

1 Thessalonians

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Chapter 1

In this chapter, Paul praises this G-dly Thessalonian congregation as one that has a mighty testimony. Not only are they influencing those around them, but they also, unusually, have a testimony and an impact in faraway places. This is what G-d wants for His people. He wants to use us to be a blessing to those around us, but also use us to be a blessing to others outside of our usual sphere of influence (eg. Bringing Biblical truth to others while we are travelling). We need to be faithful to share G-d's Word with whomever we encounter. We need to have an expectation that, as we share G-d's truth with others, great things are going to happen.

Verse 1: *"Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. To the congregation of the Thessalonians, in G-d the Father and the L-rd Messiah Yeshua: Grace to you and peace from G-d our Father and the L-rd Messiah Yeshua."*

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: This epistle begins by telling us who the authors of it are. Paul's name is mentioned first, which means that he is probably the primary author.

Silvanus: Some Bibles translate his name as 'Silas'.

G-d the Father and the L-rd Messiah Yeshua: In this epistle, G-d is frequently referred to as 'Father' and Yeshua is referred to as 'L-rd'. A father is a provider. When G-d is revealed in the Scripture as Father it is a reminder to us that He provides those things that we need to serve Him, to walk with Him, to live in this world. The way that we find access to these things is by recognizing Yeshua, not just that He is our Saviour but that He is our L-rd – we recognise the authority of Yeshua in our lives, and we submit to His authority. When we recognize the authority of Messiah it brings G-d's provision into our lives.

Grace: Grace moves us into the will of G-d. It saves us, but after salvation it moves in our lives to mature us and compel us to be in G-d's will (Titus 2:11-13).

Peace: Peace is the outcome, the by-product or result, of being in G-d's will.

Verse 2: *"We give thanks to G-d always concerning all of you, making mention of you in our prayers,"*

Give thanks ... always: There is a consistency to the prayers of these three men. They are continuing to affirm this G-dly congregation that G-d is using beyond their normal boundaries.

Our prayers: These are men of prayer. They pray without ceasing (*always*), they pray daily, and they pray for others (as they rejoice in seeing the growth, maturity, and testimony of the congregations of G-d as He works within them).

Verse 3: *“Without ceasing, making mention of your work of faith, labour of love, and perseverance of hope in our L-rd Messiah Yeshua before G-d our Father.”*

Work of faith: Faith is not idle; it works in order to produce an outcome (James 2:14-26). The work that faith does is good deeds – deeds that manifest faith. When we are walking in faith, we are going to do the work of G-d. We cannot do His work without faith.

Faith is related to truth. When we put truth into our lives it becomes an action. We are servants of G-d. A servant of G-d DOES G-d’s work.

Labour of love: They are not working or labouring for G-d out of a sense of obligation, duty, or compulsion. They desire to do the work of the L-rd. It is a joy for them. They love to do it.

Perseverance: Endurance. Staying the course.

Hope: Hope is believing in the written promises of G-d. When we have hope in the promises of G-d we stay the course, as we have a desire to inherit what we have heard about but have not yet seen. Faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17).

In our L-rd Messiah Yeshua before G-d: It is not only the pursuit of the promises of G-d but also the pursuit of the L-rd Himself. As we serve G-d, we grow in our knowledge of Him. As we serve Him, we are in His Presence more. Therefore, we experience more of His love, more of His provision, guidance, and influence in our lives. Those who experience the Presence of G-d NEVER want to walk away from it or deny their faith. We see the faithfulness of G-d carried out in the will of G-d when we are about His business.

Verse 4: *“knowing, beloved brothers, your election (that came) by G-d.”*

Election: This is a very important Biblical term that simply means ‘chosen’. When Messiah used that term of election he spoke primarily of the Jewish people (the descendants of Jacob) - those who were in covenant with G-d. When Paul speaks about election, he is speaking about it regarding all believers – Jew and Gentile alike. Many people falsely teach that G-d (who does not desire anyone to go to hell – Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9) chooses some and rejects others. They say that to those whom He chooses He gives irresistible grace – meaning: grace that causes them (forces them) to be regenerated which then leads to them having faith in G-d and not rejecting Him.

Biblically, it is salvation that leads to regeneration – and NOT the other way around. It is only AFTER salvation, once we are IN Messiah, that we are called ‘chosen’ or ‘elect’. Election does not apply to those who do not have faith in Yeshua.

Verse 5: *“For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know how we came unto you for your wellbeing.”*

Our gospel: The gospel brought about a change to the Thessalonians. When they received the gospel, it resulted in them being called ‘Chosen’ by G-d. Everyone is either chosen or rejected by their response to the gospel. This does not mean that we play a role in our salvation (our salvation was achieved eternally by Messiah, by the work that He did on the cross). Responding to the gospel by saying ‘yes’ is not a work. Saying ‘yes’ is simply receiving the gospel by faith. Once we have received the gospel, by faith, we are going to be chosen by G-d. G-d, being omniscient – knowing everything – did choose us before the foundations of the world (Ephesians 1:4), because He knew who, out of their own free will, were going

to accept or reject Messiah. The key is this: there is no being chosen apart from being IN Messiah.

Power: We have the power, by means of the Holy Spirit, to demonstrate and to bear witness to G-d's order (His will) for our lives.

Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit works in our lives to bring about G-d's righteousness - not just being declared righteousness, so that we can enter into the Kingdom of G-d, but righteous behaviour. He brings about order in our lives.

Much assurance: Full and complete assurance. This is important. When we receive the gospel, we should have total assurance that what G-d has said to us about being saved is true – we are a Kingdom person, a saint. We do not need to have doubt. We do not need to question. We have full assurance because G-d does not lie.

How (in what manner) we came unto you: Paul wanted them to remember the witness that his life had been as he had come among them. His lifestyle had been a testimony to them.

Verse 6: *“And you became imitators of us and of the L-rd, having received the Word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.”*

You became imitators: This was an outcome of the influence that Paul, Timothy, and other believers had had in their lives.

Imitators of us and of the L-rd: They did not only do the things that Paul was doing but they were walking as Messiah would have wanted them to walk. They were living in a way that manifested Messiah's presence in their lives - doing the things that He would do.

Received the Word: This is how they became imitators of Messiah.

Affliction: Literally this is the word for tribulation. Tribulation can work in our lives to bring about change. It gives us a different perspective, which sets us on a different course.

Although G-d is not the author of tribulation, He can use it for a glorious purpose.

The joy of the Holy Spirit: It is through this joy that we have strength (Nehemiah 8:10) and are led to victory. When we are walking with G-d, and the enemy attacks, the Holy Spirit defends, helps, assists, empowers, and gives knowledge to us so that we can have victory.

Verse 7: *“So that you became examples to all the ones believing in Macedonia and Achaia.”*

This group of believers, from Thessaloniki (a Greek port city on the Aegean Sea), had a testimony of impacting these two regions - Macedonia and Achaia. Macedonia was in the north and central portion of Greece, and Achaia was a region in Western Greece.

G-d enabled them to have an impact far beyond their borders. G-d will do that same thing for everyone who walks sincerely in His truth, despite experiencing many tribulations.

Verse 8: *“For from you the Word of the L-rd was sounded, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but also in every place, your faith with G-d went forth, so that we did not have need to speak anything.”*

The Word of the L-rd was sounded: Through their faithfulness the Word of the L-rd was proclaimed.

In every place: Their faith in G-d, and their obedience to Him, impacted people in a variety of places. Being obedient to G-d can bring about great changes – not only impacting our own lives, but also being able to have an impact in the lives of others.

We did not have need to speak anything: Paul could see the impact (outcome or results) that this group of Thessalonian believers had had on other regions. They had served G-d to the extent that when Paul arrived in those regions he did not have to speak or do the ministry as it had already been done. Their faithfulness had had a powerful outcome.

Verse 9: *“For they themselves were our report and how we had entrance to you, and how you turned to G-d from idols to serve the living and true G-d.”*

They: The Thessalonians

We had entrance to you: The Thessalonians had paved a way (so to speak), made entrance easier, into this far away community. Paul and his friends had an open-door access into this region in order to bring about a change in this location.

Idols: Those things that are in conflict to G-d.

You turned to G-d from idols: The service of Paul, Timothy and others impacted many and brought about a change well beyond the confines of this town or this community. People turned away from idols and began to serve G-d.

Verse 10: *“And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Yeshua, who delivers us from the wrath that is coming,”*

Wait for His Son: This will be a Kingdom event. This does not mean that the Kingdom is going to be established when Messiah returns for believers (at the rapture), but it does mean that we can wait with assurance for Him (He is coming to do what He has said He will do) as we are going to enter into the Kingdom of heaven when He does return for us.

Raised from the dead: The resurrection happened 2000 years ago.

