead up to chapter 6 with the Lamb of God, who was slain, having the authority to open the book which was sealed. And that whole book represents the judgments of God upon the earth. So it seems that the whole 7-year Tribulation is a time which the believers of this age (the church, the *ecclesia*) are not destined for.

In contrast to the wrath of God, the church is destined for the salvation of God through Christ. The whole point of salvation is not simply that we go to heaven but that we are saved from the wrath of God because He poured out that wrath upon Christ on the cross.

Verse 11 is another indicator that the church will not go through the Tribulation. This whole message is one which should encourage and build up believers. *παρακαλεῖτε* is a very common word meaning *to beseech, exhort, or console*. *οἰκοδομεῖτε* is the common word for building a house or any structure.

Question:

When Paul says *God has not destined us for wrath (5:9)*, he means:

- A. The trouble we experience on earth is not from the wrath of God.
- B. The trouble the earth will experience is not for the church.
- C. The trouble unbelievers will experience in hell is not for us believers.

Answer:

B is correct. The alertness was so they would be aware of biblical prophecy, so they could discern the signs of the times as they occurred. A is incorrect because the Day of the Lord could not begin until the Antichrist is revealed first (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). C is incorrect because Paul is addressing what these Thessalonians should be doing.

In verses 12-22, Paul gives the Thessalonians 16 *Ἐρωτῶμεν*, *requests, things he asks them to do*. These are not simply suggestions, since they come from an apostle. But rather than list them as commands, Paul gives them as things he requests they do if they want to be close to the heart of God. Typical of Paul's lists, they overlap somewhat and are a bit repetitive. But that is no accident. Paul does that for emphasis and impact. Also, you may wish to group some of these together, and some are a contrast with the previous request. I have separated them here so that we might better observe each. I shall quote the passage with my numbering of Paul's requests.

- (1) *5:12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 5:13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.*
- (2) *Live in peace with one another.*
- (3) *5:14 We urge you, brethren admonish the unruly,*
- (4) *encourage the fainthearted,*
- (5) *help the weak,*
- (6) *be patient with everyone.*
- (7) *5:15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but*
- (8) *always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.*
- (9) *5:16 Rejoice always;*
- (10) *5:17 pray without ceasing;*
- (11) *5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*
- (12) *5:19 Do not quench the Spirit;*
- (13) *5:20 do not despise prophetic utterances.*
- (14) *5:21 But examine everything carefully;*
- (15) *hold fast to that which is good;*
- (16) *5:22 abstain from every form of evil.*

5:12 Ερωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς

5:13 καὶ ἠγείσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν. εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.

5:14 Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους, παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους, ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἀσθενῶν, μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας.

5:15 ὁρᾶτε μὴ τις κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τινὶ ἀποδῶ, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε [καὶ] εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας.

5:16 Πάντοτε χαίρετε,

5:17 ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε,

5:18 ἐν παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε· τοῦτο γὰρ θέλημα θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς.

5:19 τὸ πνεῦμα μὴ σβέννυτε,

5:20 προφητείας μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε,

5:21 πάντα δὲ δοκιμάζετε, τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε,

5:22 ἀπὸ παντὸς εἴδους πονηροῦ ἀπέχεσθε.

(1) The first of Paul’s requests is his longest, and it has to do with leadership. Paul describes their leaders as:

- τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν, *those who work* (literally; *labor hard*) among you,
- προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ, [those who] *lead* (or *administrate*) you in the Lord,
- νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς, [those who] *warn or admonish* you.

We should notice that Paul describes leadership, not with positions such as deacons or elders, but with functions, like working, leading, and admonishing. Also, notice the work of leadership is not just “being followed” but leading in the direction of the lordship of Christ, and it includes warning them and/or admonishing those who are led.

The response to these leaders should be to *know* them (εἰδέναι, NASV *appreciate* – verse 12), and to *esteem them very highly in love*.

Question:

According to 5:12,

- A. Pastors and priests are not leaders.
- B. Pastors and priests are in a position of leadership.
- C. Pastors and priests should be leaders.
- D. All of the above.
- E. None of the above.

Answer:

E is correct. None of the above statements are correct for the following reasons: A is incorrect because some pastors and priests are indeed leaders as Paul describes leadership in this passage. B is incorrect because no “position” of leadership is mentioned in this passage. Also, the only “positions” mentioned in the New Testament are elders and deacons. C is incorrect because it says if we create an organization and appoint officers, and give them positions and titles, we can assume they have the responsibility, gifts, and calling to be the leaders described in this passage. Therefore D is also incorrect.

(2) This request is a common one, literally; *have peace among yourselves*.

(3) Next, he gives them an exhortation for discipline, *admonish the unruly*, or it could be translated: *we beseech you brethren to warn the disorderly (or lazy)*. Notice the continual emphasis in Paul's instructions about correcting teaching and behavior which is wrong, not just teaching what is right.

Question:

How do we *admonish the unruly* and at the same time *Live in peace with one another* (5:13-14)?

- A. There must always be a compromise because the unruly will never be at peace when they are admonished.
- B. We must *admonish the unruly*, not live in peace with them. We live in peace with those who are not unruly.
- C. Living in *peace with one another* includes living in peace with *the unruly* by admonishing them.

Answer:

C is correct. Admonishment is the way of living at peace with the unruly. Something must be done about the unruly which allows them to repent and change, while keeping their unruliness from being a leaven which leavens the whole body of believers. A is incorrect because compromise just lets sin into the church. B is incorrect because it assumes we can just exclude the unruly from fellowship without admonishing them in a process aimed at them being part of the church.

(4) Then he gives the balance to that: *encourage the discouraged*. The word is ὀλιγοψύχους, a combination of the words for *small, little* or *few*, and the word for *soul*. So it is literally, though awkwardly, *small souled*. *Depressed* might be a good translation.

(5) Five is *help* (or *support* or *seek after*) *the weak*.

(6) Where the previous three were targeted at specific kinds of people, six pertains to every believer, *be patient with all*. Patience is a virtue, in and of itself, regardless of the object of the patience because God is patient (Psalm 86:15).

(7) Not paying back evil for evil is because revenge is God's job, not our job (Romans 12:19).

(8) Always seeking good for everyone is also because goodness is an attribute of God. Notice, however, what is good for people is not necessarily what they think is good for them.

(9) *Always rejoice*. This is a present, active, imperative verb. It's like; *I'm commanding you to keep on rejoicing*. So joy is not something you find but something you do. And it is not some place you arrive at but something you keep on doing. Joy and happiness are not distinguished in the Bible, but both are a state of mind and spirit, not physical states of being. Physical or circumstantial joy/happiness is only pursuable not attainable in this world.

(10) *Pray without ceasing* is another continual command. And like #**(9)** it is a mental/spiritual condition, not a physical activity. Paul is not suggesting they be on their knees all day, but he is urging them to be in communion with God all day.

(11) εὐχαριστεῖτε, *The giving of thanks* is another word often used for prayer. Here Paul uses it to describe the proper ongoing attitude of the believer. It is in contrast to pride, the satanic response which separates value from God. Thankfulness to God in all things gives all value to God.

(12) The command *Do not quench the Spirit* is fascinating in that it reveals that such a thing is possible. The Holy Spirit, given by God, is quenchable. That means I can resist what He does. For example, the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin (John 16:8), but that does not mean I will necessarily respond to that conviction by confessing my sin (1 John 1:9).

(13) *Do not despise prophetic utterances* for us means to obey the New Testament. But for them, before the New Testament canon was complete, they had to listen for *prophetic utterances* from God given through tongues or prophecy.

(14) The procedure, for evaluating those *prophetic utterances* to see if they are from God, is outlined in 1 Corinthians 14:6-33. Here Paul tells them to δοκιμάζετε, *examine*, or *prove* things. It is the word from which English gets the word “document.” The idea was clarified by Thomas Aquinas, who told the church: revelation must come from God, but it must be understood by reason (not a direct quote).

(15) The point of the last half of verse 21 is to hold fast to those prophecies which you have examined and determined to be good. We don't have to determine the goodness of prophecies because we have a complete canon of Scripture. So we just have to hold fast to them.