Wait for His Son ...Yeshua: We are waiting and watching for Yeshua’s return because it is going to bring about a great benefit for us – rescuing us from the wrath of G-d.

The wrath: This is referring to G-d’s wrath.

Note: What this is telling us is this: If we are a follower of Messiah, and our faith is genuine, it is going to manifest itself and have an impact on others. Not only will it impact others, but it will also have an impact on our own lives - as it will save us from experiencing the pouring out of the wrath of G-d. G-d's wrath is not designated for believers. It is designated for non-believers and for a remnant of the house of Israel. In those difficult times (also called the ‘Time of Jacob’s trouble’ – Jeremiah 30:5-7) the whole house of Israel are going to come to faith (Romans 11:26-27).

Chapter 2

Part 1: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-9

There is an emphasis upon the gospel because it is only through that good news that we can see lives changed, lives brought into what G-d created each person to be. Without the gospel we are without hope. Without the work of Messiah in our lives we are broken eternally and are cut off from the goodness, love, forgiveness, and the victory that G-d wants to share with us.

Verse 1: *“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming unto you was not in vain.”*

You yourselves know: Paul is not telling them something new. He is speaking about something that they know experientially; they have witnessed it first-hand.

Brethren: Paul is writing to this G-dly group of believers in Thessaloniki.

Our coming: Our entrance. Our presence in your midst.

Not in vain: The tense that this is written in reveals to us that their presence among the Thessalonians was not in vain in the past, is still not in vain in the present and will continue to have not been in vain into the future. Paul expects that things are going to be done in the future as they are done now, and as they have been done in the past. He was expecting that his visit there was going to produce fruit. Paul is always mindful of, and praising G-d for, the work that He accomplishes through individuals - in this case, through those who were serving with Paul in this location of Thessaloniki.

Verse 2: *“But after previous suffering, also being mistreated, just as you know, among the Philippians, nevertheless we spoke boldly in our G-d to you the gospel of G-d in much conflict.”*

Previous suffering, also being mistreated: Nothing in this text suggests that Paul had done anything wrong – i.e. not speaking or behaving as he should. Quite the contrary. He had presented the gospel correctly to them, and that had led to his suffering and mistreatment. When he presented the gospel, he had no ulterior motives. He did not want to receive anything from them but wanted to provide them with Biblical truth – the wonderful message of the gospel.

As you know: The brethren from Thessaloniki had witnessed Paul’s suffering and mistreatment.

Philippians: The Philippians came from Philippi.

Spoke...the gospel of G-d in much conflict: When we say ‘yes’ to G-d (we become His disciple and want to serve Him) we can expect to suffer and to be mistreated – just as Paul suffered and was mistreated. There is always opposition to the gospel – to the will and purposes of G-d. The gospel is a message against hell, and those who are committed to the things of the enemy do not want good news - they do not want restoration to G-d. They do not want the power of G-d to be manifested in and through the gospel. The gospel transforms lives. G-d moves through the gospel message to open up the means whereby He will bless individuals (and use others to bless them), but because of that there is much conflict.

Verse 3: *“For our exhortation was not an error or that which was unclean, nor was it trickery.”*

Our exhortation: Paul and his fellow servants came to Thessaloniki (as they did other places) with a purpose - to set things in order, to bring things under G-d's submissive will. We are called to submit to G-d's will, as in doing so we recognize His authority. When we move away from being under G-d's authority we are choosing sin and are inviting shame and defeat into our lives. When we walk submissively to His will, when we recognize His authority in every situation in our lives, when we stand for truth not worrying about the consequences, it is going to bring G-d's presence into that situation - where He will do the work of restoration. There will be conflict, we will be treated poorly, we will suffer but, in the end, if we are submissive to G-d's authority, doing His purposes, we are going to experience victory.

Nor was it trickery: Paul did not try to fool the people or take advantage of them.

Verse 4: *“But just as we were documented by G-d to be entrusted with the gospel and thus we speak, not as man pleasers but G-d having documented our hearts.”*

We were documented by G-d: G-d had shown or confirmed them to be His apostles in the past, they are still approved by G-d and will continue to be approved into the future.

Not as man pleasers: They did not live to please men.

Documented our hearts: G-d had shown or proven the sincerity of their hearts. When we serve G-d by proclaiming the gospel, being gospel driven, we are going to be mistreated. Things are going to be said against us. G-d revealed to those in Thessaloniki the hearts of Paul and those who were sincerely serving G-d. They did not have a personal objective. They were not doing what they did for themselves and how it might impact them. They were doing it because they wanted to serve and obey G-d. They wanted to bring glory to G-d, and they knew that changing the lives of others through the truth was the best way of doing that.

Verse 5: *“For at no time did we use flattering words, just as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness – G-d is witness.”*

Flattering words: Paul was transparent with them. He did not use words to manipulate them in any way.

A cloak for covetousness: Paul and his companions had no need to hide or cover up (*cloak*) their intentions. They did not use religion as a pretext for getting what they wanted. They were not there to please, impress or manipulate the Thessalonians.

G-d is witness: G-d confirmed that their words were truth. He confirmed it not just by words alone but also by signs and wonders (1 Thessalonians 1:5) G-d moved in power when they spoke, because what they were doing was approved by Him.

Verse 6: *“Nor seeking from men glory, nor from you and nor from others, when we might have made demands as Messiah’s apostles.”*

Nor seeking from men glory: Paul and his friends were not trying to exalt themselves or make themselves look impressive. They did not evangelise to the Thessalonians in an attempt to seek their own glory.

Nor from you and nor from others: From a personal standpoint Paul had no personal objectives or goals. His desire was to submit to G-d’s authority in his life. That is the only way that the work of G-d can be done.

Might have made demands: Paul, as an apostle, could have used his weight, or authority, as an apostle as a way to strong arm the Thessalonians into giving him what he wanted. He, however, did not utilise this important position for any personal gain. He did not use the title ‘apostle’ as a means to manipulate others or as a way in which he could exalt himself.

Verse 7: *“But having become gentle in the midst of you, as a nursing one who cherishes her own children.”*

Having become: Caused to become. It is a word for being transformed in the flesh. Naturally people are not gentle. Especially before regeneration, we tend to want to get what we want in any way possible – even if it is hurtful to others.

Gentle: When we are gentle it means that we are trusting G-d to bring something about. We do not try to manipulate the situation, nor use power to get what we want or get others to do what we want them to do. Gentleness is not weakness. Gentleness is behaving in a way that presents the opportunity for G-d to manifest that an individual belongs to G-d and is doing the work of G-d.

A nursing one: Written in the feminine. Paul is saying that he came like a nursing mother to the Thessalonians. He came to give them nourishment, to build them up.

Cherishes her own children: A mother gives to her children without expecting to get anything back. Her entire mindset is focussed on the well-being of her children. This was the mindset Paul came to the Thessalonians with. He gave them this image of a nursing mother so that they could understand why he did the things that he did.

Verse 8: *“Thus we yearn affectionately for you, in order to impart to you not only the gospel of G-d but also even our lives. You have become to us beloved ones.”*

Yearn affectionately: This is an intense word of desire but also of affection. Paul yearns affectionately for these people. It is when we are loving G-d that we are enabled to love others. The commandments of G-d (which are summed up by loving G-d and loving others) give us the correct perspective for ministry. When we walk in the Spirit, we are enabled to fulfil the righteousness of the law – loving others correctly.

The gospel of G-d: Powerful words of salvation, words of reconciliation etc - words that have a tremendous outcome in our lives.

Even our lives: Paul understood that true ministry involves giving of oneself. It is a privilege to bless others and to help them to mature and grow in their faith. It is a privilege to help someone during their need.

Beloved ones: Over and over again Paul is affirming his love for this congregation. He loves them and as such wants to invest his life in them. The best way to love G-d is by loving others, fulfilling our responsibility to them. That is what a disciple is called to do.

Verse 9: *“For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil. For night and day we were labouring in order not to be a burden to any of you but we proclaimed unto you the gospel of G-d.”*

Labour: The work that Paul and his friends did was not an easy task. Their diligent service was very taxing. It involved effort and was time consuming.

Toil: A word that speaks about difficulty, hard times, those things that are unpleasant, or things that we do not want to go through. This verse gives us a good idea of what ministry is all about.

Night and day: Continuously.

Labouring in order not to be a burden: They suffered and worked hard to meet their own needs so that they would not be a (financial, and other) burden on the people that they were ministering to.

The gospel of G-d: This phrase has been repeated a few times in this chapter. Repetition emphasises. Paul endured suffering (night and day) for the gospel of G-d. His motivating factor was that he got to see lives changed. Paul had the opportunity to effect other people (and even himself) for eternity.

Chapter 2

Part 2: 1 Thessalonians 2:10-20

We are being watched by fellow believers and watched by other individuals as well. Our testimony should be of the utmost importance to us because it influences people (positively or negatively).

Verse 10: *“You are witnesses, and also G-d, as holy and righteous and without spot unto you we have become among you who believe.”*

You: The believers

Also G-d: Paul is confident that G-d agrees with what he has been testifying about. Why? Because Paul has agreed with G-d and has submitted to Him.

Holy and righteous and without spot: These are strong statements. This is how we, as believers, should aspire to live our lives. Our lives should be lived in holiness and righteousness. We should never do anything that could damage our credibility, our testimony, or our statement of faith.

Without spot: Without blemish. Paul is not doing anything which is against the will of G-d.

We have become: This is how Paul and his friends were living.

Verse 11: *“Just as each of you know, as a father his children, encouraging you, comforting you, also bearing witness to you.”*

Know: The word here for knowing is an experiential one. They have not seen or heard second hand stories about Paul, but they have witnessed, first-hand, how he is living.

As a father his children: Paul (as well as the other apostles) had a position of leadership in this community. They were there to provide for the people. They were not there to receive or take things from them. Paul went to them and dealt with them in the same way that a father deals with his children – a father wants to provide support to his children and does not look for something in return. His joy is in seeing his children being approved by G-d and having a righteous testimony.

Encouraging: To exhort. Paul wanted to motivate them to do the right thing – to do G-d’s will.

Verse 12: *“For you to walk in a way worthy of G-d, the One having called you into His Kingdom and glory.”*

Note: There is a question in different Greek manuscripts as to where verse 11 ends and verse 12 starts.

Walk: Walking is a word of lifestyle. In Hebrew it has the same base word as the word used for Jewish law – Halacha.

Called you into His Kingdom: This is not only something that is future, but there is a foretaste of that Kingdom within us right now. Although we are not presently living in the Kingdom, we have a foretaste of Kingdom truth and Kingdom character within us. We are called to demonstrate it - that is what it means to have a walk worthy of G-d.

Kingdom and glory: These two go together. G-d's presence, His glory, is always going to be manifest in His Kingdom.

Verse 13: *“For on account of this we give thanks to G-d, without ceasing, because the Word of G-d as a report from us you received, not as the word of men but just as it is truly – the Word of G-d – which also works in you, the ones who are believing.”*

On account of this: Because of these Kingdom promises we have received - being called into His Kingdom and glory.

Without ceasing: Continuously. Ongoing. At all times. Paul often talks about praying without ceasing. This constant prayer, more than anything else, probably had the greatest impact on the life and ministry of Paul.

Report: Some Bibles translate this as the verb ‘heard’, but it is a noun and should therefore be translated ‘report’.

Us: Paul and his companions (Timothy and Silvanus) gave a report of the Word of G-d to the Thessalonians.

Not as the word of men: They did not receive the Word as if it were coming from a human source.

Just as it is truly: Paul is writing in a very purposeful manner. He is wanting to emphasize that we need to deal correctly with the Word of G-d. Many people today do not preach the Word of G-d as if it is literal and without error. They do not teach that the Word of G-d is His

perfect revelation to us, and that it produces a Kingdom change or reality in our lives - making us a new creation and giving us access to Almighty G-d.

Works: Produces (fruit). We need to recognize that G-d's Word to us is truth, without any error. It is powerful and does not return void. His Word produces G-dly change in our lives and sets things in order. If we are going to be effective in our call, if we are going to truly experience G-d, then we must receive the Scripture as G-d's perfect revelation to us. When we have done this then His Word will begin to work in us to produce fruit.

Believing: We need to believe and confess that Yeshua, having been crucified, is the risen and divine Son of G-d. If we do not believe, then we are not saved.

Verse 14: *“For you have become imitators, brethren, of the churches of G-d - the ones who are in Judea, in Messiah Yeshua. The same things you suffer, also by your own countrymen, just as also these by the Judeans.”*

Imitators: Some Bibles translate this word as ‘followers’ but this is a word which is more exact than that. Although we are followers of Messiah, we are called to be even more than that – we are called to imitate - to behave as Messiah did. Messiah is the only divine Son of G-d. We are not the Son of G-d, but we become children of G-d, heirs of G-d. Messiah serves G-d. We too are servants of G-d. Human beings are endowed with the Spirit of G-d in order to do the work of G-d.

Churches: Congregations.

Note: This verse destroys the teaching that some congregations hold to ie that the law has greater relevance for Jewish believers than non-Jewish believers. Although some of the believers in this congregation in Thessaloniki would have been Jewish, it would have been a congregation made up of primarily non-Jewish believers. These primarily non-Jewish believers become imitators of the local believing assemblies in Judea, Israel (which would have been comprised of mainly Jewish believers).

You suffer also by your own countrymen: Because of their faith in the message of the gospel, the truth of G-d's revelation, this Thessalonian congregation was being rejected and persecuted at the hands of their fellow countrymen – primarily fellow nonbelieving Gentiles.

Judeans: This term is a reference to the Jewish leadership at that time. It is not a reference to Jewish people in general. The Judeans were people who lived in and around Jerusalem, and they held to the traditions of the elders (oral tradition).

Verse 15: *“It was those who also the L-rd Yeshua having put to death, but also their own prophets and we are persecuted; they are not ones who are pleasing to G-d and are against all men.”*

Those: Referring to the Judeans (those in leadership). See John 7:13. The people at the Feast of Tabernacles were Jewish people who had gathered in Jerusalem from all around the world. They were there because it is one of the three festivals, according to the Word of G-d, for which the people were required to go up to Jerusalem each year to observe. These Jewish people were not afraid of each other – but they were afraid of the Jewish leadership (who are simply termed ‘the Jews’). Not all the Jewish leaders were a threat, but most of them were.

L-rd Yeshua...their own prophets...we are persecuted: This leadership was consistent in causing hardships for those whom G-d had sent or against those who were being used by Him. The world (Jew or Gentile) is opposed to the things of G-d.

Against all men: Yeshua, the prophets, the apostles, and Paul did not come in opposition to humanity. On the contrary, they wanted to share G-d's Word of redemption and restoration with the people. They wanted the best for all men. But those of the world, both Jew and Gentile, were in opposition to that. They were against humanity, as they did not desire the best for it.

Verse 16: *"Having hindered us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; for the fullness of their sins always the wrath of G-d upon them for completion."*

(They) having hindered us: Paul is talking about a group of Judaizers who had supposedly gone out from James' congregation in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1, Galatians 2:4-9, 12). Although they respected Yeshua and believed that He was the Messiah, they did not have the gospel straight. They were teaching that it was faith plus works that equals salvation. They were also teaching that a Gentile had to first convert to Judaism before the gospel message could be proclaimed to them. Paul refuted this at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15)

The fullness of their sins: The sum total of their (these Judaizers) sins.

For completion: For totality. They are going to experience the wrath of G-d, as they hindered the gospel and stood in opposition to the things of G-d. The wrath of G-d is His desired outcome for those who stand in opposition to Him.

Verse 17: *"But we, brethren, having been bereaved for a season of an hour from your presence, but not in heart, all the more so being hasty to see your face with much desire."*

Brethren: Speaking to the Thessalonian believers – male and female.

Bereaved: This is a word that is usually associated with death, or with losing someone. Paul is mourning his separation from the Thessalonians. He is experiencing the same pain or grief that is associated with mourning.

A season of an hour: An idiom which means 'for a short time'.

Presence: Literally the word used here is the word for 'face'. At that present time Paul was not able to see them face to face. They were separated from each other physically and could not be in one another's company.

Not in heart: Even though they were separated physically they still had a spiritual connection through prayer. Paul also thought about them and heard reports about them. He held them close to his heart.

Hasty: Paul had a strong desire to be reunited with them as soon as he possibly could.

To see your face: To be in their presence.

With much desire: He was eager to be with them.

Verse 18: *"I, Paul, once and twice wanted to come to you but have been hindered by satan."*

Once and twice: Paul had tried to go and see them twice, but both times he had been prevented from doing so.

Hindered by satan: satan hindered them from going to see the Thessalonians.

Verse 19: *“For what is our certain hope, joy, and crown of boasting? Is it not even you when you are before our L-rd Messiah Yeshua at His coming?”*

Note: Verse 19 -20 give us a true understanding of what Paul was really like – why he did what he did.

Hope, joy and crown: These are three very strong words. Paul is speaking about something that is very significant to him. The Thessalonians are all of these things to him presently, but they are going to continue to be this for him eternally.

Boasting: Rejoicing. Paul is praising G-d for them. He is excited and filled with joy in regard to them.

You: Meaning those believers in Thessaloniki.

Our L-rd Messiah Yeshua at His coming: Paul is excited about what they are going to experience at the time of the rapture. They are going to be transformed into Kingdom people and given a Kingdom body. This is Paul’s hope, joy and crown.