(16) Verse 22, *abstain from every form of evil*, could be a continuation of verse 21, but more likely it is a separate principle to be understood as pertaining to all evil, not just evil *prophetic utterances*. εἶδους has the idea of *form* or *appearance*. It is an exhortation to avoid not just what is actually evil but what a casual observer would consider to be evil. However, the word πονηρου, *wickedness*, or *evil* is biblical evil, not social evil. Society might define good things as evil (such as intolerance for homosexuality, abortion, Islam, and women clergy).

Question:

What is the best application of the sentence in 5:19-22?

- A. The Thessalonians were to welcome *prophetic utterances*, and examine them to be sure they were truly from the Holy Spirit, because the canon of Scripture was not yet closed, and the Spirit was still giving revelations to people in Paul's day.
- B. Any teaching which is new or unfamiliar should be discussed by the church to see if it is *that which is good*.
- C. We should not disregard *prophetic utterances* today because they might be from the Holy Spirit. We should examine them to see if they are indeed from God.
- D. All of the above.
- E. A and B are true.
- F. B and C are true.

Answer:

F is true, which is to say B and C are true. This passage should be applied to all new or unfamiliar teaching in the church. It seems from 1 Corinthians 13:8 and Revelation 22:18 that God is not giving more *prophetic utterances* today. However, God can do whatever He pleases, and if you believe He is, then you should follow the instructions in 1 Corinthians 14. A is incorrect because it is an interpretation, not an application.

5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5:23 Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης αγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὁλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθείη.

Verse 23 is another one of Paul's magnificent benedictions. This one is significant in several ways. For one, this chapter (like all the other chapters in the book) ends with a view to future prophetic events. Specifically, Paul prays for their entire sanctification at the coming of Christ. This coming is probably a reference to the Rapture described in Chapter 4:13-18.

Notice that this is not a sanctification the Thessalonians are to work toward. Neither is this the positional sanctification they had at their salvation which allowed them to become children of God (John 1:12). This is an ultimate sanctification, which God Himself will perform upon the believers at His coming.

This is also a verse which furthers what is often called the tricotomist view of man. Here there are three areas of a human, all of which require sanctification: body, soul, and spirit.

Question:

What does it mean to *sanctify you entirely* in 5:23?

- A. It means we are to make our body, soul, and spirit holy before God.
- B. It means God will make us holy in heaven.
- C. It means God is in the process of making us holy now.

Answer:

B is correct. The context is our sanctification (or holiness), which God will perform at the coming of Christ (probably a reference to the Rapture of the church). So B best fits this passage. A is incorrect because the passage is about what God will do, not what we should do. C is incorrect because the context is about what will happen at the coming of Christ (ultimate sanctification), not what God is doing now (experiential sanctification).

5:24 *Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.*

5:24 πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει.

Verse 24 is not part of the benediction, but it continues the same thought. The point is the immediate sanctification of the believers, which was their position in Christ at salvation, and their experiential walk as they matured will be their ultimate state. This not by their own efforts but by the faithfulness of God who called them.

5:25 *Brethren, pray for us.*

5:26 *Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.*

5:27 *I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.*

5:28 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

5:25 Ἀδελφοί, προσεύχεσθε [καὶ] περὶ ἡμῶν.

5:26 Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς πάντας ἐν φιλήματι αγίῳ.

5:27 Ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν κύριον ἀναγνωσθῆναι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς.

5:28 Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μεθ' ὑμῶν.

Paul ends the letter with three requests:

1. *pray for us*
2. *Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss*
3. *have this letter read to all the brethren*

The second request is often given as a reason to ignore Scripture for cultural reasons. The difference between this verse and, say, the submission of wives in Ephesians 5 is there is no theological case made for using a kiss to greet one another. The verse does need to be applied, however, as to the importance of personal greetings.

The third request shows that Paul meant for his epistles to be instruction for the whole church—including us.

Question:

What does Paul mean in 5:27 when he says *have this letter read to all the brethren*?

- A. They were to read this letter to all the Christians they ministered to in all the cities where they traveled.
- B. We are to share this letter with everyone we can in the universal church.
- C. We should read this letter in the gatherings of our local churches.
- D. All of the above.

Answer:

A is correct. Paul's instruction is for this letter to be read to everyone they ministered to. B and C are incorrect because they are applications, not interpretations, and the question asks for the meaning of the passage, which is an interpretation not an application. Therefore D is also incorrect.