Verse 20: *“For you are our glory and joy.”*

You are our glory: Paul is not looking for something personal or for an earthly reward. Earthly reward is not what motivated Paul (and nor should it motivate us). Earthly reward, more often than not, can actually be a hinderance to us spiritually (Proverbs 30:8-9).

Joy: Contentment. A feeling of victory – Paul’s joy comes from his effective ministry to other people. Paul, too, was waiting for the time that he, like us, will be changed. We have been promised that if we have truly believed we will be in the Kingdom of heaven before the wrath of G-d begins. It is then that we are going to know what our lives have amounted to.

Chapter 3

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Do we love other believers as we love our families? The Scripture speaks about how people from different backgrounds, cultures and even different languages can become one through the gospel message. The Bible speaks about how G-d is building up a temple - not a temple made of physical things, but rather a temple of people who He is fitting together so that we can represent Him in this world.

In this passage of Scripture, Paul and those who are with him show and declare their love for other believers. Paul was a Jew who ministered to a predominantly Gentile church. This, however, did not hinder Paul's love for them, nor did it impede his ability to take truth to them.

Verse 1: *"Therefore, no longer being able to bear it, we thought it was good to be left in Athens alone."*

No longer able to bear it: Paul is speaking about being in a situation where he could no longer continue in the same way – it had reached the point where something had to be done. Paul desperately wanted to know what was going on with those in Thessaloniki – how they were physically, but more importantly where they were at spiritually (where they were in their faith).

Alone: In English this word is singular in its grammar and in its application. In Hebrew and Greek, though, this word 'alone' is able to take on a plural form – which it does here. Paul is not utterly by himself. He is not separated from other people in Athens – there are other believers and other leaders there with him.

Verse 2: *"We sent Timothy, our brother and servant of G-d, our fellow worker in the gospel of Messiah, to strengthen and encourage you concerning your faith."*

We sent Timothy: Paul, and those who were with him in Athens, made a decision to send Timothy to Thessaloniki to find out how this congregation was doing. They wanted to make sure that this congregation was walking faithfully before G-d.

Strengthen: A synonym for this word is establish (rooted, grounded). Paul wanted them to put their faith into action. He wanted their faith to be a deciding factor in how they lived and how they manifested, by believing in Messiah Yeshua, submissiveness before G-d.

Strengthen and encourage: Timothy was sent to this congregation with the purpose of strengthening and encouraging them.

Verse 3: *"That no one would be moved by the tribulations; for you yourselves know that for this we have been positioned."*

No one would be moved by the tribulations: Before the rapture (therefore before Jacob's trouble and the wrath of G-d) an intense time of persecution of believers is going to happen. It has already begun in many parts of the world but is going to get a lot worse.

Tribulations: Suffering, persecution. This is a very heavy word theologically - especially when dealing with the End Times. Many Christians today do not want to think about tribulation so

they say that the rapture will occur before this tribulation comes upon this world (before those last seven years). It is difficult to deal with Scripture verses like these if that is the view that we hold. This word 'tribulations' is written in the plural. By using the plural, the L-rd is warning us that these tribulations are going to be abundant or massive in number (quantity) and quality. They are going to be intense.

This: Referring to tribulation.

Positioned: Placed in a specific location. As believers we have been positioned or set up for tribulation.

Verse 4: *"For also, when we were with you, we told you before that in the future there was going to be tribulation, just as also has happened unto us, and you know."*

We told you before: Paul was sensitive to the things of G-d. He thought that this fulfilment might have happened in his lifetime. Every generation would do well to live with the thought of the tribulation and rapture being fulfilled in their lifetime, as it helps us to prepare and to always be ready. Paul was teaching the Thessalonians about this coming time of tribulation that would be for believers.

You know: They were going through suffering and persecution, as Paul had warned them, in the same way that Paul had. They now knew that what Paul had said was true. We should know that this is also true for the last days.

Verse 5: *"On account of this, also I no longer could bear it, I sent to know your faith, lest the tempter having tempted you, and for vanity our labour should be."*

On account of this: They were suffering, were being persecuted and had great opposition against them. For this reason, Paul wanted to make sure that they were doing well spiritually.

No longer could bear it: This is a repeat phrase from 1 Thessalonians 3:1. Paul could not take it anymore. He wanted to know if this congregation were living out and demonstrating their faith despite their circumstances.

Sent to know your faith: They had testified and made a proclamation that they were a congregation of believers. Paul wanted to know if this still held true for them. Was their faith holding up to this growing opposition...not only in word, but also in deed?

Tempter: The one who tempts. Our enemy wants to tempt us and try to get us to do that which is not right, that which is evil or against the will of G-d.

For vanity our labour: If this congregation were falling victim to the temptation and giving in to it, then Paul is saying that all of his work would have been for nought. Paul did not want them to allow hardships, trials and temptation to turn them away from Christ, and His will and purposes for them.

Verse 6: *"But now Timothy has come to us from you, and he has brought us good news about your faith and love, also that you have a good remembrance of us, always yearning to see us, as we also to see you."*

Timothy has come to us: When Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians, Paul already knew how they were doing, as Timothy had come back from them with a good report.

Good news: Usually when the words ‘good news’ are used Biblically they are words that refer to the gospel. Here, however, this is not the case. This is referring to the good news concerning the well-being of this congregation.

Faith and love: Faith (a confession) expresses itself through love (an action) – loving G-d with all of our hearts and loving our neighbours as we love ourselves.

Good remembrance of us...yearning to see us: Paul loved this congregation. And this congregation loved Paul and his companions. There was a consistency to this love – it was not a one-sided love, but it was a love that was reciprocated.

Verse 7: *“On account of this, brethren, we are comforted concerning you, in all our affliction and distress, on account of your faith.”*

Comforted: This is a word of encouragement. Paul wanted to comfort them, but he is telling them that he is also encouraged and comforted concerning what he had heard about them.

Affliction: This is the same word for tribulation (θλίψει). Paul and his companions were comforted in the midst of distressful times by the report that Timothy had brought back to them concerning this congregation. Although Paul and his fellow servants had suffered, it had all been worth it as it had borne good fruit.

On account of your faith: They were walking in love - doing what believers are called to do.

Verse 8: *“Because now we live, since you are standing in the L-rd.”*

Now we live: The fact that the Thessalonian congregation was doing so well invigorated Paul – made him feel alive.

Since: Some Bibles translate this word as ‘if’. ‘If’ is a word that casts doubt on a situation, but there was no doubt in this situation – Timothy had come back with a good report about them. They were standing. There was no doubt about that. They were doing well. They were walking in faith and expressing love to each other.

Standing: They have been established. They are on a firm foundation.

Verse 9: *“For what a thanksgiving we are able to give to G-d concerning you, upon all the joy which we rejoice on account of you before our G-d.”*

Thanksgiving: Paul, having received this good report, praises and gives thanks to G-d for this people's faithfulness. He is full of joy that his labour among them was not in vain – his labour had produced a good result.

Verse 10: *“Night and day exceedingly desiring to see you in the face, to make perfect those things that are lacking of your faith.”*

Night and day: Continuously. Without ceasing. This confirms what Paul has previously told us about his prayer life (1 Thessalonians 1:2)

Exceedingly: Abundantly.

In the face: Paul longed to see them face to face again. He knew that investing his time and effort into them was “paying” great dividends. They were well worth his time, his effort and his investment.

Perfect those things that are lacking: Although they were doing well there is always room for improvement.

Verse 11: *“But now the same G-d and Father and our L-rd Messiah Yeshua make straight our way unto you.”*

G-d...L-rd: Paul wants to get back to the Thessalonian congregation. He tells them he is going to pray about exactly that.

Make straight: Direct. Set in order a way for Paul to be able to go and be with them again.

Verse 12: *“And the L-rd will give increase and abundance to your love for one another, and for all, just as also we you.”*

Increase and abundance to your love: When we increase (are brought deeper into the understanding of the truths of G-d) an automatic fruit of that will be a love for G-d and a love for others. Loving G-d and loving others are the greatest commandments. Loving G-d and others manifests that we are keeping the law – not according to the letter but according to the spirit of it.

One another: Other believers.

All: All of humanity. Their faith is going to be strengthened and the outcome of that is that their love is going to be manifested toward all those who they come in contact with.

Just as also we you: Paul is again telling them that he loves them – he is expressing that same manifestation of G-d’s will ie to love others.

Verse 13: *“So that He may strengthen your hearts blameless in holiness before our G-d and Father at the coming of our L-rd Messiah Yeshua with all His saints.”*

Note: Paul is no longer inquiring. He is no longer hearing or giving thanks. He is no longer pronouncing what his objectives are. He is focusing now on one thing: victory.

Strengthen: Establish. To be placed in a position whereby we can thrive, grow and become strong.

Blameless: Without blemish or flaw.

The coming of our L-rd Messiah Yeshua: The rapture (‘our blessed hope’) and the second coming of Yeshua are NOT the same event. The rapture, when the saints or believers in Yeshua are gathered to Him, happens before the wrath of G-d is poured out, and before the Kingdom of G-d is established on earth. Believers will not be present in this world when the wrath of G-d is poured out on it (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Paul is not talking about the rapture in this verse. He is talking about the second coming of Messiah – when He comes to establish His Kingdom on earth.

Coming...with all His saints: This phrase confirms for us that Paul is indeed speaking about the second coming of Messiah and not about the rapture. Sometimes the term ‘saints’ can be used for angels, but this is not the context here. There has been no mention of angels in this passage at all. ‘Saints’ here is referring to the believers who had been raptured and who are now coming back to earth with Yeshua to be present for service as He establishes His victorious Kingdom. Believers never have to be concerned about being ready for the second coming. We need to be ready for the rapture.

Chapter 4

Part 1: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Sanctification, derived from the word 'holy', is the process whereby our fleshly desires become less, and the power, presence and Spirit of G-d become more in our lives. G-d spoke numerous times, in both the Old and New Testament, concerning His purposes or will for our lives. Only as we begin to mature, submitting more and more to the Holy Spirit, are we going to move in the direction of His will.

Verse 1: *"Finally, therefore, brethren, we beseech you and exhort you in the L-rd Yeshua, just as you have received from us, how it is necessary for you to walk to please G-d in order that you all abound all the more."*

Finally: This has to do with the final thing that Paul wants to talk about. What he has spoken about, up to this point, has laid the foundation for those things which remain, usually the primary truth that Paul wants to share.

Beseech: A strong word of encouragement, putting pressure on someone to do the right thing – to turn away from the thinking and things of this world and to embrace the purposes of G-d.

L-rd: Yeshua is not only our Saviour, but He is also our L-rd. We need to acknowledge, understand and desire to submit to His L-rdship over our lives.

Walk: 'Walk' is a behavioural word. It speaks about lifestyle. The root of this word in Hebrew shares the same root as the word related to Jewish law.

Necessary for you to walk to please G-d: The Word of G-d demands an obedient lifestyle – not as a means for salvation, but as a result of it. Obedience, submitting to the will and purposes of G-d, pleases Him. As we submit to and obey G-d's general revelation (the instructions we find written in His Word) He will reveal His specific revelation to us – the plans and purposes He has for our lives personally.

Abound all the more: When we live in a way that pleases G-d we experience a life of abundance – in a way that goes beyond our expectation, beyond what we could imagine (not necessarily materially, but spiritually).

Verse 2: *"For you know certain instructions we gave to you through the L-rd Yeshua."*

Although we are not saved by our behaviour, our behaviour is important to G-d. Behaving in the right way, in a pleasing way, has great benefits.

Instructions: When we submit to these instructions, or commandments, they are going to bring about G-dly activity in our lives – His power, the anointing of the Spirit, the revelation that we need to make wise decisions, G-dly discernment so that we can see things correctly. This only comes through demonstrating that He is the L-rd of our lives.

Verse 3: *"For this is the will of G-d; your sanctification: for you to abstain from evil;"*

For this is the will of G-d, your sanctification: This is very clear. G-d's will is that we are sanctified - a process that we go through whereby we demonstrate holiness. Holiness is always connected to the purposes of G-d. G-d's grace works in our lives to bring about an

understanding of what His will is, and to empower us to carry out His will. It helps us to be obedient to the purposes of G-d. It helps us to submit to the truth of G-d. It teaches us to deny ourselves (our flesh) so that we can say 'yes' to the commandments of G-d. There is no temple today, so it is impossible for anyone to fulfil the law according to the letter of it. However, when we walk in the Spirit, we can fulfil the spirit or the intent of the law, the righteousness of the law (according to its objective or purpose). This is not legalism but is called faithfulness. It is called obedience to the Word of G-d.

Abstain: Do not welcome or receive it into our lives. Sanctification always implies rejecting that which is not according to the commandments of G-d.

Evil: This is a word that is often interpreted as 'sexual immorality'. This is indeed the context of what Paul is speaking about.

Verse 4: *"For each one to know his own vessel to possess in sanctification and honour."*

Own vessel: Own body.

Possess: Rule over. Govern properly.

In sanctification and honour: We need to control and properly govern our bodies within the parameters of G-d's commandments. When we know how to rule our bodies, our behaviour, within the framework of what G-d says is holy then our bodies can become instruments that bring honour to Him.

Verse 5: *"Not in the passions of desires, just as also the nations, the ones that do not know G-d."*

Nations: This term is often translated 'Gentiles'. When Paul is speaking about the nations (in this context) he is not referring to a non-Jew but is referring to those who have no covenantal relationship with G-d. Those who do not have a relationship with G-d, do not have His revelation, resources, anointing or power. They are unable to discern truth.

Know: This is not referring to knowing G-d intellectually, but about knowing Him experientially. They have never experienced G-d, nor His benefits. Therefore, because they do not know G-d, they live improperly.

Verse 6: *"Not in iniquity and exploiting the matter of his brother, for the L-rd avenges concerning all of these things, just as we have said beforehand to you, and we have testified thoroughly."*

Brother: Paul is starting to lay the foundation for bringing a Torah context into this passage (loving our brothers as we love ourselves). When we walk in sanctification, we are not going to exploit other people. Instead, we are going to want to love others, to minister to them and to be a blessing and G-d pleasing influence in their lives. It is only when we are right with G-d (loving Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength) that we are able to love others.

Matter: Pragma. Issue. To be pragmatic is to do something useful, practically, for someone else. It also involves studying thoroughly, having all the information at our disposal, so that we can make an informed and practical decision. What Paul is saying here is that we must not ignore or exploit the foundational thing, our basic obligation, to our neighbour.

The L-rd avenges: We need to take this seriously.

Things: Those things which are in violation to Word of G-d – one of which is the obligation that we have to love our neighbours as we love ourselves.

Testified thoroughly: Paul had forewarned this congregation that they needed to be people who walked in submission - not exploiting or misunderstanding G-d's grace. They were not to be people who walked in iniquity or unrighteousness but rather in the holiness of G-d's purposes. One of the reasons why the church is not very influential in the world today is because it has no power – power is found in sanctification, and we become sanctified as we submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and apply G-d's instructions to our lives.

Verse 7: “For G-d has not called us for impurity, but in sanctification.”

Impurity: That which is unclean. There are only two ways to behave in this world – unclean or holy, impure or pure.

Sanctification: Holiness. Paul is not talking here about declarative holiness or righteousness – which we are from the minute we believe in Yeshua (1 Corinthians 6:11). Instead, Paul is speaking about a daily walk, an ongoing process of living in a holy, clean, pure, righteous way day after day (not for salvation, but for sanctification). Being declared righteous (or holy) by grace is a free gift. Living righteously comes through the power and the provision of G-d - through the Holy Spirit.

Verse 8: “Therefore the one who rejects this does not reject man but G-d, the One also who gave His Holy Spirit to us.”

Rejects this: The one who rejects the statement that we are called to live in holiness, called to live within the parameters of G-d's Word, to obey His commandments, does not reject man but rejects G-d. Those who are saved by grace are called to obey the Word of G-d.

Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit works in our lives to empower us so that we can have discernment and be able to understand and implement G-d's revelation in our lives, so that we can have a testimony of righteousness.

Chapter 4

Part 2: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-18

We have a blessed hope – the rapture. G-d has promised to remove believers from this world prior to the outpouring of the wrath of G-d (1 Thessalonians 5:9). We can have absolute assurance, through the new covenant relationship we have with G-d, through His only begotten Son, that we are not going to experience any of G-d's wrath, therefore we do not need to fear it.

Verse 9: *“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught of G-d to love one another.”*

Note: There is a Spirit that prepares us for our blessed hope and that is the Spirit of the law. The Spirit of Messiah (His Holy Spirit) is the Spirit of truth and of righteousness (John 16:13). We understand what righteous is through the law. The law does not make us righteous, but we understand righteousness from G-d's perspective (based upon his commandments) through the law. If we want to understand G-d's definition of righteousness, and how to live righteously, being led by the Spirit, we need to study all of the commandments of Moses.

Brotherly love: Loving our brother (neighbour) as ourselves. Paul is emphasizing, not by chance but because he understands the instructions of the law, that walking in brotherly love is what is going to prepare us to be found faithful at the time of the rapture.

You have no need that I should write to you: Paul does not need to write to them about brotherly love because Moses had already written it down for them. We demonstrate our love for G-d by loving our neighbour. The Torah (law) reveals to us what our obligations, toward each other, are.

Taught of G-d: How? Through the Word of G-d, through the law of G-d.

Love one another: This is what G-d's teaching reveals to us. We are called to love one another.

Verse 10: *“For also you do this very thing to all the brothers who are in Macedonia. And we encourage you brethren to abound all the more.”*

You do this very thing: This congregation in Thessaloniki had a reputation of demonstrating the spirit of the law by loving one another - within their congregation, as well as into their wider community in Macedonia.

Abound: Increase. When we demonstrate truth (in this case, loving our neighbour) it is going to produce an outcome in our lives – we are going to increase in our fruitfulness. Loving others is foundational. It acts as a catalyst for the power of the Spirit of G-d within us, so that we can do G-d's will in the fullest sense.

Verse 11: *“And strive to live a quiet life, practicing the things of oneself, and to work with your own hands, just as to you we have commanded.”*

Strive: Make an effort. Work at this. If we want to live honourably and have in our lives those things that G-d sees as right and precious, we need to make an effort to live a quiet life. Our lives must not be full of drama.

Practicing the things of oneself: Not being a busybody. We must not get improperly involved in other people's lives. We are called to minister to, to bless and to help one another, but there is a very clear distinction between blessing someone and meddling in their lives.

Work with your own hands: We are called to work, to busy ourselves with our own affairs. We are not called to be idle.

Verse 12: *“In order that you should walk properly to those who are outside, and for nothing you should have need.”*

Walk properly: As has already been mentioned, ‘walk’ is a very Hebraic term that speaks about a lifestyle - the things that we do, how we behave, our manner of life. Who defines what a proper behaviour or walk is? Only the Word of G-d does that - all of His Word, including His commandments.

Outside: Those who are not a part of the congregation. Those who do not believe or do not have faith. We are called to be a testimony to these people.

Nothing you should have need: When we behave in a way that is pleasing to G-d and when we have a testimony that is pleasing before other people, we are going to lack nothing that we need. Living in a way that is in line with the Word of G-d is going to position us to be in a place whereby we will receive G-d's provision into our lives so that we lack nothing.

Verse 13: *“But I do not want you to be against knowing, brethren, concerning the ones who have fallen asleep, in order that you do not grieve just as all the ones who are remaining who have no hope.”*

Note: In this verse we begin to see a change. Everything Paul has spoken about has led him to this point – he has laid a foundation in order to speak to us about a great event.

Against knowing: Some Bibles will say ‘ignorant’, but it is the word that implies that these people are against knowing. It is not like they are unaware of this revelation, but they choose to wilfully ignore or go against it.

Have no hope: It is Biblical hope that removes the sting of grief or sorrow in regard to death. We know that death is not the end but is simply a transition. The *remaining* ones have grief because they do not have hope. They do not believe in the resurrection and nor do they believe in the promise of Messiah - that gospel message. We have hope when we know the promises of G-d.

Verse 14: *“For since we believe that Yeshua died but also rose, thus also G-d, the ones who have fallen asleep by Yeshua, He will bring with Him.”*

Since: Some Bibles translate this word as ‘if’. The word ‘if’ introduces doubt into a text. Paul is talking to believers who do not doubt that Yeshua died and then rose again.

Died but also rose: Paul does not emphasize death here, but he emphasises the resurrection.

By Yeshua: Meaning in faith. They have *fallen asleep* (died) in Messiah.

He will bring with Him: Death is the separation of the soul from the body. Before Messiah rose from the dead people went to Sheol (Either into Hades or into Abraham's bosom – depending on their faith). After Messiah's resurrection this was no longer the case. People who die in Messiah now do not go into Abraham's bosom, but they are immediately with Messiah (2 Corinthians 5:8). When Yeshua brings them with Him it means that the souls

who have died in Messiah (ie: after His resurrection and ascension and before the time of the rapture) will accompany Him when He descends out of the heavens into the sky in order to gather us up (those who are IN Messiah and alive at that time) at the rapture.

Verse 15: *“For this to you we say by the Word of the L-rd, that we the ones living at the coming of the L-rd will not proceed the ones having fallen asleep.”*

By the word of the L-rd: This is a very important statement. Paul is telling us that this is direct revelation from the L-rd.

The ones living: Some believers will still be alive, will still be surviving, at the time of the rapture.

The coming: This is not speaking about the second coming of Messiah but is speaking about the rapture.

Will not proceed the ones having fallen asleep: At the time of the rapture there are going to be two different groups of people: those who are alive on the earth at that time, as well as those who have died in Messiah (ie dead believers) – their bodies in the grave, but their souls with Messiah in heaven. Both groups are going to be with Messiah in the air at the time of the rapture.

Verse 16: *“Because the L-rd Himself, with the commandment, with the voice of the archangel, even the sound of the trumpet of G-d, will descend from heaven. And the dead in Messiah will rise first.”*

With the commandment: Noone, except the Father, knows the day or the hour when the rapture (our blessed hope) will take place, but we have been called to watch (Matthew 24:36,42). G-d the Father is going to give a commandment when the time for the rapture is right. Yeshua is going to act on His Father’s commandment and timing.

Voice: Or Sound.

Archangel: Probably Michael.

Trumpet: Shofar. This ram’s horn or shofar is a reminder of the provision of G-d (Genesis 22:13-14).

The dead in Messiah will rise first: Their bodies will rise first – their souls will not rise as these are already in heaven with Messiah. All believers (those who are alive now and those who are dead in Messiah) are going to get a new (Kingdom) body, perfectly designed for the new environment that we are then going to be in. All who are in Messiah, dead or alive, are going to be changed, transformed.

Verse 17: *“Then we, the ones who are living and remain, shall be snatched away in the clouds together with them for the meeting of the L-rd in the air. Thus, always with the L-rd we shall be.”*

Snatched away (ἀρπαγησόμεθα): This is the word that forms the base for the term ‘rapture’ – being snatched away quickly. Those, in Messiah, who are alive on earth at this time will be quickly removed from this earth before the wrath of G-d falls. We are not going to be sustained or kept through the time of G-d’s wrath. That is a false teaching. We are going to be completely removed from it.

The meeting of the L-rd: It does not say that we are going to ‘meet the L-rd’ (as in its verbal form). The word ‘meeting’ is a noun. ‘To meet’, in its verbal form, would imply that this was a casual encounter – almost like bumping into somebody by chance. By using the word ‘meeting’ in its noun form Paul is conveying to us that this meeting has been designed, it has been planned. It is not going to take place by random chance.

Air: Implies sky

Always: This is the word that is emphasised in this phrase.

Verse 18: “*Encourage one another with these words.*”

Encourage one another with these words: This is a commandment. We are called to encourage one another with these words pertaining to our blessed hope - the rapture.

Chapter 5

Part 1: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

We should be excited about what the Bible says concerning the last days! It is a great blessing to open up the Word of G-d and see what He shares with us concerning this time of transition, when He will begin to move in a unique way to bring about His Kingdom. In this chapter, Paul gives us some very significant information on what we need to know and on how we are called to live in the last days. This knowledge should change our behaviour.

Verse 1: *“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, not a need you have for me to write to you.”*

Times ... seasons: Both words are written in the plural. The reason for this is that there are different stages to the last days. If we are not aware of them (if we are not watching for them) we are in disobedience. It is as we watch prophetic events unfold that we are enabled to grow in faithfulness and in our commitment and understanding that what G-d has said is indeed true. Those who live in the last days will see prophetic events taking place before their very eyes.

Brethren: An inclusive term that includes brothers and sisters, believers.

Not a need you have for me to write to you: Paul did not need to write to them about the last days because it had already been written down by the prophets. We can learn a lot from the prophets and what they reveal concerning the last days. If we are not studying prophecy, we are in disobedience. We need to know what the prophets reveal concerning the last days.

Verse 2: *“For you yourselves know, very well, that the day of the L-rd as a thief in the night thus He will come.”*

Very well: Clearly, perfectly.

Day of the L-rd: There are two completely different days mentioned in the New Testament: The Day of the L-rd (as it mentioned here) and the Day of Messiah (eg 2 Thessalonians 2:2). The Day of the L-rd refers to a Day of G-d’s judgment, the outpouring of His wrath. The Day of Messiah, on the other hand, speaks of the Day of the rapture, our Blessed Hope. The Day of Messiah is specifically related to believers, the Day of the L-rd is not for believers – it is a day when the enemies of G-d, those who try to thwart His plans and purposes, receive their just dues.

A thief in the night: Although we do not know the day or the hour when the rapture will take place Yeshua is NOT coming like a thief in the night for believers. We have been called to watch so, by watching, we will have an understanding that the time of the rapture is near. It will not catch us off guard. For the world, on the other hand, the L-rd will come as a thief – they will be completely unaware that He is near until it is too late for them.

Verse 3: *“For whenever they shall say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then suddenly to them there shall stand sudden destruction, as labour pains upon one having in the womb. And they shall not escape.”*

Safety: Security. We know that this is going to happen in the midst of the antichrist empire. There is going to be a time of great instability. One of the primary sources of that instability is going to be Iran. They are going to greatly expand and as they do so they are going to cause great instability. The antichrist empire (symbolised by the goat) will, however, defeat this Iranian (ram) empire – Daniel 8 - and bring about a time of (false) peace and security (as well as prosperity).

Destruction: When they are proclaiming ‘peace and safety’ (ie that everything is now well in the world) then suddenly sudden destruction is going to come upon them.

Labour pains: Birth pains. These speak about something (a birthing) that is about to happen. Labour pains are necessary. They act as a warning system to the pregnant woman to get ready, to prepare herself for what is coming. A birthing has a purpose behind it. It produces something glorious – a baby. In the case of these End Times birth pains, they too are going to lead to something glorious – the establishment of the Kingdom.

Upon one having in the womb: This is an idiom for a pregnant woman.

They shall not escape: It is impossible for anyone to escape these birth pains that are coming.

Verse 4: *“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, in order that that Day should overtake you as a thief.”*

But: This conjunction is important because it shows discontinuity or a distinction between two things. Paul has been speaking about how unbelievers (those of this world) are going to be caught unawares in regard to the Day of the L-rd. A thief does not announce himself. He comes quietly, when the night is at its darkest. He now contrasts this with the believers – we are not going to be on earth when this Day arrives (the rapture would have already taken place), so we are not going to be caught unaware by it. G-d has promised to remove believers prior to the Day of the L-rd, prior to the wrath of G-d.

Brethren: Believers

Not in darkness: We are of the light. We are of Messiah. Therefore, that Day is not going to overtake us like a thief - we are not going to be here for it to do so.

Verse 5: *“For all of you are sons of light. You are also sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.”*

Sons of light: Sons of darkness do their activities in the night, under cover of darkness. This is not how we behave. We have nothing to hide. We are called to be transparent - people who testify to truth.

We are not of the night: Those of darkness, those of the night, are going to experience the Day of the L-rd. That day will come upon them as a thief in the night. As believers, this is a Day that has nothing to do with us. If, however, we are not living repentantly (not true believers) then this Day will overtake us like a thief (Revelation 3:3).

Verse 6: *“Therefore do not sleep, as also the others, but rather watch and be sober.”*

Do not sleep: We are not called to be asleep. This means that we are not called to ignore or be unresponsive to what is taking place in the world.

The others: Those who are asleep. Those who are not watching.

Watch: There is a big difference between being awake and watching. This word for watching is almost militant. It involves strategy and careful planning. A study of the last days is called eschatology. It teaches us about the events, prophetic events, that are going to take place at the end. When we ‘watch’ it is these events or signs that we are watching for. They inform us that we are indeed in the last days and that our blessed hope (the rapture) is approaching. Those who are teaching that the rapture is ‘imminent’ (can happen at any time now) are teaching falsely. Although we do not know the day or the hour when the rapture will take place it does not mean that it can happen at any time. That is a false conclusion. There are certain things that still need to take place, prophetically, before the rapture can take place.

Sober: In the Greek this is a word which means to operate and behave with knowledge (ie with truth – found in G-d’s Word). We believe G-d’s revelation; therefore, we act in light of it. His revelation needs to become the basis of our thoughts, our words, and our deeds. This is what soberness is - functioning properly according to truth, according to knowledge. Soberness is a word of discernment. This is where we are able to take the revelation or the knowledge that we have received, and are able to put it into practice based on the situations we find ourselves in.

Verse 7: *“For the ones who sleep, sleep at night, and the ones who get drunk get drunk at night.”*

Drunk: Those who are drunk are under an influence that makes it impossible for them to function correctly, sometimes even leading to death. Those who are under the influence of alcohol cannot perceive things properly. It affects their ability to respond, and even to know how to respond. Those who are drunk cannot remain alert, impairing their ability to ‘watch’.

Verse 8: *“But we are being of the day, and we are sober. Put on the breastplate of faith and of love, and the helmet the hope of salvation.”*

But we: In contrast to. We are different.

We are sober: We can respond properly. We can discern and know what to do in any given situation because we are of the day.

Put on: Clothe ourselves. This is a word of preparation.

Breastplate of faith and love: The breastplate is for defence. It is something that protects us when (not ‘if’) we are attacked. Persecution is coming. We need to prepare ourselves for it by putting on faith and love.

Hope of salvation: G-d has promised future victory for those who persevere to the end. Those who persevere to the end will be saved. We do not persevere in order to be saved; we persevere because we are saved. We persevere because we know that victory (salvation ie being rescued from persecution) is coming – the Kingdom of G-d. This is a word of encouragement. In difficult circumstances those of us who are saved (believers) need to remain hopeful, passionate, and committed to Kingdom truth.

Verse 9: “Because G-d has NOT appointed us for wrath, but rather for obtaining salvation through our L-rd Messiah Yeshua.”

Appointed: Set or placed us in a position. Because of the gospel we have received by faith in Messiah Yeshua we can be absolutely sure that we are not going to suffer G-d’s wrath. G-d is going to remove us before His wrath falls.

Salvation: Paul is speaking about obtaining the Kingdom promises - not just being in the Kingdom, but experiencing the goodness, the blessing, the promises of the Kingdom. This is the hope we have through Messiah Yeshua. It is ONLY through Him that we (Jew or Gentile) can obtain salvation (Acts 4:12).

Verse 10: “The One who died on behalf of us, so that, whether we are watching or sleeping, together with Him we live.”

The One: Yeshua is the only One who has died on our behalf.

Died: Yeshua died on Passover – His crucifixion took place on the 14th day of the first month. It is only when we understand what Passover (the festival of redemption) is that we will understand what His death brought about for us. It brought us freedom from the punishment and authority of sin in our lives.

Watching: The implication is that if we are alive at that time, and if we are a true believer, we are going to be watching. True believers are in only one of two states at the time of the end: watching or sleeping (dead). If we do not know prophetic truth then we are not going to know what we are watching for. We need to be watching for prophetic signs, prophetic indicators, concerning the approach of that Day of Messiah. These signs are going to confirm G-d’s Word and are going to help to build our faith. As a result, we will grow in our commitment and passion for the things of G-d.

Sleeping: Have died. By using the word ‘sleeping’ Paul is hinting at resurrection – those who sleep are expected to wake up.

Together with Him: This phrase was not written in classical Greek but is written as it was spoken – colloquial or conversational Greek. This phrase shows redundancy. Paul did not need to say ‘together’ but could have just said ‘with Him’ – which would have implied togetherness. This redundancy has a purpose though – it emphasises this togetherness.

With Him: This is a redemptive term. We can only be ‘with G-d’ through redemption.

Verse 11: “Therefore, comfort one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

Comfort: Rightly understanding truth, concerning the last days, gives us comfort. When we share this truth with others then they too can be comforted regarding these things.

Build one another up: Knowing this truth about the last days helps to strengthen people spiritually. We are not in the dark, but we are aware and expect that what is going on is part of the plan.

Just as you are doing: Paul was pleased with this congregation in Thessaloniki, as they had a G-dly testimony of loving others. This is how we are to behave – especially in these last days that we are living in.

Chapter 5

Part 2: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

What should a local congregation do in order for the Spirit of G-d to move mightily in the midst of its members, enabling them to have an influence on those outside of their immediate fellowship? We are called to be salt and light in this world (Matthew 5:13-16). G-d has saved us so that He might use us to be instruments for His purposes. As believers we are called to get involved in the lives of others - not to meddle or to manipulate, but to help, assist and bless them in order to see them grow. As we are a blessing to others, G-d will move in our own lives so that we will mature, grow and become more effective in ministry.

Verse 12: *“But we implore you, brethren, that you would recognize the ones who are labouring among you, also the ones who have authority over others in the L-rd, and those who admonish you.”*

We: Paul and the others.

Implore: Beseech. Intensely ask. A word of emphasis and intensity.

Brethren: Brothers and sisters. Fellow believers.

Recognise: Acknowledge

Labouring among you: In every congregation there are those who are labouring, those who are leading. Paul wants them to be acknowledged by the rest of the congregation.

Have authority over others IN the L-rd: Authority has to do with being IN the L-rd. He is the ultimate authority. The authority of leaders goes as far as G-d's Word allows, and, of course, this authority is only given to achieve the purposes of G-d. Leaders lead or rule over others in order that the purposes of G-d can be fulfilled or carried out.

Admonish: Instruct. It is a word that can also imply discipline. The purpose of admonishment is to encourage others to do the right thing. The leaders that G-d has put in over the congregations are leaders who want to see the congregations do what is right, pleasing, in the eyes of the L-rd. Although these leaders have a degree of authority they demonstrate submission to the L-rd's ultimate and absolute authority over them.

Verse 13: *“And that you esteem them exceedingly in love on account of their work. Be at peace among them.”*

You: Those in the congregation.

Esteem them exceedingly: Greatly value the leaders/labourers. Recognise that their leadership is under the authority of G-d.

In love on account of their work: These two things go together: we love them on account of their work. They are doing the things that G-d wants done. They are committed to the purposes of G-d. They are working on behalf of the well-being of their congregation.

Peace: We experience peace as an outcome of G-d's will.

Verse 14: *Now we exhort you, brethren, that you admonish the unruly, encourage the ones who are weak in the heart, help the ones who are weak, and be patient with all."*

Exhort: A strong word for encourage. This word of encouragement always has to do with encouraging others in the ways and truth of G-d.

Admonish: Instruct. This can be a verbal instruction, but sometimes it can also be with the use of authority or discipline.

Unruly: Those who do not reflect the order in a congregation. Things need to be done decently and in order within a congregation. Someone who is unruly is rebelling against the order and the authority structure within that congregation. He needs to be taken in hand. Consistently unruly people, even after admonishment, reject G-d's rule in their lives.

Encourage: Be sensitive

Weak in the heart: Faint of the soul. Their soul is not strong. They are weak-minded. As a result of this they need encouragement.

Be patient with all: Change often happens very slowly. We have to (utilising discernment) have patience with all believing individuals.

Note: Having wisdom is related to a lot of different aspects of spiritual gifts. G-d, through the Holy Spirit, equips us to have discernment. We need to evaluate if people are sincere – are they in the congregation for the right reasons? Do they want to worship and serve G-d? Do they want to learn more about G-d, and do they want to implement all of this as part of their worship and service to G-d? 1 John 2:18-20 tells us that in the last days there are going to be a great number that go out from among us as they are not part of us. These people are not losing their faith – they never had any faith to begin with. They bought into an incorrect, watered down, gospel and never wanted to understand the true gospel. As soon as the going gets tough these people are going to depart. We need to be patient with believers, but those who are of the enemy, those who threaten the well-being of G-d's people as well as hinder the purposes of G-d, need to be recognized and responded to in a very different way.

Verse 15: *"See not that a certain one evil for evil to someone returns, but always the good thing you are to pursue - for one another and to one another."*

See: Although Paul is talking to everyone there is an emphasis on the leaders.

Evil for evil to someone returns: None of us should return evil for evil. That is not what we are called to do. We are called to suffer for the well-being of others (again, within the parameters of discernment spoken about above).

Good thing: Written in the singular. This is that which is related to the will of G-d.

For one another and to one another: We need to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Verse 16: *"Always you rejoice."*

Rejoice: This word for rejoicing is a word that implies a character that rejoices in the well-being of others. When someone experiences the will of G-d, when someone walks in truth, when someone is being blessed by G-d, it should cause us to rejoice, to be filled with joy.

Verse 17: “Without ceasing you pray.”

Without ceasing: There is never a situation that does not require prayer. We need to take prayer much more seriously. We need to see that everything should be done by prayer – at all times. Prayer is not just making requests from G-d, but prayer also involves listening for His response. One of the things we should be praying for is that we are given discernment to make G-dly decisions.

What we are praying for says a lot about our spiritual maturity. When we are spiritually mature one of our prayers will be for our sanctification, because G-d wants us to be holy. He wants us to carry out His purposes.

Verse 18: “In all you give thanks, for this is the will of G-d in Messiah Yeshua for you.”

All: In everything.

Give thanks: Apart from salvation, giving thanks greatly impacts and changes the lives of believers. Being thankful involves acknowledgement, with sincere gratitude, for wherever we find ourselves in life. Even when things are difficult, we need to give thanks to G-d. He is the only One who can supply what we need to overcome (to be victorious). Giving thanks to G-d is a form of worship. It acknowledges that He is the One who has all of the authority. He gives and He takes away. We need to be grateful in both of these circumstances, as He knows what is good for us. Giving thanks changes our perspective and empowers our worship. Giving thanks transforms every aspect of our lives - especially those spiritual aspects.

This is the will of G-d: For those who are in a covenantal relationship with Him. Satan hates it when we give praise, honour, glory, and thanksgiving to G-d. This is the strategy we have been given on how to defeat him. Giving thanks also acts as a catalyst in helping us to find out what the will of G-d is for our lives. Those who are mature will understand how vital being thankful to G-d is.

Verse 19: “The Spirit you do not quench.”

Do not quench: The order of what we are reading is so important. Within this context Paul is revealing to us that being unthankful quenches the Spirit. There are other ways that we can quench the Spirit, but Paul is revealing to us that this is one of those ways.

Verse 20: “Prophecies do not despise.”

Prophecies do not despise: This is something else that brings about the quenching of the Spirit – despising prophecies. Even today G-d still gives us prophetic truth. However, one of the best ways to encounter prophetic truth today is by reading prophecy that was given a long time ago. The better we know Biblical prophecy the more we will be able to have prophetic discernment, the better equipped we will be to give a word of knowledge - that timely word for the moment or for the season. There is always agreement between that word of knowledge and what we see prophetically Biblically - what G-d does, His nature, how He functions, what He has done in the past. How G-d moved in the past gives us a prophetic indicator of how G-d moves today (Hebrews 13:8)

Do not despise: Do not have contempt for them. Do not treat them as something of little value, something that is not important. Prophetic revelation is still of great value - but there is a correlation, an agreement, between prophetic revelation today and what the prophets of old have said.

Verse 21: *“All things you document; and that which is good hold on to.”*

Note: When we do what this verse commands us to do we are going to reap the reward of discernment.

Document: Prove or test. It is no accident that after Paul has spoken of prophecy he inserts these instructions into the text. When we prove or test prophecy it means that we hold it up to the Word of G-d in order to see whether it stands true. Prophecy gives us discernment to know what the will of G-d is. Prophecy produces a repentant spirit – it turns people toward G-d. Many congregations today ignore prophecy. Therefore, many in the congregations are prophetically illiterate and are not repenting and turning toward G-d.

Good: That which is according to G-d’s will.

Hold: Seize or grab on to.

Verse 22: *“From every appearance of evil, abstain.”*

Evil: Anything opposed to G-d’s will. The Word of G-d is truth, and it is accurate. We need to have discernment to be able to identify that which is unrighteous (according to the Word of G-d) - that which is in conflict with the will of G-d.

Abstain: Keep ourselves far away from. We must not participate in anything that is unrighteous.

Verse 23: *“And the G-d of peace Himself to sanctify you completely - your spirit, your soul, and your body - so that you would be found preserved blameless at the coming of our L-rd Messiah Yeshua.”*

The G-d of peace Himself: When we put all of these things into practice (Biblical faith always leads to action), we are going to experience peace. Peace is the fulfilment of G-d's will.

Your spirit, your soul, and your body: Every part of us is going to go through the process of sanctification.

Preserved: To be kept.

Blameless: This is our goal: To be blameless, to be without spot or blemish (Revelation 19:8). We want the holy things, the righteous things, the good things, the pure things in our lives. This is how we want to be found at the coming of the L-rd. Being found in this blameless state does not depend upon us. It depends upon G-d's influence in our lives.

The coming of our L-rd Messiah Yeshua: Speaking of the rapture.

Verse 24: *“Faithful is the One who called you, who also will do it.”*

Who also will do it: G-d is faithful to complete the work that He has started in our lives (Philippians 1:6). This does not mean that we should be unfaithful. We are called to be faithful. Faithfulness is manifested by commitment to the purposes of G-d. We want to have

that sanctifying influence in our lives so that we can be found blameless when Messiah comes.

Verse 25: *“Brethren, pray concerning us.”*

Brethren: Fellow believers. Brothers and sisters.

Pray concerning us: Intercessory prayer (praying for each other) is so important. We can pray that people are found pleasing to G-d, that they accomplish His purpose, that they are successful etc.

Us: Referring to Paul and those who accompanied him in his ministry.

Verse 26: *“Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.”*

Holy kiss: Demonstrate love. We need to converse with others in a way that demonstrates love.

Verse 27: *“I implore you by the L-rd to read this epistle to all the holy brethren.”*

I implore you: He urges them strongly. He begs them to do this.

Holy brethren: All the saints, the believers.

Verse 28: *“The grace of our L-rd Messiah Yeshua with you. Amen.”*

Grace: Paul concludes this epistle in a familiar way, as he does in almost all of his epistles - he focuses on grace. Grace produces an obedience, a submissiveness, to the purposes and plans of G-d.

With you: This is a redemptive expression. We can only be with our L-rd Messiah Yeshua because of His grace which produces redemption.

Amen: This means that everything Paul has written is true and can be believed and practiced.